

Delegation and Managing Requests

Creating space, empowering others, and leading with clarity

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Using the

Delegation and Managing Requests

Workbook

Delegation is about using time and talent wisely - it's not or should not be about dumping work on others.

When done well, it's an act of trust and growth.
You create opportunities for others to develop new skills while freeing yourself to focus on what matters most.

In this lesson we explore:

- Why delegation matters for leaders and aspiring leaders.
- How to delegate effectively and fairly.
- How to manage requests and negotiate workloads with confidence.

These are my reflections

.....

on ___ /___ /_____

Building on Solid Foundations

Over the last two lessons, you've created a foundation for your leadership presence and skills.

In Lesson 1, you explored leadership, what it was, why it was important and why it matters to you.

In Lesson 2, you learned some practical structures, several basic approaches about how to do leadership.

In Lesson 3, you learn more vital skills for a manager or leader.

You're unlikely to be leading well if you're still trying to do it all yourself!



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1. Why Delegation Matters

Leadership is not about doing everything yourself — it's about ensuring everything gets done well.

Delegation allows you to:

- Focus your energy on tasks that need your unique expertise.
- Develop others by giving them meaningful responsibility.
- Reduce stress and workload through shared accountability.
- Model trust and collaboration within your team.

Reflections

In the context of your current role, can you clearly identify:



As far as your role allows, these things should be your focus and should be prioritised where possible.
Consider what scope you have to delegate other things.

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2. Why Delegation Feels Hard

Many of us struggle to delegate because we worry that:

- It will be quicker to do it ourselves.
- Work won't be done "well enough."
- It feels unfair to add to someone else's workload.
- We don't fully trust others' judgment yet.

The truth?
Delegation is rarely perfect the first time.
It's a relationship that develops over time as our degrees of trust, skill and communication develop.

Delegation isn't weakness or avoidance, it's a leadership skill that strengthens both you and your team.

You are not simply giving work away.
You are giving someone else the chance to grow.

- What do you hesitate to delegate and why?
- How might your reasons reflect fear, habit or high standards?
- What would be possible if you could delegate more confidently?

Practically, many of us experience the challenge that we don't feel we have anyone to delegate to!

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3. Delegating Without A Team

Not all leaders have people who report directly to them, yet every successful leader or manager - whether they are researcher, academic or project lead - must learn to work through others.

In this context delegation is about collaboration and influence, not heirarchy. It might look like:

- Guiding students or postdocs to take ownership of parts of a project.
- Asking a colleague to contribute to a grant proposal.
- Requesting admin or technical support to help you meet a deadline.
- Negotiating roles within a multi-institutional collaboration.

In each case, you're practising the same skills as formal delegation:

- Clarifying the task and desired outcome.
- Explaining why it matters and how it connects to shared goals.
- Agreeing timeframes, roles and boundaries.
- Following up and giving feedback.

Even without line management authority, you are still leading.
Delegation here becomes a tool for influence and self-protection - ensuring your workload stays realistic while enabling others to contribute and develop.

> Delegation starts by asking for help clearly and confidently.
> It's a sign of professional maturity.

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4: Levels of Delegation

Delegation can vary depending on how much control, responsibility or autonomy you share.
Here are four useful levels to consider:

Level	Example Instruction	What It Means
1	Look into this, report back.	You retain decision-making; they research and advise.
2	Find options and recommend the best. I'll decide.	You want their input but you keep final authority.
3	Check this out, tell me your choice and check with me before acting.	Shared responsibility; trust and oversight.
4	Do this as you think best, let me know what you did.	Full trust; they own the decision and action.

As trust and competence grow, you can move people gradually from Level 1 to Level 4. Delegation builds capability both yours and theirs.

What one task could you consider delegating now?

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5: Steps for Effective Delegation

A simple, six step structure:

1) Get their full attention:
Have a real conversation, not a rushed handover.
Make time to connect, explain and listen.

2) Clarify the task and outcome:
State what needs doing, why it matters and what "done well" looks like.

3) Explain why it matters:
People are motivated when they understand the purpose and impact of their contribution.

4) Agree a timeframe:
Collaboration, not command. Discuss priorities and deadlines.
Ask: "What would you need to move to have this done by Wednesday?"

5) Check for understanding:
Invite questions or have them summarise what they'll do.
Encourage open communication.

6) Schedule follow-up:
Delegation is not abdication.
Agree how and when you'll review progress *before* the deadline.

How will you adapt your conversation to the person and the situation?

Using this structure helps you to engage your colleague fully in the task without you losing responsibility or oversight.

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6. Delegation in My World

Often, as we start our leadership journey we are reluctant to delegate. Once we understand how delegating increases our ability to do our job while also developing our colleagues, we realise it's an important skill to consciously develop.

- What task could you delegate or ask for assistance with?

- Who might be able to help?

Reflecting on a time I delegated:

- What worked or didn't work?
- How clearly did I define the task and expectations?
- What could I do differently next time?
- How could delegation help me negotiate workload or manage competing demands?

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7. Managing Requests

Delegation is only one of the skill-sets needed.

As you develop your leadership visibility and become known for getting stuff done successfully, the requests for your assistance are likely to increase. Learning to manage requests is another essential skill.

