

Delegation, Authority and Responsibility: Removing the Rhetorical Obstructions in the Way of an Old Paradigm

Reginald L. Bell
Prairie View A&M University

Nancy Dusty Bodie
Boise State University

This study examined 14 articles in trade publications and professional journals, published between 1985 and 2010, that specifically addressed the management practice of “delegating authority.” The goal was to determine if there are meaningful changes in the advice authors gave their readers over the years or, if similarities in their prescriptions persisted. Findings show that authors provided a plethora of advice to their audiences on delegating authority. Furthermore, findings show that there are five key similarities in the semantics on delegating authority which authors used. In advising their readers on the topic of delegating authority, the authors prescribed that: 1) a process occurs in steps or stages; 2) results will contribute to greater organizational benefits; 3) selection of the ideal person who can accomplish a task is essential; 4) transferable authority, task specificity and trust are crucial; and 5) good communication between delegator and “delegatee” is essential. A four stage reconfiguration of the delegation process is presented.

INTRODUCTION

Defining Delegation

While it is clear that authority can be defined as one person having the ability to make decisions that are binding on others, the actual delegation process in present-day management environments is not so clear cut. For this reason, it is always helpful to look a word up in the dictionary, as a first step, to gain a more banal understanding of how lexicographers denote a word. *Webster’s Online Dictionary* defines delegation as: “the act of empowering to act for another or, a group of persons chosen to represent others.” Sometimes the simplest definition is best, sometimes not. As an operating definition for this study, the ordinary meaning of delegation does not offer a thorough enough elucidation of what the word delegation means for modern managers.

Dunham and Pierce (1989) defined delegation as “the process managers use to transfer formal authority from one position to another within an organization and, thus, to put authority system they have designed into place” (p. 377). From their perspective, delegation becomes a prescriptive framework for managers, rather than a commonplace denotation. In modern management terms, delegation, as defined by the authors in the 14 articles compared in this study, has not appeared to have evolved much since 1989. Thus, the paper’s purpose was to explore further “delegating authority” within the context of the

professional management literature published over the past 25 years, especially articles targeting a practitioners' audience.

Delegation Issues Identified in Select Trade Publications

Various issues related to the delegation process add to the complexity of the definition. Crucial questions between the delegator and delegatee need to be answered to assure optimum outcomes. Where delegation implies delegating of accountability as well as tasks, trust between the two parties is a crucial element which must be emphasized. Clarification of questions regarding the exact nature of the task, limits of authority and accountability, deadlines, relationship to larger projects, resources, and timing of updates is important to the successful delegation process (Helpdesk, 2006; Urbaniak, 2005).

Battles (2005, p.39) argues that while performance of the tasks is shifted to someone else ... "the responsibility for getting the work done and done correctly has not." In order to ensure that the delegation process works, the manager must 1) select the correct person with the necessary maturity and technical skills; 2) define the task so that the delegate has a clear understanding; 3) establish a schedule of progress points, measurements, and deadlines; 4) transfer appropriate authority to achieve the task; and 5) focus on the accomplishments rather than the method with which the task is accomplished (Battles, 2005).

The initial decision to delegate and to who is often difficult because of manager perceptions and beliefs. Some senior managers perceive women as poor at delegating because of women's "lack of single mindedness" because of their split focus on family and career (Newman, 2008, p.8). Other managers have doubts about their subordinates' abilities as compared to the manager's abilities. Doing the task oneself because of a reluctance to be perceived as "unwilling to get their hands dirty" is another factor that often prevents managers from delegating tasks (Master, 2001, p.94).

While setting clear objectives, establishing controls and accountability, and evaluating the final product, are important parts of the delegation process, Cauldron (1995, pp. 28-29) suggests that use of other interactive strategies may encourage effective delegation, such as:

- Asking for volunteers, rather than assigning the perceived best worker
- Providing training and guidance but being open to alternative approaches
- Asking for ideas where the employee may see something differently
- Explaining why a person has been chosen, to build confidence
- Providing both positive and negative feedback
- Identifying the lessons learned by both the delegator and the delegatee.

