

# The Art of Delegation

By Stan Pohmer

With payroll being one of the single largest controllable expenses on your P&L, most of us have cut back staff significantly over the past few years in order to downsize, right size, streamline



Stan Pohmer

or just survive, and we've been reluctant to add back staff (as the recession is officially over) because our sales simply haven't recovered enough to justify it. Too many of us resemble this saying: "We've become so adept at doing more and more with less and less that pretty soon we'll be

able to do everything with nothing!" Some may wear the "lean and mean" attitude as a badge of honor, something to be proud of, but what are the trade-offs of this for you as a manager (personally and professionally), your customers and your business?

When business is tough to come by, one of the first responses many managers make is to centralize and consolidate power and authority because they believe only they have the abilities and skills needed to navigate through challenging times. And in some cases this classic reaction works, at least short term. But there are also downsides to this behavior; the more one micromanages and is closer to the ground, the sometimes overwhelming details of the day-to-day can take up too much time and fuzzy one's focus of the big picture and how they look at things strategically.

## No "I" in Team

OK, you've made it through the hard times and it looks like the economy and consumer sentiment and confidence are improving. If we get some decent weather (including some rain to begin to mitigate the droughts so much of the nation is experiencing), we're finally positioned for a decent spring, which we all need! In order to fully capitalize on the potential knocking at your door, no longer can you continue to be a one-man show; you need to be able to look beyond the day-to-day and start looking forward strategically. Consumer behavior and mindset and

The "people won't do things the exact same way I've done them" attitude is not a good one. You can't delegate if you believe there's only one way to get things done right.

your competition are changing and dynamic. You need to be able to anticipate and adapt, and this requires a different focus from you, as well as the time needed to accomplish this.

How do you free up the time and energy to allow you to develop and implement your vision and set the direction for profitable growth? Delegation! What you delegate and to whom you delegate to are critical decisions you need to make. Remember you can delegate in several different directions:

1. Upward ... to your boss.
2. Downward ... to your team.
3. Laterally ... to a peer, possibly in another department or division of your company.
4. Externally ... to suppliers, financial providers (i.e. CPA or lender). Yes, any type of outsourcing is a form of delegation.

Though the major benefit of delegating is it gives you the freedom to focus on the really important things, there are some other major wins for both you and your company. For example:

- When you delegate work to a member of your team, they feel more engaged, more important and more likely to give the task their maximum effort. They feel trusted and respected and don't want to disappoint you, breeding loyalty.
- Delegating empowers your employees, and empowered employees are more likely to actively engage with customers and co-workers and problem solve independently. They take more ownership for outcomes, both personally and professionally.
- Delegation increases fresh ideas and taps creativity, inventiveness and ingenuity. Empowered workers feel they are a more integral part of the organization and are more willing to offer opinions and ideas to help the company succeed and grow.
- You become more efficient.

## Delegate vs. Abdicate

It's important to mention there's a clear distinction between delegating and abdicating.

When delegating, you as the delegator still ultimately own the outcome of the delegation process, and instead of managing the task, you manage the people who are managing the task or project. Under abdication, you cede all responsibility to someone else. I'm not a proponent of abdicating or what we also call "dumping" or "moving the monkey from my back to yours."

So what kind of activities or projects should a good manager consider as delegation candidates in order to become a great manager?

Consider these:

- Tasks that keep you from growing your business: Activities that can be accomplished by others can free you up to focus on bigger impact opportunities.
- Areas outside your areas of expertise: Tasks that are not within your core competency take longer to do than if given to someone with more expertise.
- Tasks that are already streamlined: Activities or processes where you've been instrumental in leading them almost to fruition can be handed off for implementation and monitoring.
- Projects that impede development: Though we may find it difficult to believe, sometimes the boss's involvement stymies creativity and new ideas! Often, better progress can be made if the boss sets the goal and then delegates the task to the team that knows or does that job or will be directly impacted by the outcome. Good examples of this might be creating best practices or a brainstorming session where the employees may feel intimidated by the boss's presence.
- Tasks or activities that you simply hate to do: If you find something boring or unfulfilling, it saps your energy and time, and someone else could perform it more proficiently, allowing you to apply your energy to opportunities that yield greater payback.

For delegation to succeed, there are clearly defined steps that you need to take:

1. Identify the right person for the task or project.
2. Define what is to be done.
3. Be certain that the delegatee understands what is to be done.
4. Put the activity in context of the total business so the delegatee understands the "why" of what he/she is doing.
5. Explain what the desired outcome is, and set parameters for what can/can't be done in the process.
6. Be certain the delegatee understands what is expected of him/her.

