

Chiropractic ECONOMICS

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6 secrets to delegation that gets results

By Monica Wofford

It's Monday. The office was closed yesterday and you were off Friday and Saturday.

You left extensive notes on how you wanted things run, where you wanted charts filed, which equipment you wanted put away, and what you wanted ordered.

In the morning, as you arrive before the rest of the staff, it appears as if nothing you asked has been done. What a way to begin the day.

What a tirade the staff is going to face when they come in. You'll blow up and then get to work with patients while the staff is still reeling from the "talking

HOW TO DELEGATE

When you delegate, remember the result: To get things done and (hopefully) done right. Remember though, as you follow these steps that "right," except in matters of legality or regulation, is subject to interpretation.

If you are willing to see more than one right way, try practicing your delegation with these methods:

1. Be clear about the end result. What exactly are you looking to have done? Not *how*, but *what*? What does the result look like? What will the person experience, see, or be able to access?

For some, the *why* will also be important, so if you are dealing with a detail-oriented person, share the why and

Delegation is not about doling out the gopher work. It's about developing those you lead.

to" that you're going to dish out. "Why don't they ever listen?" you say to yourself. "That is the last time I ever go away on vacation! I knew I shouldn't have left them here by themselves."

And the unhealthy internal banter continues, only soon to come out all on those employees and precious patients. If only you could call a hotline to get some direction on handling the situation!

Now, let's get a few things straight:

- As the leader of an office, you should be able to assign appropriate tasks to be done in your absence in such a way that they actually get done.
- You should be able to leave things in the capable hands of your employees.

The office *should* run better in your absence than it does when you are there, but it takes practice and letting go of the need to control it all. It takes a well-honed system of delegation, training, and follow-through.

And, it takes the awareness that just because it is *your* practice, not everyone knows how you want things and not everyone is a clone of your way of thinking or doing things.

be more detailed in your description of the end result.

2. Model the way that works for you. If you are delegating something you have done many times, share with the person you are now assigning this task one of the ways it can be done successfully.

Also share that this method may not be the only solution, but it has worked for you in the past, so it is an option. This person may find a more efficient, faster, and better way, so give him or her freedom to choose or discover that option.

3. Give a clear picture of the parameters. Before you give your staff all of this freedom, explain the boundaries. What are the lines they cannot cross, regulations they cannot violate, and your pet peeves they simply cannot ignore?

This explanation will further paint the picture for options, and it may well be your way is the only option that fits your many parameters. But, until you give the job to someone else with a different experience, background, ideas, and learning styles, you may never know.

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4. Offer other resources.

Invite the person to whom you are delegating to explore other options for advice or information when you are not available.

The saying is: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Even if that lifetime is merely the time in which the person works in your practice, teach him or her to be resourceful, instead of coming to you with every question. The reality is you

don't have time to field all those questions, do you?

5. Emphasize the timeline. If what you are asking the employee to do has a strict timeline (a deadline), make the deadline clear. Also, remember people go through learning curves and make mistakes, so give a deadline that is well before the one you will be held accountable for. Give yourself a bit of "wiggle room" for follow-up.

6. Remember your first lesson. What is the first step in

driving a car? Since most of you have probably been driving a while, you might say, "Put the key in the ignition and go."

Yet, if you had to teach someone to drive, you would quickly realize there are a number of little steps you take for granted that a learner doesn't know.

Telling an employee to "just do" something you have done well for 20 years doesn't work. Review the steps in your head, write them down, and share them. Then, be patient. Learning and mastering a new task takes time.

The very definition of delegation is "giving someone else the opportunity to learn a skill that he or she did not already have." That may sound like a company line, but it's true, and if you plan to be successful at it, keep it in mind.

Delegation isn't about giving out all the gopher work. It's about developing those you lead.

It isn't an order barked across the clinic; it's quality time with an individual employee.

Delegation is key to your survival, vacation, and practice, not to mention, those who run it while you are away. ☺



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