This Study's Purpose

The previous issues suggest that confusion appears to exist among practicing managers on how they should go about delegating authority. The confusion is somewhat exacerbated by the tremendous amount of advice on delegating authority that is published in the trade publications and professional journals they read, which, over the years has bemused managers rather than making them "slaphappy with the punch of clarity." The magnitude of advice seems to interfere with managerial understanding of delegating authority; the semantics seem to contravene common understanding in management practice. Therefore, this study's purpose was to take a look at authors whose writings appear in trade publications and professional journals to determine if there are contextual differences in advice they gave their readers. Considering the large amount of rhetoric on delegating authority, three very important questions appear to need answers.

Research Questions

1. Is all the rhetoric being published on delegating authority the same or different, regardless of the creative licenses authors use?
2. Do these authors use rhetoric to differentiate themselves because there is nothing new in the paradigm?

3. Is there a need to reconfigure the old delegating authority paradigm into a more modern perspective?

Notwithstanding these questions, a recurring rhetorical theme in trade publications over the past 25 years appears to be that authors are concerned about managers who fear losing control.

Managerial Fear of Losing Control

Delegation, simply put, means a manager will temporarily transfer formal authority to another position on an indispensable assignment. The manager must select someone who can do an assignment correctly, and then allow time for the person selected to either accept or reject the conditions of the offer. Upon acceptance, the manager will create the responsibility, transfer formal authority, and allow the delegatee to do the assignment, with minimal oversight (Brown, 1998; Davidson, 1986). Unfortunately, when managers fear losing control they can inadvertently thwart the delegation process entirely (Anderson, 1992). Trust is absolutely essential when a manager transfers formal authority to another position.

Managerial fear of losing control is a phobia known as threat rigidity (Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981). Managers fail to transfer authority to another position in an organization successfully because of this phobia. The main problem with delegating authority is that some managers tend to have an inherent distrust of the people working for them based on their own prior negative experiences with delegating authority. In the past, entrepreneurs and female executives found it harder to let go of responsibility and authority (Baechler, 1996; Dawson & Kleiner, 1992). Threat rigidity comes loaded with a variety of complex reasons.

Managers tend to transfer biases that they believe to be cause effect from an old environment to a new environment. Because this sort of fallacious reasoning is temporal in nature, philosophers call it “post hoc ergo propter hoc—or “post hoc” fallacy: first this event (A) then this event (B); therefore, event (A) caused event (B). A very good example of post hoc fallacy is on the website FallacyFiles.com: (Retrieved, November 14, 2011 from, <http://www.fallacyfiles.org/posthocf.html>)

The only policy that effectively reduces public shootings is right-to-carry laws. Allowing citizens to carry concealed handguns reduces violent crime. In the 31 states that have passed right-to-carry laws since the mid-1980s, the number of multiple-victim public shootings and other violent crimes has dropped dramatically. Murders fell by 7.65%, rapes by 5.2%, aggravated assaults by 7%, and robberies by 3%.

It is human nature that people will tend to make a causal inference from a previous event to an event that follows. For example, a child’s survival can depend on a lesson learned from single event learning experience. From a single event a child will learn (reason thereafter) fire will burn the skin, dogs will bite when provoked, cats will scratch when cornered, etc! This knowledge will last for a lifetime. Despite never being burned after the first time the child is equipped with the knowledge fire will burn—knowledge that will be carried forward to adulthood to the end of life.

Unfortunately, some managers have a deep fear of losing control that is rooted in fallacious reasoning in management practice. This fear can be hurtful to the organization (Hunter, 2008). Biased managers have no real evidence that a new employee will act similarly to an old employee; they can misjudge the situation and burden themselves with too much work. Some managers believe employees are just not ready to take on any responsibility (Wilson, 2010). Some managers lack confidence in employees’ abilities (Douglas, 1992).

Nevertheless, unlike children, managers are adults, and well educated and experienced. They are not necessarily prone to behave the way we might expect them to behave, based on our memories of past employee behavior. Because of their employees’ education and experience, supervising managers must be prepared to escape the phobia of losing control. The only cure for the irrational fear of losing control is for managers to develop an ability to trust their employees. Success in transferring formal authority in an

organization is predicated on managers being keen on what it takes to delegate authority. Unfortunately, the huge amount of rhetoric published on delegating authority is at first glance the very thing that appears to obstruct managerial understanding of the delegating authority paradigm.

Is the Abundance of Rhetoric Obstructing the View?

