

Delegation skills are the key to multiplying your time.

Managing a volunteer Organization or Managing a disaster Require good delegation skills. None of us are born with them, but they can be learned.

Often managers will look at the list of things they must get done today, and realize the day is over, but the list at least partially remains.

What about all these things you must get done? You must learn to delegate them. Assign the job to someone else. This doesn't sound like a big deal, why write a whole training program on it? Do you delegate? Of course you do. But do you delegate the important things? The things you "know" you could do better? The things you are "best" at? Probably not. And the question is, should you?

Think about your greatest contribution to your organization. If it is not leadership, the volunteer for the duty where you feel you can offer the most help. Focus on your highest value contribution the organization. Which of your activities generate the most benefit to the entire group and its served agencies? Where do you get the most bang for your buck? (Timewise). All volunteers in ARES/RACES are leaders in some capacity and your greatest leverage is in mobilizing the forces around you to do their very best. Everything else becomes secondary to that in terms of impact and success.

So the answer is yes. You should give away even the things you are "best" at. And then do your best to make sure they are done right. Make sure they are up to spec and delivered on time.

Look at the Cost of Holding On:

Many leaders refrain from delegating responsibilities they've labeled "critical". They fear the job won't be done correctly. Or no one else can do it as quickly, and it won't get done on time. Or the right attention won't be paid to it.

The truth is often this; the organization you have volunteered to lead will suffer in the exact areas where you think you are the expert!

Project development? You hold up the development of a key component, because you are the expert, yet you are away taking care of one of the other task you just can't anyone to do as well as yourself.

Staffing? Two needed volunteers can't be utilized because you haven't signed off on them, but you are out of town at leadership training course.

Memorandum of understanding with a served agency? Negotiations on an important deal are held up, because you working on putting together a list of proper equipment that will be needed for certain emergencies and the need for them to be NIMS type compliant.

While trying to lead your organization. Whether it is at a federal level, a state level, a district level, a county level, a site commander level, or even just the radio operator at a resource intake site. You will become the choke point on each of these vital functions unless you delegate.

Delegation, not resignation.

Many leaders delegate like this. They say, "John, would you take on this project? It has to be done by next Thursday. Thanks." That's it. Then, when the job comes back incomplete, they are frustrated. What happened? They left out accountability. They neglected the structure for making sure things happened according to plan.

There are five components to successful delegation.

1. Give the job to someone who can get it done.

This doesn't mean that person has all the skills for execution, but that they are able to martial the right resources. Sometimes the first step in the project will be education. Maybe your delegate has to attend a seminar or take a course to get up to speed.

2. Communicate precise conditions of satisfaction.

Time frame, outcomes, budget constraints, etc.; all must be spelled out. Anything less creates conditions for failure. It's like the old story about basketball - without nets the players don't know where to shoot the ball.

### 3. Work out a plan.

Depending on the project's complexity, the first step may be creation of a plan. The plan should include resources, approach or methodology, timeline, measures and milestones. Even simple projects require a plan.

### 4. Set up a structure for accountability.

If the project is to take place over the next 24 hours, schedule an interim meeting 12 hours from now. If the task is to take six weeks, establish a weekly conference call, or an e-mailed status report. Provide some mechanism where you can jointly evaluate progress and make mid-course corrections. This helps keep the project, and the people, on track.

### 5. Get you volunteer to buy in to the timeline.

Often time frames are dictated by external circumstances. Still, your delegate must sign on for the task at hand. If you say, "This must be done by next Tuesday," they have to agree that it is possible. Ask instead. "Can you have this by Tuesday?" To many this may seem a bit trivial, but the step is important and often overlooked. Whenever possible, have your delegate set the timeline and create the plan. You need only provide guidance and sign off. As General Patton said, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do, and they will surprise you with their ingenuity."

If you skip any one of the above steps, you dramatically reduce the likelihood things will turn out the way you want them to. On the other hand, if you rigorously follow good delegation steps, you greatly increase the odds for your group to succeed.