7. Set a deadline for completion and/or progress reports.
  8. Re-confirm agreement on methods and dates.
- You'll note that there is a pattern of explanation/confirmation in this process; the delegation process will only be successful if the delegator and the delegatee both share the same expectations for timing, methods and outcomes.

### Proof Is On the Paper

On paper, most managers can see the benefits of delegating, so why aren't more of us taking advantage of this time-saving resource?

Initially, delegating something takes more time than if we just did it ourselves. True, but like most things, we have to invest something (in this case time) to realize longer term benefits. And it does take patience, especially at the beginning.

The "people won't do things the exact same way I've done them" attitude is not a good one. You can't delegate if you believe there's only one way to get things done right.

People have difficulty accepting that, though the outcome is achieved, it may not be as perfect as if you have done it yourself.

Many things can and should be delegated to people who will not do them the way you would or won't do them as perfectly as you would but wind up with the same result that works. Type A personalities like me are innately micro-managers; we have a hard time accepting this, and it's a hard habit to break. But those leaders who have mastered the art of delegation can speak to the benefits, but it does take practice.

The business climate is improving and what got us through the hard times won't necessarily be enough to allow us to move forward as quickly as we would like. To get to the next level we have to go from being managers to becoming leaders again, so we can focus more strategically and with vision. Delegating is one tool that can free up time and energy, so you can seize the bigger opportunities that can help move your business forward.

Yes, delegating can be frustrating and will try your patience. But the investment to master this art can be powerful with awesome results... **LGR**

*Stan Pohmer is president of Pohmer Consulting Group in Minnetonka, Minn. He can be reached at [spohmer@pohmer-consulting.com](mailto:spohmer@pohmer-consulting.com) or 952.545.7943.*

# Signs Educate. Signs Persuade. Signs Sell.



## COLMET®

### Largest Manufacturer of Steel Landscape Edging & Galvanized Nursery Sign Holders in the Industry

- Prime galvanized steel for indoor & outdoor use
- Economical long-term alternative to plastic signs
- Durable galvanized construction for years of use
- Available in assortment of standard & custom sizes



Tel: 972.494.3900 • Fax: 972.494.1605  
Toll Free: (800) 829-8225  
Email: [sales@colmet.com](mailto:sales@colmet.com)  
[www.colmet.com](http://www.colmet.com)

©2014 COLLIER METAL SPECIALTIES LTD.

Write in 843

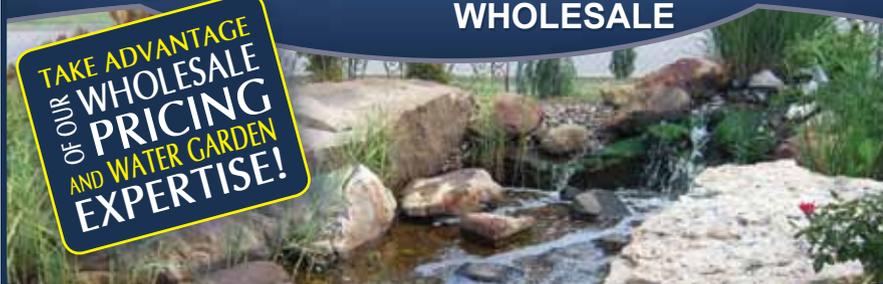
**AMERICAN MADE. AMERICAN STRONG.**

WHOLESALE WATER GARDEN SUPPLIES

# Pondliner

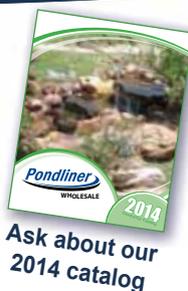
WHOLESALE

TAKE ADVANTAGE  
OF OUR  
WHOLESALE  
PRICING  
AND WATER GARDEN  
EXPERTISE!



### 3 REASONS TO CHOOSE PONDLINER WHOLESALE

- 1 WHOLESALE PRICING AND SERVICE**  
We support your business with a large variety of equipment from multiple brands. Most orders ship the same or next business day.
- 2 EDUCATION**  
Our customer service representatives are always happy to help with any technical assistance and are able to provide professional advice on products, design & construction.
- 3 HUGE INVENTORY**  
Over \$1,000,000 of inventory in our warehouse. We handle most warranty issues for you, no need to contact the manufacturer.



Ask about our  
2014 catalog

(866) 219-3561 • [www.pondlinerwholesale.com](http://www.pondlinerwholesale.com)

Write in 842