Douglas (1992) observed that supervisors might be suffering from a “hesitate to delegate syndrome,” arguing that this syndrome is associated with lack of confidence in employees and a fear of losing control. To impress upper management, the line manager should be able to find the best employee for the assignment and match his abilities with the tasks. Similarly, Brown (1998) argued that managers should: 1. Identify which tasks to delegate; 2. Assess the staff and list qualified candidates; 3. Design a training program; 4. Schedule a meeting with the selected employee; and 5. Know when to call a project back. Reporting on his personal experience at a steel mill, Protch (2006) noted that delegating authority worked best when authority was delegated along with responsibility. Other authors wrote about the benefits of delegation to the organization and to maximizing output.

Myrna (2010) argued that each employee’s output can be optimized through delegating authority. Since organizations have downsized their staff, knowing how to effectively delegate and optimize everyone’s groups, and prioritize tasks and efforts, is crucial. An accelerated continuous cycle of four steps is how this is achieved: 1) agreement, 2) accountability, 3) action, and 4) assessment. In other words, managers must: break tasks into groups based on value delivery; make sure tasks are understood; and assess progress on task accomplishments through formal and informal meetings. For entrepreneurs, running the “whole darn show” might not be the best strategy; in fact, one person trying to do every job can be a form of addiction (Baechler, 1996).

Some managers are destined to commit the seven deadly sins of delegation (Wilson, 2010), which are: 1) the “do it my way” syndrome; 2) believing our people are not ready yet; 3) abdicating, not delegating; 4) not providing clarity or specificity; 5) lack of communication to others; 6) taking it back; and 7) not establishing clear return and report processes. Hughes (2002) wrote that delegating duties can be a challenge difficult for any manager to overcome. The crux of her argument is predicated on proper task assignments and employees’ skill development.

Dawson and Kleiner (1992) argued that female executives must learn to “delegate low priority items both at work and at home.” Furthermore, once “successful women” have learned to delegate, they should delegate in relationship to their work duties and in their domestic duties.

For Gunn (2003) when leaders understand the delegation process it can unleash acceleration towards achieving the established goals. All can be accomplished through forbearance, tolerant restraint, focus and a leader who ensures that the “company’s overall tone, or feeling, is positive.”

Jones (1985) admonished managers to learn to delegate authority to fit their management styles. This sentiment seems to be echoed by Davidson (1986) who argued managers must act as motivators to get the most from their people; a part of motivating people includes assessing people skills, needs and interests before delegating tasks to them. Years later, MacKenzie (2003) argued leaders of organizations can lose their top talent when they fail to discuss important matters on assignments, i.e., not stating the big picture, failing to explain the steps, and not explaining the individual’s role and reasoning for selection in the first place.

Goal Attainment Through Delegation

Good leaders are different than good managers in that good leaders know how to give up control, even when they are tempted to do everything themselves; often it is much better for the organization when leaders delegate authority (Marti, 2006). The current literature seems to suggest that delegation is a key to get subordinates and peers working collectively towards goals; delegating authority is also associated with the advantages of more cost-effective solutions (Hunter, 2008). Delegation is a critical factor in helping anyone become a leader (Lemberg, 2008). Delegating authority has even helped virtual teams perform better and when virtual team leaders were assessed by team members those who delegated

authority were positively correlated with team member satisfaction (Zhang, Tremaine, Egan, Milewski, O'Sullivan & Fjermestad, 2009).

In the 1980s the purpose of delegation was to share work according to the individual employee's abilities, resulting in an optimized organizational output; delegation in a nutshell meant sharing the work accordingly. Managers then could retain duties such as allocating resources, setting priorities, and motivating employees (Nisbet, 1988). Hicks (1988) argued that a success in public relations was dependent upon effective delegation because it freed managers from the routine task so they could focus more on the big picture. Babbit (1987) seemed convinced that bureaucratic organizations performed better when they hired strong people and delegated authority and responsibility to them to make the system work.

In the 1990s practicing managers had a voracious appetite for articles on delegating authority that included prescripts on why delegation fails such as managerial lack of patience, inability to let go (McConalogue, 1993), and insecurity and inadequacy, problems that have plagued managers in many Asian companies too (Bedi, 1994; Maynard, 1996). Despite these problems, there was evidence in the 1990s that authors writing on delegation understood there is a difference between delegating responsibility and relinquishing control (Korenblat, 1994). Thornton (1993) argued employees working for a credit management department would improve on motivation and interest in their jobs when given authority to make decisions. The manager would then be free to learn new skills and techniques because there would be fewer interruptions from subordinates and clients. Masak (1992) warned that delegation is an overlooked aspect of good time management. Axley (1992, p. 17) believed "Delegating is, essentially, a numbers strategy. It takes the workload off the shoulders of one person or a few people and spreads it around. It brings more human resources to bear on a task. By implication, this frees up the manager or supervisor for other responsibilities. These managers see delegating foremost as a method of boosting productivity and saving time--both theirs and their subordinates."

