



## Unit 2

## Skills Required for Accountability Process

### Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- Describe what individuals must do to become accountable
- Build skills required for accountability, including goal setting, giving and receiving feedback, and delegation
- Pinpoint ways to build ownership in your organization
- Isolate areas for further self-improvement

## Unit 2

### Skills Required for Accountability Process

#### Setting Goals and Expectations

##### **Tips and Tricks**

In order for people to be accountable, they need to know what they are going to be accountable for! Two ways to do this are to set goals with employees and to communicate expectations in a structured way.

##### **SPIRIT**

Each objective should be broken down into several small, achievable goals that will help you get where you want to go. Good goals should have SPIRIT!

##### **Specific**

Be specific about what you want or don't want to achieve. The result should be tangible and clearly described. "Finish a project" is ambiguous, whereas "Finish the warehouse reorganization" is specific.

##### **Prizes**

Reward yourself at different points in the goal, particularly if it's long term. If your goal is to develop a set of standard operating procedures to make your employees more independent and accountable, for example, you might have a small reward for each section that you complete and a larger reward at the end.

##### **Individual**

The goal must be something that you want to do. If your boss wants you to work on a project you have no interest in, you will find it difficult to engage. Find something – even if it is a small thing – to anchor yourself to the project and make it yours. For example, if you enjoy working with that particular team of people, or you will get to attend a conference in a different city, or perhaps the project itself makes the rest of your work easier to do, you can connect to it on an individual level.

##### **Review**

Review your progress periodically. Does the goal make sense? Are you stuck? Do you need to adjust certain parts of it?

##### **Inspiring**

Frame the goal positively. Make it fun to accomplish. You could make a poster of the end result, frame it, and post it on the wall.

**Time-Bound**

Give yourself a deadline for achieving the goal. If it's a big goal, split it into small parts and give yourself a deadline for each item.

**Create a goal with SPIRIT to help yourself become more accountable.**

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**Structuring Expectations**

If your desired outcome is too general for a specific goal, you can simply communicate your expectations. If you have a structure for these expectations it can help you make sure that you've got all the bases covered.

The following checklist can help you outline just what you expect and what the employee will be accountable for.

- How will the task be started? What will execution look like? (Remember, keep this as broad as possible. Giving the employee maximum freedom to design their job often results in maximum ownership and accountability.)
- What will the end results look like?
- What communication tasks will they be responsible for? Will there be any tasks that others should be responsible for? (There shouldn't be, if at all possible.)
- What tools and resources will be helpful in executing the task?
- When should the task be complete? When should reporting take place?
- Who can they rely on for mentoring and support?
- Why is the task being completed? Why is it important?
- What other tasks or projects rely on this task? What's the big picture?

**A Final Note**

Input contributes significantly to accountability. Ideally, the person who is accountable for the project or task should design most of the goals and expectations. Input from those above the individual should be focused on the big picture, not the way the tasks will be carried out.



6. Whenever possible, let people speak for themselves. If a report must be prepared or a presentation must be given, pass it off to the project owner.
7. Let employees know what the long-term plan is. Give them options for how they want to be involved through ventures like career and succession planning.
8. Encourage a holistic approach through the company. Focus on quality as well as quantity, customer satisfaction, and other emotion-based factors.
9. Invest in your employees. When possible, give them opportunities to learn and do new things. If possible, give them support to try new things – and don't say "I told you so" if it doesn't work.
10. Work on creating an atmosphere of cooperation and creativity rather than competition.

## Doing Delegation Right

### Understanding Delegation

#### Defining Delegation

**What do you think that delegation means?** Is it delegation to assign somebody the work that you don't want to do? Is it delegation to assign work to somebody when you are busy and then to reclaim it again when you have more time?

A common definition of delegation is entrusting power and authority to a person acting as your representative. While that may seem a little abstract, it really captures the meaning well. Another way to define delegation is getting your work done through other people.

It's more than simply assigning work. Delegation also involves making an investment in a person for the future and helping them to increase their own skills.

