

6. Delegative behavior of the Project Manager

6.1 Concept of Delegation

In general terms, one delegates when certain functions that were being performed by one person are entrusted to another person that is part of the team. Delegating is useful in order to have more tasks done, laying others aside, and becomes particularly important when it aims to increase efficiency by improving the use of time. The most intelligent manager is the one who permanently seeks to transfer functions to someone on his team, and thus free part of his time to be able to devote himself to other tasks of greater strategic interest, or of greater relevance in relation to the company's objectives.

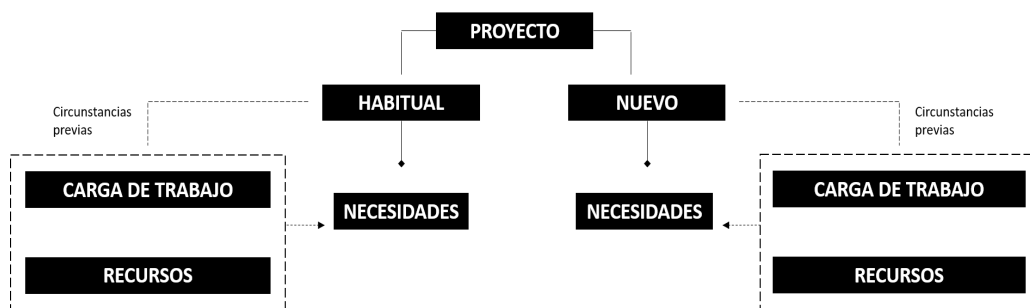
Habitually, people who are able to delegate show certain reluctance, after having delegated on previous occasions with bad results. But there is a reason that is more common but less recognized on the part of the person who can delegate, namely the fear that the subordinate will perform the task as well or better than he does. As a result, on many occasions persons, both individually and as a team, do not evolve properly, due to the reluctance of managers to delegate some of their functions.

However, we must bear in mind that delegation has a double effect on time. On the one hand, delegation will end up producing a reduction of the time the boss devotes to a function. But on the other hand, this release of time will occur in the long term since, initially, delegation requires extra time to train the subordinate and for the preparation, launch and control of the new process.

6.2 Direct and delegated performance

Project managers must always have a double line of action: direct action and delegated action. The use of one or the other will depend on different circumstances (situation) surrounding the work to be carried out and existing prior planning of projects.

To make it clearer, we will represent this in a diagram:



Proyecto=Project; Circunstancias previas= Previous circumstances; Carga de trabajo=work load; Recursos=resources; Necesidades=Needs; Nuevo=New

Projects that come into the company may be habitual or new. Habitual projects are known and entail a high degree of control by the project manager and by the team. The new ones are projects that require deciding how they will be handled, at least at the beginning, which is unknown by the manager. Therefore, we already have a first idea of when the project manager should delegate: a new project is less likely to be delegated than a habitual one.

If we follow the diagram, the next step would be to assess which needs are involved in the project, regardless of whether it is habitual or new, or to put it in other words, what is needed to deal with it. Habitual programs with low levels of needs have many options of being delegated, as the team is probably used to implementing them. When programs are habitual, but have high needs, delegation will depend on the workload of our project planning and what resources we can have at that moment to handle them.

In the same vein, a new project with few needs can generate doubts about delegating it, since we do not know it and although it does not need much time, it can take up a great part of it just because of everything we have to invest to know the details. If, in addition, the previous circumstances of our project planning require a high workload and high resource consumption, it is not likely that it will be delegated to the team.

Together with the foregoing, new projects with many needs, regardless of the previous circumstances of our project planning, are those to which we, as project managers, must give preferential attention, at least initially. These projects usually fit in worse with previous circumstances and require maximum concentration.

Nonetheless, the fact is that both types depend on the objective we have as project managers and what we want to obtain from our team, including how we have acted before, because according to the way we acted we may have created teams that are more or less autonomous. Let us try to give some form to this information with the following matrix.

<i>Conditions</i>	Level	Committed	Required	Action
	WORKLOAD	RESOURCES	NEEDS	DELEGATION
Usual 1	▼	▼	▼	▲
Usual 2	▼	▼	▲	▲
Usual 3	▼	▲	▲	▶
Usual 4	▲	▲	▲	▼
New 1	▼	▼	▼	▲
New 2	▼	▼	▲	▶
New 3	▼	▲	▲	▼
New 4	▲	▲	▲	▼

If we review the table above we can see the conditions where we have more options to delegate to our team and the ones with which we risk not delegating:

- Usual conditions

Usual 1. It is the easiest to delegate because they have all the conditions in their favor. The usual project arrives at a moment of low workload, with few usual resources committed (used) and does not require high implementation needs.

Usual 2. It is a great opportunity to check the team's self-confidence level because the usual project comes with high needs but the conditions allow the team to work on said needs: low workload, uncommitted resources and usual project for the company.

