Abstract

These materials are provided to help you as a leader assess how you prefer to make decisions and how to adapt that personal style to the group with which you are working. The same is true for how you delegate tasks and responsibilities. You may want to include some of this information during your Board orientation to ensure that everyone understands the way you all prefer to make decisions as a group.

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LWVUS Convention 2014
Leadership and Delegation in Decision Making

Adapted from Facilitative Leadership, Interaction Associates, Cambridge, MA and Ross A. Webber, Management. (Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin, 1975)
Leadership and Delegation in Decision Making

**Telling** .... The leader identifies a problem, considers alternative solutions, chooses one of them, and then tells the followers what they are to do. The leader may or may not consider what the group members will think or feel about the decision, but they clearly do not participate directly in the decision making process. Coercion may or may not be used or implied.

**Selling** .... The leader, as before, makes the decision without consulting the group. However, instead of simply announcing a decision, the leader tries to persuade the group members to accept it. The leader describes how the decision fits both the interests of the organization and the interests of the group members.

**Consulting** .... The leader here gives the group members a chance to influence the decision from the beginning. The leader presents a problem and relevant background information, and then asks the members for their ideas on how to solve it. She may give a tentative solution for their reaction. In effect, the group is asked to increase the number of alternative actions to be considered. The leader then selects the solution considered the most promising.

**Consensus** .... The leader here participates in the discussion as “just another member”… and... agrees in advance to carry out whatever decision the group makes. The only limits placed on the group are those given to the leader by superiors.

**Delegating** .... The leader defines a problem and the boundaries within which it must be solved. Then it turns it over to the group to work out a solution that makes sense to the implementers. The leader agrees to support their solution as long as it fits within the boundaries.

Most of us naturally tend to use one type of leadership style more than the others, but we all have occasion to work in different settings. Consider the following questions to understand the leadership setting in which you work best.

**How do I react to different leadership styles?**

1. What style of leadership do I most frequently choose?
2. Is my leadership influenced more by forces within myself? Forces in the group? OR forces in the situation? Have I neglected any of these forces?
3. Do members of my group usually know how I intend to use my authority as a leader? How much influence will they have in making a particular decision? Have I made that clear to them?
4. How much attention do I give to long term objectives in choosing a leadership style?
5. How well do I understand the expectations of those I lead? Do I make it possible for them to share with me their response to my leadership?
6. When I am a member of a group, what leadership style brings out the best in me?
7. Has my leadership style changed in the past few years? Am I more leader-centered? Or group-centered? What is the major cause for the change?
8. Does the organization in which I work have an implied “approved” leadership style? Is it overt? Or subliminal?
9. Think about circumstances where one style of leadership is more appropriate than another.

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There are various **degrees and styles of delegation**. In his book *Management*, Ross Weber lists eight styles varying from very little delegation to complete and total delegation:

“**Before delegating a job, make sure both you and the other person understand which of those styles you are using. It can save you a lot of time and frustration in the future.**”

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Factors to Consider in Facilitative Decision Making

What level of involvement is appropriate in different circumstances?

- Stakeholder buy-in: who needs to be involved?
- Time available: how much time is available for discussion and debate?
- Importance of decision: is the issue really important to people in your organization?
- Information needed: do the appropriate people have the necessary information to make a decision?
- Capability: is there sufficient expertise in the group to make the decision wisely?
- Building teamwork: does this project have the capacity to create a stronger team identity?
- Implementation: Are those responsible for implementation involved in the decision-making process?
- Risk: what are the consequences of failure to complete the task?

The key is to ensure the maximum appropriate level of involvement in each circumstance.

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The Positive Impact of Delegating

Delegation is giving others the authority to act in your behalf, accompanied with responsibility and accountability for results.

The steps to delegation

1. Set aside time for reviewing the assignment
2. Analyze the assignment and organize the task.
3. Recruit your team member(s)/other volunteers and explain how they are chosen.
4. Explain how this assignment fits into the total program.
5. Provide necessary information and guidelines.
6. Communicate expectations.
7. Determine how much guidance is needed.
8. Assess progress of the task.
9. Express appreciation and recognize all of those who played a part in completing the project.

Methods of delegation

Ask for Volunteers: Explain the task and see who is interested. A request for volunteers is often met with silence. Don’t drop an idea when this happens.

Use Your Perceptions To Select People For The Task. Often a person won’t volunteer because they are uncertain about the task or their ability to do it. Express confidence in them by indicating she/he might be good for the task, the person may feel good and take the responsibility.

Do Not Be Afraid to Assign Tasks. Do not assume silence means lack of interest. Take the initiative to suggest someone. The person always retains the option of saying no.

Spread The Good Tasks around. Make sure the same people don’t always get the same jobs.

Roadblocks to delegation

I can’t trust my team members. I can do it better myself
I don’t have time to involve others. It’s easier to do it myself.
I can’t bring myself to delegate busy work. I can’t delegate to friends.
I can’t delegate something I don’t know how to do myself. Everyone is already busy.
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Why do people resist delegation?

They don’t know how to do the task. They don’t have the time.
They don’t understand what is wanted. They lack confidence in their ability.
They have a fear of criticism for mistakes. They don’t like doing it.

Know your members

Just as it is difficult to lead if you do not know where you are going, it is also difficult to lead if you do not know whom you are leading. Members break into several areas.

There are those who want to “do something.” These are the activists. They simply may have great enthusiasm for a current project and want to share that enthusiasm with the group. They may have a desire to help others and feel they can channel that desire through the League. This group is the easiest from which to draw officers – it gives them something to do.

There are those who want to “learn something.” Association with others having a similar interest allows them to “test” their understanding in a comfortable environment.

There are those who want to “be part of something.” Extroverts who draw personal energy from association with others may use their interest in yet another association. Some people are just natural “joiners.” Others may see League people as having a good time and want to have one too.

There are those who are merely curious. They may have seen our booth at the Fall festival. Voter registration may have piqued their interest. They have joined your League to see what it is all about, and they may or may not stay.

You should understand the needs of all of them. Perhaps you cannot address all at the same time, but you must be mindful of their various needs so that one group is not addressed at the expense of another. If you can do so effectively, members will tend to “move up.”

A good leader not only moves an organization to a higher place, but does it without creating a dictatorship that impedes local League growth.

An effective leader knows/learns when and how to delegate.
(Delegating can be a great stress reliever too.)