**In the broadest sense, delegation involves five things:**

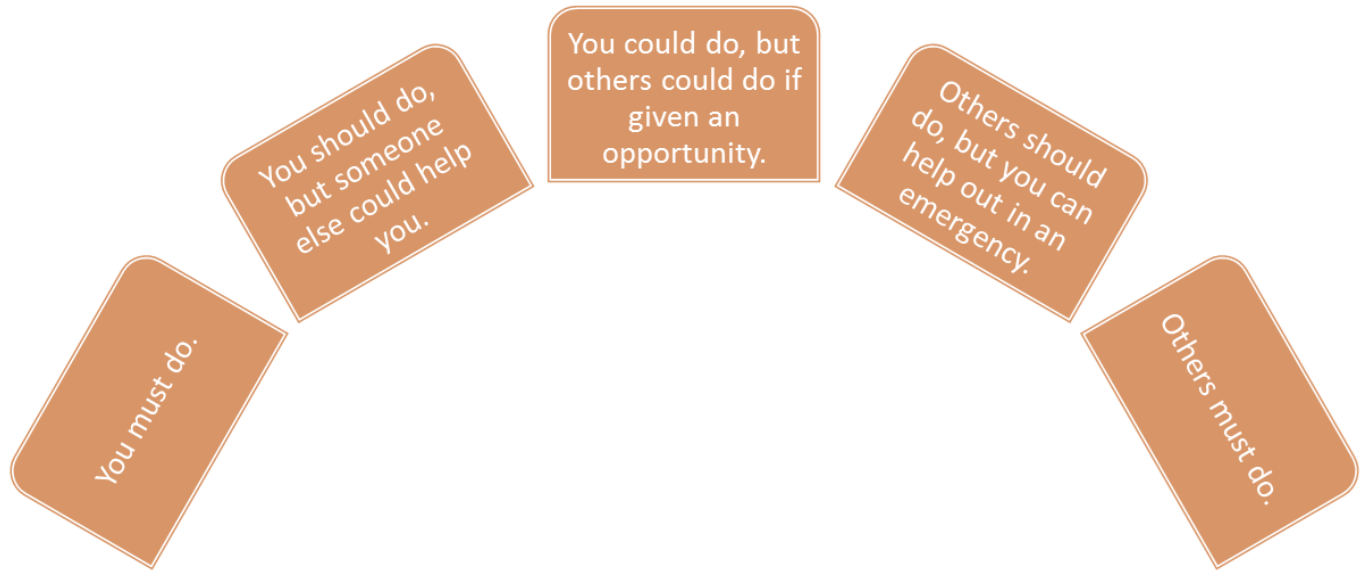
- The training and development of your staff
- The direction and follow-up of assignments
- The analysis of performance problems
- Coaching to overcome problems
- Periodic formal evaluations of performance