Usual 3. It is a situation that tends to generate doubts because the usual project needs are high and the usual situation of labor resources are committed to other projects. The doubt is generated by the low workload, which makes it possible at least to think that it can be delegated to the team. In this sense, if we have any doubts, we should act as the assistant referees in football and let the game continue without whistling fouls of which we are not sure; so when in doubt, delegate to the team maintaining supervision of the project's evolution. The main reason is that it is a usual project and it is not new for the team; so you have to worry more about an internal work adjustment than about the team being overwhelmed by the project and upsetting current work activity.

Usual 4. A much more compromising situation than the previous one because the workload is now high and this entails greater complications when it comes to delegating, basically because one thinks that it can interfere with the usual tasks, which are high and also have many committed resources. Normally the project is not delegated. But this is a mistake, because we lose a new opportunity to create an autonomous team, to lay the foundations for this to happen and for the team to have confidence to carry out projects in situations of great stress, but more or less controlled, as the workload and the committed resources are known and usually worked by the team; and most importantly, it is still a usual project.

- New conditions

New 1. The main problem of new projects is precisely that they are new and therefore require a very high level of attention by the team and all the needs they require have to be carefully analyzed. Of all situations considered as new, possibly, this is the easiest to delegate, especially if we consider that the workload during the entry of the new project is low and there are not many usual resources committed. Together with the foregoing, the project arrives with a low demand for new needs; in other words, it is possibly a slight variation on what the team is used to doing. In summary, there is time to devote to it and it does not require a high detailed analysis, so the priority would be to delegate it.

New 2. Here the situation changes even though the sole circumstance that is altered is that the analysis needs of the new project are very high. This means that we have to spend time to analyze them, and this often generates many doubts to the project manager because he knows that the new job requires an investment in detail; however, the key is still that it arrives in a situation of low workload and with few resources committed. This condition is a sufficient to delegate and take advantage of the opportunity to continue

creating autonomy on the team. But the fact is that this situation generates many doubts in the project manager, and if in doubt, we have already commented that we must decide to “let the team play”.

New 3. This time we have already committed usual resources, so we will not be able to carry out the detailed analysis that the new project requires so easily. The first option of the project manager is not to delegate so as to not compromise the team or the work that is being carried out. Here taking control of the project and delegating it is seriously considered; delegating is probably an option when it is well analyzed by the project manager and the degree to which the team’s daily rhythm can be disturbed can be calibrated with precision. The most appropriate decision is to analyze and advance the project before delegating it. And in case it is delegated, to ensure that we do so with more controllable objectives for the team.

New 4. This is the situation that should not be delegated, at least usually. Everything is at a very high level: high usual workloads, very committed usual resources and very stringent new demands. The project manager has to take control of this project from the beginning, work on it and make it advance, and later, if there is a chance, delegate specific issues that help to improve it together with the team.

In summary, as a general rule, although the specific circumstances described must be considered, usual projects must always have a high delegation prognosis, while new projects may be delegated as long as they do not compromise the team’s usual performance.

6.3 Recommendations for effective delegation

In order to achieve effective delegation, it is necessary to begin analyzing the objectives to be achieved and then decide which functions must be personally performed and which ones can be done by someone else. Therefore, to delegate in an effective manner, it is necessary to establish the basis of the new delegation relationship, in other words:

- Define accurately the competences, authority and responsibility which is delegated.
- Communicate these competences and responsibility to the persons on the team or not who may be affected by them.
- Help your collaborator and provide him/her with the training and information needed; especially in the initial phase, in which the novelty will, inevitably, lead to problems.
- Establish controls that ensure the necessary follow-up, with decreasing frequency.

But, in addition, we must be aware of the possibility of error. Some causes of failure of delegation may be:

- Not granting the right of error.
- Fear that the subordinate will do better.
- Distrust of the subordinate’s capacity.

- Fear of risks and criticism.
- Mistaken belief that it has already been delegated.
- Disagreement on the peculiarities of delegation.
- Delegation of activities to be performed rather than proposal of results to be obtained.
- Not defining performance standards.
- Inadequacy of competences for the responsibility.
- Lack of training and practice required.
- Short circuits or interferences from above.
- Perfectionism.
- Excessive desire to please the subordinate Inadequacy of monitoring and control methods.

Moreover, the delegation of responsibility does not entail the delegation of authority, although the responsibility can be totally delegated; but even though it was delegated, it is completely kept by the boss. Delegation does not release from any responsibility; it is fully retained and is exercised through the required monitoring and control.

When delegating, it is necessary to consider a series of questions: What has to be done? Who can do it? Why is it necessary to delegate? How must the task be carried out? When must it be done? Based on these questions, the conditions for an effective delegation are:

- Specify the goals and steps to be performed by the other person.
- Determine the most appropriate person to perform the task, taking into account the requirements of the work to be performed.
- Give clear and precise instructions to ensure they are understood by the other person.
- Define the scope of the liability assumed by the delegate.
- Facilitate procedures, auxiliary means and information to carry out the task.