A Reconfiguration?

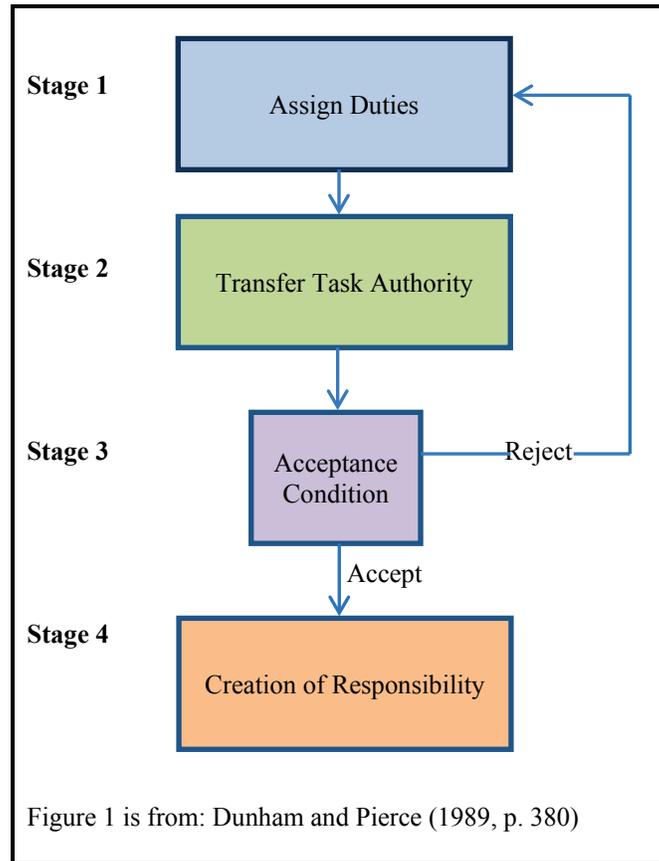
Shown in Figure 1 is a figure that depicts the four stages of the old delegation process (Dunham & Pierce (1989, p. 380): in Stage 1, the manager assigns duties; in Stage 2, the manager transfers task authority; in Stage 3, is the acceptance condition; and in Stage 4, the manager creates the responsibility.

More recently, however, Bushardt, Glascoff, Doty, Frank, and Burke (2010) found that at the core of management practice is assigning tasks and delegating authority and responsibility to subordinates. Bushardt, et al. (2010) argued that these are two widely held assumptions that are seen now as maxims or even principles of management: that the delegator has absoluteness in responsibility and that authority should equal responsibility; they believe that there needs to be a reconfiguration of the delegation process that is more consistent with reality. This view has merit. There does need to be a reconfiguration of the paradigm, of sorts.

Other factors contribute to the belief that it is time for a reconfiguration of this important process. Globalization, virtual organizations, the preponderance of team and collaborative management styles, and advances in software that simplify team based problem solving may contribute to questioning whether a rearrangement or updating of the delegation model is warranted.

This reconfiguration can be accomplished with clarification of the 25 years of rhetoric on delegating authority; furthermore, there is no need to abandon the old maxims which are at the core of the old paradigm—assumptions core to understanding the delegating authority process which have not changed much over the years.

FIGURE 1
THE OLD DELEGATION PROCESS IN FOUR STAGES



METHODS

Readers of trade publications such as *Black Enterprise*, *Supervision*, *Harvard Business Review*, *Modern Machine Shop*, and others, seem to have a huge appetite for articles on delegating authority. Furthermore, they act on the advice they read in these publications. Moreover, managers tend to not like theories that they cannot apply to their situational needs; thus, the professional and trade publications cater to this by publishing articles where theories have been put into practical applicable formats. Editors of these publications know that practicing managers are pragmatists.