### Four Basic Steps to Delegation



### Deciding What to Delegate

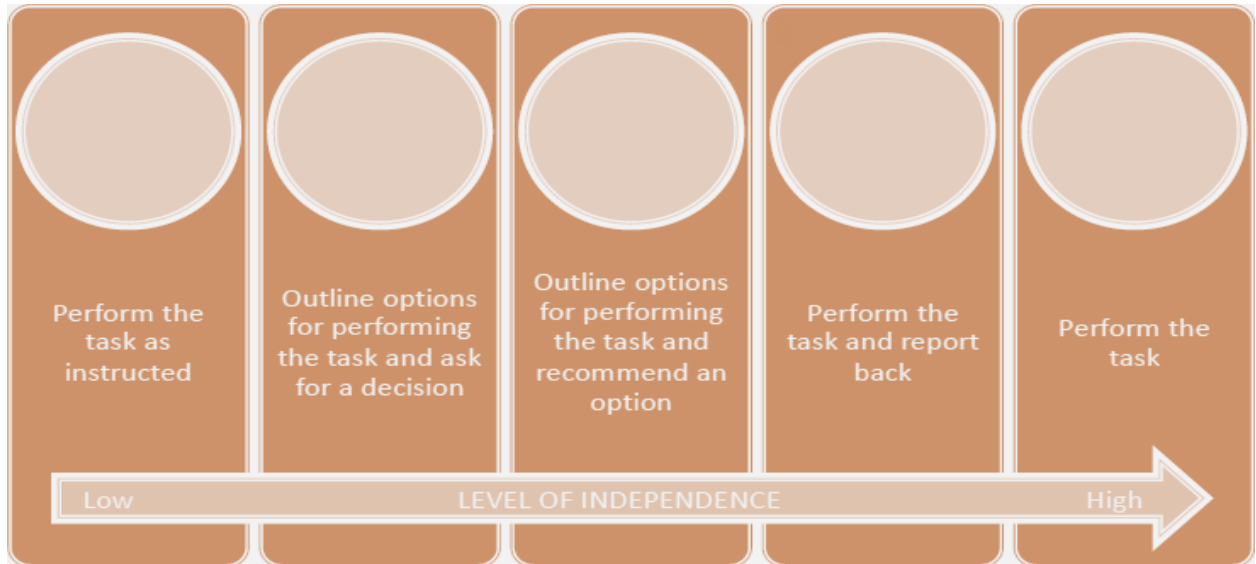
Part of preparing to delegate is deciding what tasks you can and cannot delegate. Tasks can generally be placed in one of five categories:



### The Five Levels

Delegation doesn't have to be all or nothing. In fact, you should consider what level of delegation is appropriate for the task, the employee, and the situation.

Here is an overview of the five levels of delegation:



### Breaking Down the Model

Let's say that we want an employee to prepare a summary report of their work over the past year that will be submitted to the executive team. How will each level of delegation look?

The **first level of delegation** is to have the employee perform the task exactly as instructed with no independence. In our example, we might give the employee a report template, the data, and similar reports. Then, we'll ask them to complete the report and submit it by a certain date.

The **second level of delegation** is to allow the employee to do some research (if necessary) and then give you options for the task. You make the decision and the employee completes the task according to your instructions. In our example, the employee might research different formats and give you some different options. They may also draft a list of items that they want to include in the report. Then, you will outline the format and contents for them. They will complete the report and submit it by a certain date.

The **third level of delegation** is similar to the second, except that an employee makes a recommendation. Continuing with our report example, the employee would recommend a format and possibly prepare an outline. You would approve it and ask the employee to complete and submit the report.

The **fourth level of delegation** is where independence really comes into play. This is the level that you will use most often once team members get up to speed. With our report example, you would simply ask the employee to complete the report and submit it by a certain date. (They may use existing procedures or templates, but the bulk of the decisions are up to them.) You would then review the report, approve it, and send it to the executive team.

The **fifth level of delegation** gives the employee complete freedom. With our report example, you would ask the employee to complete the report and submit it directly to the executive team. You may ask the employee to send you a copy of the report, but you would not have any active role in it.

## **Monitoring Delegation**

### **The Importance of Monitoring**

Your best efforts at delegating can fall short if progress isn't adequately monitored. It's also important to keep in mind that just because you have delegated tasks and given the individual the authority to get those tasks completed, you are ultimately responsible for the results of anything that you do delegate. You retain that responsibility as delegator.

Monitoring helps you catch problems as they arise and it helps motivate team members toward completing a task successfully. What do you consider when you are figuring out how much control or monitoring is necessary?

- The team member's experience and motivation
- Your working relationship
- Importance of task

### **How Do You Monitor?**

#### **Assignment Log**

Identify milestones in the project or task and then develop a system for tracking what tasks are assigned to whom and when they are to be completed.

#### **Personal Follow-Up**

Informal methods of follow-up are very effective. An assignment you ask about frequently is more important than one you mention once but never monitor. Your interest must be sincere to be effective. Although it may appear time consuming, the fact that you take the time to ask tells the team member that completion is important. Remember that although you have delegated something, you are still ultimately responsible for it.

#### **Sampling Techniques**

Depending on the type of work, you may ask for a sample of the work to monitor quality. For example, you might look at a portion of a report or sit in on a meeting the employee is chairing.

