

Delegating Authority: Principles for Experienced Leaders

An integral part of being human and made in God's image is to be stewards over creation. The idea of God creating us to be stewards reminds us that the Father is happy to delegate to us – indeed He rejoices in seeing us partner Him and take on the task of being fruitful in our work. The implication is that as image bearers we too should be willing to delegate; not just willing, but delight in seeing others flourish with the responsibility and objectives we give them. Delegation is also part of sustainable stewardship – it is not just that we should not, but we cannot do everything ourselves. In this session we will look at the application of biblical teaching on responsibility, accountability, subsidiarity, generosity, and sovereignty as the basis of delegating power to empower you as a leader and others in their God given roles.

Ross Hendry serves as CEO of CARE since his appointment in November 2021. Prior to joining CARE, he was the CEO of Spurgeons', one of the UK's largest children's charities. He has also served as Deputy CEO at the office for the Children's Commissioner in England and as Head of Public Policy at Action for Children. In 2005, he stood as a Parliamentary candidate for the Labour Party and has worked in a number of other roles in think tanks, the public sector, and the trade union movement.

1. Defining and understanding delegation

2. What does the Bible say about Delegation?

3. Creation

Genesis 1

- Use of power – The Father's example of giving away power to empower and see flourishing.
- Our Creation mandate - responsibility as stewards and culture makers.
- Made male and female: working in community and diversity.

4. Fall

Confronting the barriers to delegation:

- It's easier/ quicker to do it myself
- Others are not competent enough to do it
- I am 'humbly' serving others
- I'm the (only) one who can or should do this

The dangers of not delegating

- Exodus 18, and *The Jethro Principle*
 - Burn-out
 - Bullying
 - Blocking

5. Redemption

The 'everyday' Jesus example

Lessons from Jesus' Parables

Matthew 25:14-30

- Trust
- Capability and capacity
- Accountability
- Faithfulness

Luke 16:10-12

6. Restoration

Looking ahead to new creation

Delegating authority is formative:

- for the person delegating
- for the person receiving delegated tasks and authority
- for those around both parties

7. Principles to apply

- Clarity
What needs to get done? Is every person involved clear about their role and objectives?
- Subsidiarity
What is the lowest safest level at which this decision/ action can be taken? Am I holding onto or passing something on that I should not?

- **Communication**
Is it clear how principle 1 is clarified and checked, and how progress is reported/checked? Is there a culture of openness and transparency, and what are the practical channels in place to facilitate good communication?
- **Support**
What does each person need to carry out their role successfully? Is what someone wants the same as what they need (realistic and proportionate – if not review principles 2&3)
- **Consequences**
How will you honestly review whether the delegation has worked? How will you measure results – both task completion and development objectives? How does the power imbalance impact accountability, transparency, honesty and growth?

8. Questions for discussion

- When it comes to delegating tasks and authority, which of the four barriers am I most tempted to apply at work?
- What spiritual disciplines and practices are helpful in promoting good delegation?
- Define the goals you are trying to achieve in delegating tasks and authority.

9. Goals of delegation are:

Appendix 1:

A practical example of a statement used to contextualise a Christian children’s charity scheme of delegation

Why a Christian children’s charity takes delegation seriously

An integral part of being human and made in God’s image is to be stewards over creation. That means we are all given responsibility to do more than manage and maintain; we are designed to cultivate and create.

If humans are made in the image of the God, as we read in Genesis 1, then we have also been created to

- use our minds and hands;
- to work diligently; and
- to see our work as an act of service, even worship. Indeed, the bible talks about our work being a “fragrant offering” to the Lord.

That is why it is a good thing for us to assume the level of responsibility commensurate with our capability and capacity, and for us to be stretched, with support to realise our potential - to see what we can make with the tasks we are given.

The idea of God creating us to be stewards also reminds us that He is happy to delegate to us – indeed God rejoices in seeing us partner Him and take on the task of being fruitful in our work.

The implication is that as image bearers we too should be willing to delegate; not just willing but delight in seeing others flourish with the responsibility and objectives we give them.

Conversely, the desire for an easy life devoid of responsibility, where we are told exactly what to do, without any scope for us to develop our work, abilities and gifts is not God honouring. Neither is it God honouring to fill our time doing tasks that avoid challenging ourselves and demonstrating our gifts and talents. A desire to abdicate appropriate responsibility in this way can be in direct opposition to how God has designed us.

But not everyone is created the same, and so we have different expectations for staff and volunteers who operate at different levels within the charity. Yet even the team member who has least responsibility in their formal role must be given the opportunity to experience a sense of agency over their work. The more senior a role the more responsibility we expect the individual to hold.

That may mean that individuals are given objectives that are broader than the narrowest definition of their role, and asked, with support to consider tasks and responsibilities that have wider organisational implications.

The more senior the role the more we expect the post holder to show initiative and demonstrate ways of promoting and furthering the charities' strategic objectives.

We want everyone who works for us to have the opportunity to think about how they carry out their task and what their work aims to achieve; to grow and flourish in an environment that is supportive and stretching, nurturing and ambitious.

How does this apply to delegated authority?

We start from a core set of principles:

1. It is better for the individual's development and the flourishing of the charity when every member of the team is given clear objectives, and the tools and support to achieve them, rather than a set of tasks that assume one way of doing something.

Managers (whether a line manager or project lead) need to be clear what they want and expect. The person being managed must be clear about what they are being asked to do, and what they reasonably need to accomplish the task. Managers cannot be expected to always know this and so it is the individual's responsibility to ask just as much as it is the manager's to be as supportive as they can.

2. Responsibility to make decisions should be kept at the lowest safe and practical level, so that decisions are made as near to where they will have an impact as possible.

Decisions and actions should not be delegated up or down simply because an individual is uncomfortable with what they have been asked to do.

3. Accountability and responsibility (not always the same) should be clearly defined ideally to a single named individual so that everyone is clear about who should do what.

4. Responsibility should be held by the person who is most impacted by the successful or unsuccessful outcome of the action.

Practices such as copying many others into emails or calling lots of meetings as 'cover' and dispersing accountability is not helpful. Any projects or task will rely on many people but it is not helpful for anyone concerned if there is not clarity about who is responsible and accountable.

5. While we delegate responsibility to the safest lowest level managers have a duty to make sure the people, they manage have the support to make the decisions / take the action required of them. Serving their team may involve empowering not 'doing it for them'.
6. There should be clear opportunities for assessing how these principles are being applied. This applies to individuals, teams and the whole charity. Such an assessment should build and empower, not diminish.
7. These principles are designed to give clarity about what and how authority is delegated across the charity, not as a set of instructions or checklist of what to do in every circumstance.