According to MSN’s BING definition, *prag-ma-tism* [prágmə tizzəm] is a:

1. way of thinking about results: a straightforward practical way of thinking about things or dealing with problems, concerned with results rather than with theories and principles
2. way of evaluating theories: a philosophical view that a theory or concept should be evaluated in terms of how it works and its consequences as the standard for action and thought.

(Retrieved November 14, 2011 from, <http://www.bing.com/Dictionary/search?q=define+pragmatism&qpv=pragmatist+definition&FORM=DTPDIA>)

Therefore, data for the current study were collected from articles published on delegating authority between 1986 and 2010. The article selection process was a convenience sample process, aiming to

achieve a relatively representative sample of articles from different years within the 1986 and 2010 range, and a variety of types of business academic journals and trade publications. The types of journals and publications also incorporated different audiences.

After collection, a preliminary coding guide was designed by dividing the data into parts based on the aforementioned old definition of delegation and then conceptualizing the data into new categories and relationships among the categories (McMillan & Schumacher, 1998; Strauss, 1987). The data was independently coded and analyzed by the principal researcher, ultimately resulting in the Table 1 and Figure 2 interpretations of findings.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The articles differed in rhetorical approaches but the advice trade publication authors gave their readers had similarities that transcended articles and time. The semantics all seemed predicated on five core assumptions or prescriptions for readers based on anecdotal knowledge—not so much knowledge derived from scientific investigation. In delegating authority the authors prescribed that: 1) a process occurs in steps or stages; 2) results will contribute to greater organizational benefits; 3) selection of the right person who can accomplish a task is essential; 4) transferable authority, task specificity and trust are crucial; and 5) good communication between delegator and delegatee is essential.

What all this means is that there are definitely core underlying assumptions in the prescriptions authors writing for the trade publications and professional journals advocate for their readers. Table 1 displays data from 14 articles that represent authors' ideas spanning from 1986 to 2010. The similarities in content are several. Nearly all the authors prescribed steps or stages in the delegating authority process; most prescribed a greater benefit to the organization; most prescribed explicit or implicit communication between delegator and delegatee as a perfunctory part of the process; most prescribed finding the right employee to delegate authority to.

For example, in Table 1 the cells shaded in olive green represent the rhetorical similarity in the advice multiple authors gave their readers (managers) on the aspect of assessment and selection of the right person who can do the job when a manager has decided to delegate authority. It should be noted that in Table 1, three articles represent the contrary account of assessment of persons—meaning when managers violate certain aspects of the process the entire delegation of authority process will fail (Pollock, 1986; Maynard, 1996; & Wilson, 2010).

In the Pollock (1986) column, it is assumed that if a manager has a lack of confidence in the ability of others then a manager who does have confidence in the ability of others will be better able to delegate authority; this is why cell #3 in the Pollock (1986) column is shaded olive green.

In the Maynard (1996) column, insecurity (cell #2) is directly related to not selecting the ideal person, thus, it is shaded as advice on assessment of the right person because this rhetoric resembles the others' rhetoric—although it is an example of what not to do.

Similar is true for the Wilson (2010) column, cell #2. If managers taking the opposite view believe people are ready, then managers will be able to assess and select the right person. These three authors on assessment of persons seem rhetorically similar at the core, but, unique on the surface via stylistic devices and colorful jargon. Nevertheless, over the past 25 years authors seem to be saying similar things on this particular aspect of delegating authority: picking the right person for the task is essential.

In Table 1, cells that are colored light red represent the rhetorical similarity in the advice multiple authors gave their readers (managers) on the aspect of transferable authority and specificity of tasks or assignments when a manager has decided to delegate authority. It should be noted that in Table 1, that nearly all of the 14 articles specifically stated that delegating authority requires that a manager be able to specify transferable authority and carefully communicate the requirements of that authority in the task. Hicks (1988) cell #1 seems to advise on both task specificity and selection of persons in the same sentence, thus, there is a red box within the olive green cell. Also, the span of time among Nesbit (1988), Axley (1992), Brown (1998) and MacKenzie (2003) is 15 years; yet, the rhetorical similarity in advice

given to their readers is nearly identical. This evidence suggests that the old paradigm should be reconfigured.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The Delegation of Authority Process Reconfigured into Four Stages

Delegation involves a manager and a trusted person e.g., *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition* defines delegatee as “one to whom something is delegated.” *Webster’s* defines delegatee as “to entrust to another.” While it is true an organization can delegate to another organization, or a group to another group, this study focused our attention on the managerial transference of temporary authority to another position. Hence, a manager who intends to transfer formal authority in an organization to another position should follow a process that happens, conceptually, in four stages; although, some stages could occur simultaneously. Nevertheless, much of the rhetoric in the trade publications and professional journals spanning 25 years is very similar which justifies a reconfiguration of the old paradigm on delegating authority which incorporates these commonalities—but not necessarily affecting the core maxims of the old delegation process.