### **Progress Reports**

This is similar to an assignment log, except this time the onus is on the employee to include steps taken and difficulties in execution.

### **Management by Exception**

This is based on the idea that controls are only needed when there is a deviation from set standards. In this way you focus on unacceptable problems rather than try to monitor everything. However, don't use this method if difficulties are hard to spot, a single error could be significant, or the employee is inexperienced at the task.

## **Offering Feedback**

### **The Ingredients of Good Feedback**

One goal of feedback is for it to contribute to an improvement in future performance. Even when it does not lead to a desired level of performance, the meeting itself provides the platform to discuss expectations, results, motivation, and how to succeed. For employees (or even suppliers) who choose not to perform at an adequate level, the meeting serves as a benchmark within the larger performance management arena. If an employee refuses to comply, has been supported and coached to do well, and continues to refuse, then the supervisor has the necessary means to move into a disciplinary performance management plan.

When feedback is perceived to be negative (because of our own behavior, or perhaps because it is not well delivered), people will naturally try to avoid it, or at least minimize the negative effects. However, we need to let people know that it can be a great tool for personal development, especially when we include information on both the issues and the possible solutions. With this in mind, let's delve deeper into the six major characteristics of effective feedback.

### **In Private**

Feedback should be given in private if your comments can be embarrassing, and a formal feedback meeting should always be held in private. While some people like the attention that comes from sincere praise or celebrating an accomplishment in front of others, some do not, and no one wants negativity shared in front of their peers. (This should be apparent without having to state it, but sometimes we get excited and forget!)

### **Balanced**

Balance in this context is about designing the feedback session so that, even though there may be constructive criticism required, the employee does not feel attacked, or that all you have to say about his work is negative. We recommend that you avoid the older form of "sandwich approach" (by making a positive comment, a negative, and then a positive). However, you should still start any feedback with a

positive comment about some aspect of the employee’s work. If you are not comfortable with this, or not good at small talk, write some comments down ahead of time to keep yourself focused. Your employee will appreciate that you get to the heart of the meeting quickly instead of letting any anxiety build. Feedback that is delivered in specific terms and in a sincere manner is usually accepted well, even when we are receiving criticism.

**Relevant**

Keep the conversation focused on feedback that is relevant and job related, and to things which the employee has control over. For example, complaining about the way a letter looks when the employee only has access to an ancient printer that adds lines to everything, or asking for a sophisticated looking brochure when there is no budget provided for the proper paper and licensed photography, only adds to the employee’s stress and frustration.

**Specific**

Avoid general statements when you deliver feedback. “You seem unmotivated,” is not nearly as helpful as, “You arrived late to work at least three days a week, your last two assignments were late, and you did not attend the new employee lunch last week.”

**Documented**

Base your comments on documentation, facts, and your own observation. Don’t rely on what another manager or a colleague told you, or what someone overheard, when you should be available to monitor what is going on yourself.

**Personal (In the Right Way)**

Compliments or criticisms that are directed generally toward the team are meaningless to an employee. “We just don’t seem able to get out error-free invoices,” is not as constructive as, “Three of the last invoices you sent out had errors in them.” Describe the behavior that is unsatisfactory, rather than judge a person because of it. Base it on their actions, and don’t make a personal attack on the individual.

**Test your knowledge**

**Come up with three to five pieces of feedback that would have been helpful during the situation that you described in your pre-assignment.**

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## A Toolbox for Managers

### Identifying Learning Opportunities

As you can see, there are a lot of skills required to help you become more accountable. Accountability truly is a state of mind, and it will require constant work on your part. But trust us – it’s worth it!

We have talked about a lot of skills today that will help you become more accountable. Here is a summary of the most important items.

### Coaching

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### Teamwork

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### Delegation

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**Leadership**

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**Time Management/Personal Productivity**

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**Communication**

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**Goal Setting**

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**Giving and Receiving Feedback**

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**Public Speaking and Presentation**

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**Planning**

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**Project Management**

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**Relationship Building**

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**Negotiation**

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**Assertiveness**

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**Further Reading:**