Each request is an opportunity to negotiate boundaries, clarify priorities, or empower others. Consider your responses carefully:

Yes	It's aligned with my priorities and I have capacity.
No	It's outside my priorities. I choose to decline.
Maybe	I'll agree if timescales, scope or resources are adjusted.
Share	Delegate or collaborate: someone else may be better placed.

What else do you need to support your choices and decisions?

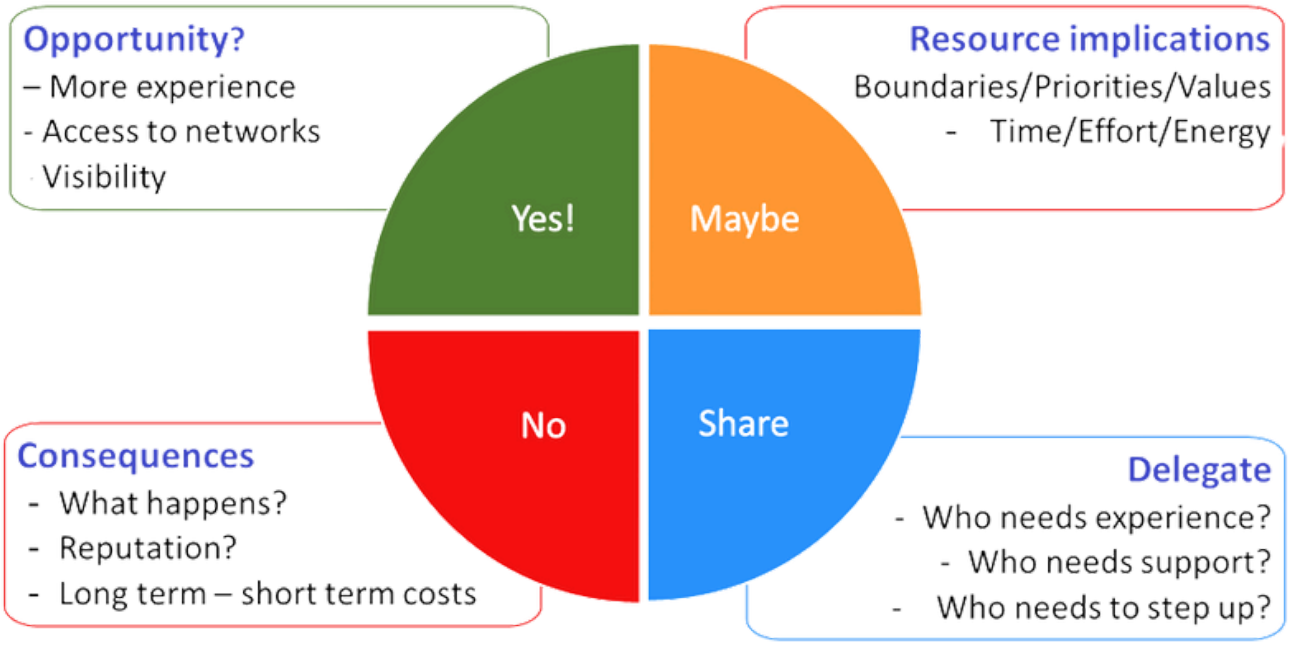
Are you able to communicate these choices well?



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7. Managing Requests

Many people - not all people - have a preference for saying yes when asked. That might be driven by a desire to help, to please, to prove ourselves competent and capable.



Saying yes is often influenced by FOMO: the fear of missing out.
We ask ourselves: “Is this an exciting opportunity that will grow?”, “Will something bigger come out of this?”.

These are good questions and yes, many opportunities arise from chance encounters or happy accidents.

We do need to be mindful that saying yes too often or to the wrong things will result in our effort and attention being spread too thinly.

How do you evaluate which opportunities are really worth your yes?

7. Managing Requests

Next time someone asks you to take on something new, pause and reflect.

It might be valuable to refer to your “north star” intentions or your vision and values (see Self-Discovery module).

Practically, what time do you have available? (see Time & Balance module).

Review some recent requests:

With what you have learned here, might you have responded differently?

Ask yourself:

- Does this align with my goals or current priorities?
- What would I need to say yes comfortably?
- Could this be shared or delegated?
- What happens if I say no?
  (A missed opportunity or a distraction avoided?)
- What happens if I say yes?
  (Potential for overwhelm or distraction?)

Moving Forward

Delegation, managing requests and boundary-setting are core leadership skills. They make space for creative, strategic work and prevent burnout.

By choosing when to say yes and how to share responsibility, you build stronger, more capable teams and a more sustainable career.

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Reflections

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WANT MORE?



This workbook describes some structures for delegating tasks and for managing requests.

Many people, especially the researchers and academic leaders I work with, are pulled in many directions and, being busy, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the need to do everything.

Your job is to make sure things are done well. That doesn't always require you to be the person doing it.

This reflection helps you step back from the daily demands to clarify your long-term direction and sustain your motivation over the course of your career.

I hope this content has been useful.
If you know you need more, do reach out to me.
I'd love to hear from you.

You can always explore the other resources on my website.

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Resources

Let me know how you get on!

Margaret

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