In the first stage, the manager must understand what type of authority can be transferred. In the second stage, the manager must locate the best person who can accomplish the assignment. In the third stage, the manager must ask the person to accept or reject the conditions surrounding the assignment. And in the fourth stage, the manager, upon the person’s acceptance, should temporarily transfer authentic authority to the person accepting the assignment, create the responsibility and, trust the delegatee to do the assignment with minimal oversight. These stages are not necessarily done sequentially; for example, a manager (delegator) can select a person, ask if they would accept the responsibility on a job or assignment and then develop the assignment with the delegatee’s input before authority is actually transferred. The reconfigured delegation process is illustrated in Figure 2.

TABLE 1
SELECT TRADE PUBLICATIONS AND ARTICLES ON DELEGATING
AUTHORITY SPANNING 25 YEARS

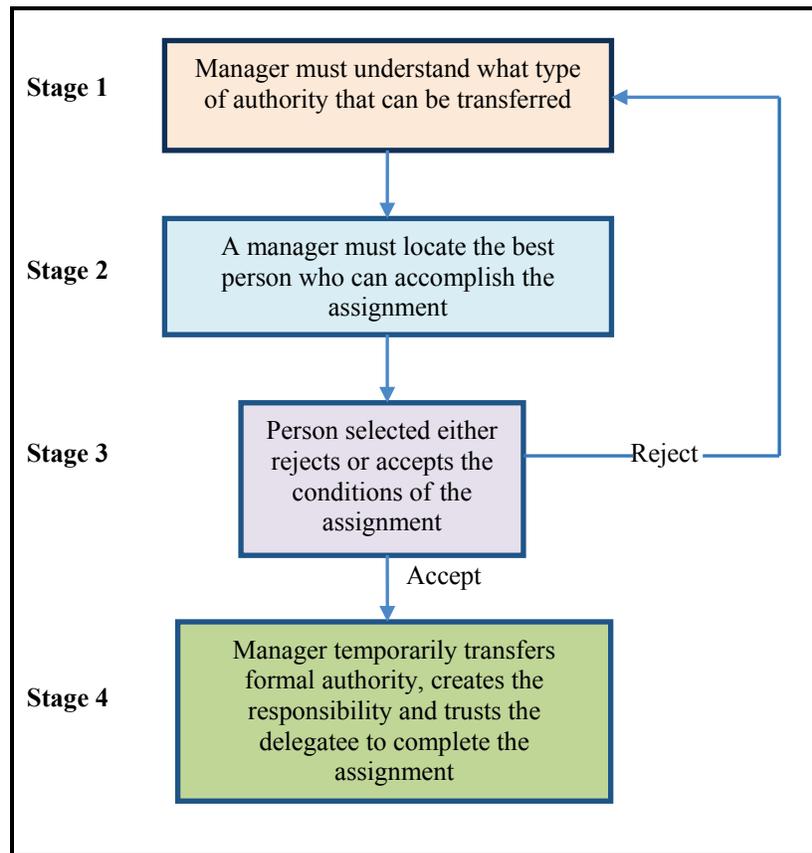
<i>Production</i>	<i>Data Management</i>	<i>The Public Relations Journal</i>	<i>Canadian Banker</i>	<i>CMA</i>	<i>Industrial Management</i>	<i>Nation's Business</i>
Pollock (1986) "Reasons for the failure to delegate include:"	Davidson (1986) "Suggestions to create a climate conducive to a motivated staff include:"	Hicks (1988) "Some signs indicating delegation is needed are: a heavy managerial workload, staff malaise, and failure to break new ground."	Nesbit (1988) "The elements of effective delegation include:"	Masak (1992) "Delegation helps managers challenge, motivate, and develop their staff:"	Axley (1992) "Steps in effective delegation include:"	Maynard (1996) "The most common reasons for not delegating are:"
1. fear of being considered inadequate for the job,	1. offering continuous feedback on a delegated task,	1. The first step in effective delegation is deciding which tasks can be given away and to whom they should be given.	1. communicating the task clearly,	1. The most poorly executed step in delegation is often assignment of the project or task.	1. Define the task.	1. lack of patience,
2. an obsession with perfection,	2. spending extra time with employees who are undertaking new challenges,	2. Next, activities should be prioritized, and finally,	2. scheduling,	2. Managers should focus on the objectives of the complete project, not just the specific tasks.	2. Review and select recipients.	2. insecurity,
3. lack of confidence in the ability of others,	3. assessing an employee's skills, interest, and needs before delegating a task to him, and	3. Staff should be assigned responsibility for each activity.	3. emphasizing results,.	3. Managers should try to negotiate with the employee while ensuring that they maintain a sense of control over the project.	3. Inform and instruct recipients.	3. inadequacy, and
4. reluctance to admit that someone else knows more,	4. offering praise as often as possible and demonstrating confidence in the staff in both words and actions.		4. giving minimal supervision,	4. When assigning the project, managers should attempt to convey their enthusiasm and commitment.	4. Provide follow-up support and communication.	4. occupational hobby
5. fear of not getting credit,			5. delegating entire jobs,		5. Perform final feedback and evaluation.	
6. lack of firmness, and			6. training, and			
7. fear of the progress of a subordinate			7. recognizing jobs well done, 8. absorbing stress, 9. giving sufficient authority, and 10. not limiting delegation to the less desirable jobs.			

