DELEGATING RESPONSIBILITY

As you probably have discovered, you can't do everything. So how does it get done? Well, delegation is the key to a successful organization. Sharing responsibilities keeps members interested and enthusiastic about the group. You might be reluctant to delegate because you want to make sure the job is done right (your way). However, that can make members feel unimportant and become apathetic. Here are several good reasons to delegate:

1. The group benefits by having:

- members become more actively involved and committed
- more projects and activities are undertaken
- increased opportunities for members to develop leadership skills
- more of a chance to fill leadership roles with qualified, experienced people
- the organization runs more smoothly

2. The leaders benefit by:

- not being spread too thin and, therefore, being less likely to burn out
- gaining satisfaction seeing members grow and develop
- acquiring more experience in executive and administrative functions.

AN APPROPRIATE TIME TO DELEGATE IS WHEN:

- There is a lot of work to be done
- A member has particular qualifications for or interest in a task
- Someone can benefit from the responsibility
- Routine matters need attention
- Details take up too much time and have to be divided.

THE TIME NOT TO DELEGATE IS WHEN:

- Someone is under qualified or overqualified for the task
- The work is your own specified responsibility (except in emergencies)
- The task is too big or is an unsolved problem, issue or matter dealing with the personal feelings of another (i.e., the "hot potato or squeaky wheel").

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO DELEGATE:

- Explain the task to see who is interested then ask for volunteers by a show of hands or passing a sign-up sheet. (Interest is a great motivational tool.) However, this method can be impersonal and you could be "stuck" if no one volunteers.
- Appoint or suggest someone for the task. Sometimes a member lacks self-confidence and won't volunteer, whereby, appointing them demonstrates your confidence in them.
- Assign the task through a committee. This takes the pressure off an individual and reinforces organization structure.
- The most effective method of delegation is the "best fit" approach which involves matching the most qualified or interested person with the appropriate job task. Remember to try to spread the enjoyable and responsible tasks around; thus giving more members status, value, and leadership training opportunities.

THERE ARE MANY IMPROPER WAYS TO DELEGATE ALSO:

- Pleading, threatening, intimidating, flattering, and giving guilt trips are not recommended methods of delegation.

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE DELEGATION

1. **Choose the appropriate people** by interviewing and placing your members carefully. Consider their time, interest, and capabilities. Specific responsibilities to be delegated to a particular person must be appropriate for the growth of that person at that specific time. Don't delegate tasks that are too challenging or too easy to accomplish.

2. **Explain why the person was selected for this task**.

3. **Delegate segments or portions that make sense**; not bits and pieces of a task.

4. **Discuss the task at hand**. Discuss ideas; mutually set goals and objectives. Whenever possible, give those who will be responsible for carrying out the task a voice in the decision-making. Do not lower standards. Never insult.

5. **Clearly define the responsibilities and expectations** being delegated to each person. Explain what is expected of the person and what the bounds of authority are. Be sure agreement is reached on areas where the person can function freely. The end result is important, not the various steps involved because everyone accomplishes tasks differently.

6. **Give accurate and honest feedback**. People want to know how they're doing and they deserve to know as well. This is an opportunity for allowing risk-taking and mistakes, giving satisfaction, and encouraging growth.

7. **Support your members by sharing resources, information, knowledge, and plans with them**. It is incredible how many errors are made simply because of poor communication or lack of information or lack of proper resources.

8. **Really delegate**. Most responsible people do not appreciate someone looking over their shoulder, or taking back parts of their assignment before they have a chance to do it. As a leader, it can be hard for you to "let go" because you like being the doer. Let them do the job! Delegating does not eliminate work, it simply changes it. As you delegate appropriately, a multiplier effect occurs; the time spent doing one job can be spent enabling several people to do numerous jobs. However, if things aren't getting done find out why and act upon it.

9. **Stress the importance of evaluation**. You must not overlook the need to evaluate and measure the extent to which your member's actions conformed to organizational plans. You should assess if the plans went well, or if the original plans were appropriate and worthwhile. Use appropriate feedback techniques when evaluating. One of your most important roles as a leader is to help your members learn and grow. Remember to share past failures as well as successes with the group so that all group members may benefit and learn from these experiences!

Your members are your greatest resource. Let them contribute to their own personal development and to the organization by putting their creativity into action!