

Delegate or Abdicate?

An Editorial by Bob Tierno

As owners of a ten room boutique hotel & conference center located in California's Gold Country for thirteen years, my wife and I agreed that we needed to delegate the responsibilities of performing tasks such as payroll, taking reservations, evening set up, and the dreaded laundry. We held a staff meeting and after speaking with the 2-3 key staff members we obtained their "agreement" and then we "ran".

The Law of Unintended Consequences kicked in and payroll was late, laundry wasn't done ("oh, you meant the ironing too?") and reservations weren't posted correctly. Taking a step back, we thought it'd be easier if we did it ourselves and then realized that we couldn't grow our business

if we continued micromanaging every task. We discovered that we didn't delegate, we abdicated the tasks and then made it worse by under educating our staff. Running was not an acceptable option.

As a business coach for the past two years, it has become apparent that when you delegate the responsibility to perform an important task or process, it doesn't relieve you of the ultimate responsibility for your business. On the other hand, delegation should empower your employee(s) or team to get the job done to your standards without having you micro-managing the process. The objective is to allow you to focus on the strategic work of the business.

Look at each area of your business; for example, money management, human resources and sales. Identify and prioritize the tasks or processes you need to delegate. The next step is to document the correct way to perform each task step-by-step including Key Performance Indicators (KPI) or quality control standards. This creates an Action Plan which contains baseline expectations for successfully implementing the plan. Your employees should be empowered and asked to provide feedback (make process improvements) that meet the KPIs. Once the new system document is ready, provide it to the employee responsible for that task, train him or her on how to successfully run this system, and insert the document into the company's operations manual. This became a key reason why we were able to sell the inn as a turn-key operation. Over the years every process and task was documented by our staff and reviewed by us.

Don't fall into the pitfalls many business owners fall prey to when they have "abdicated" the responsibility for the task while having "under-educated" the staff. "Delegate and Over Educate" should be your motto. •