TABLE 1
SELECT TRADE PUBLICATIONS AND ARTICLES ON DELEGATING
AUTHORITY SPANNING 25 YEARS (CONTINUED)

<i>Black Enterprise</i>	<i>Executive Excellence</i>	<i>Strategic Finance</i>	<i>SuperVision</i>	<i>Non-Profit World</i>	<i>Employee Relations Today</i>	<i>Inside Public Accounting</i>
Brown (1998) "To make delegation work for you, the following steps are recommended:"	MacKenzie (2003) "To help people succeed, take them through six steps:"	Gunn (2003) "Three keys to delegating decisions are presented:"	Urbaniak (2005) "If you follow these five steps you will greatly improve your skill in delegating:"	Lemberg (2008) "Here are the four keys to successful and effective delegation:"	Myrna (2010) "Delegation and execution can be accelerated with a continuous cycle of four steps:"	Wilson (2010) "The following are seven deadly sins of delegation:"
1. Identify which tasks you should delegate.	1. State the big picture.	1. The first principle of delegation is forbearance - tolerant restraint.	1. Select the job carefully.	1. Give the job to someone who can get it done.	1. agreement,	1. The do it my way syndrome,
2. Assess your staff and list qualified candidates.	2. Give the specific assignment.	2. Besides forbearance, the leader who is adept at delegation has focus.	2. Select the person carefully.	2. Communicate your conditions of satisfaction.	2. accountability,	2. Believing our people are not ready yet.
3. Design a training program.	3. Explain the roles of others.	3. Finally, the leader who delegates effectively ensures that the company's overall tone, or feeling, is positive.	3. Prepare all individuals for change.	3. Work out a plan.	3. action, and	3. Abdicating, not delegating.
4. Schedule a meeting with the selected employee.	4. State reasons for selecting the individual.		4. Turn over the assignment skillfully.	4. Establish a feedback loop. Create some pre-defined mechanism to keep you informed and to give your delegate a way to seek guidance.	4. assessment	4. Not providing clarity or specificity.
5. Know when to call a project back.	5. Explain the next steps.		5. Follow-up soon			5. Lack of communication to others.
	6. Summarize.					6. Taking it back.
						7. Not establishing clear return and report processes

- a) Cells that are colored olive green represent authors' advice to their readers on how they should go about selecting the right person for the task which is similar rhetoric across the various articles and years.
- b) Cells that are colored light red represent author's advice to their readers on how they should go about specifying authority and communicating the specificity of the task/assignment to delegatee.

FIGURE 2
THE DELEGATION PROCESS RECONFIGURED IN FOUR STAGES



Stage 1: Understand the authority that can be transferred.

In the first stage, the manager needs to determine the authority that can be transferred. Managers will always garner authority because of the nature of organizational momentum: rapid change frequently forces managerial action that outpaces job analysis and design. Often, garnered authority is difficult, in some cases impossible, to transfer. Knowing what part of managerial authority can be formally transferred is crucial. Managers must understand there are two types of authority and they will overlap: 1) formal authority—normally written down and associated with formal title and hierarchical position and 2) garnered authority—normally not written down and not necessarily prescribed to a position, but, accompanies the manager who wields incredible power because others’ recognize their garnered authority as legitimate and are willing to act on their commands regardless of formality. Garnered authority is not likely to be transferable.

A manager’s attempts to transfer garnered authority in hierarchical structure transference can be problematic. Too often, managers are prone to engage in work that is not a part of their written, formal job description. Some managers over time blur these lines. And, even though many human resources managers struggle to keep pace, job analysis and descriptions often lag what managers are actually doing. How many times do managers proclaim when they don’t want to do something, “Is this even in my job description?” It is safe to assume managers at all levels will at some point in their careers engage in work not formally described, but which is essential in accomplishing their goals. If a manager wishes to reduce the resistance others will have towards the delegatee concerning the authority that has been transferred,

the delegator should separate formal authority from the authority which has been garnered before moving on to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Define the task and find the right person for the assignment.

In the second stage, the manager must find the right person for the assignment, and determine if the person selected can do the assignment correctly.

Stage 3: Allow the person to reject or accept the conditions of the assignment.

In the third stage, the manager should solicit the person thought to be best suited to do the assignment to either accept or reject the assignment. At this point, the delegation is conditional upon the acceptance. If rejected go back to Stage 1; if accepted go to Stage 4.

Stage 4: Transfers the formal authority, creates the responsibility and allows the delegatee to do the assignment.

In the fourth stage, the manager should, upon acceptance, hand over authority to the delegatee with minimal oversight. This is always easier said than done; some managers have a hard time letting go. Often, these managers are sufferers of a phobia known as “Threat Rigidity.” Now the aforementioned research questions can be answered.

Research Questions Answered

1. “Is all the rhetoric being published on delegating authority the same or different, regardless of the creative licenses authors’ use?” It is slightly different. The 25 years of delegation of authority rhetoric found in 14 professional and trade publications is not exactly the same; however, there is a good deal of rhetorical similarity.
2. “Do these authors use rhetoric to differentiate themselves from reporting on nothing new in the paradigm?” Over the past 25 years the professional and trade publications have published articles that differentiate themselves rhetorically around similar themes, yet, they do echo new views of the core of the paradigm. The old maxims (stages in the process, task assignment, acceptance, trust, etc.) shine in a new light (transfer of authentic authority, clarification of tasks, communication, feedback/feed-forward, real trust in letting go).
3. Finally, “Is there a need to reconfigure the old delegating authority paradigm into a more modern perspective?” Yes. The old delegation paradigm needs adjusting to include many elements imposed on modern managers including competing in global markets using virtual teams.

Limitations and Future Research

One differentiating factor of this study is its use of data collected from professional or trade publications (Western New England University, <http://www1.wne.edu/library/index.cfm?selection=doc.5188>). This data collection choice was deliberate and seemed appropriate for the current study because of its focus on applied learning of delegation principles and how these principles are used by practicing managers working in professions or trades. Additional insight in future research might be achieved through analysis of articles written by academic researchers and subject experts in peer-reviewed journals.

One of the key recent management issues is managing different generations. Future research might focus on whether and how delegation processes might differ between GenX, Baby Boomer, or other generations.

CONCLUSION

When managers learn to transfer certain aspects of their authority, with the realization these transfers do not mean an abdication of their authority, delegation is possible. Authority is having the ability to

make decisions that are binding on others. It may be a surprise to some managers that the reason they fail in delegating authority, no matter how sincere the manager might be, is because they do not understand the process requires trust. They fail because they fail to trust. Remember, delegating means assigning to a subordinate authority to make independent decisions on most of the issues associated with the assignment.

Organizations evolve much quicker than jobs can be analyzed, described and written down, especially in today's globalized world of virtual organizations, and intra-sector collaboration. Therefore, deciding on the assignment to be assigned to another person requires that managers understand clearly what their legitimate authority is as opposed to their derived authority. Opportunities emerge when organizations encounter problems, as do the leaders who exhibit immense power by resolving these dynamic changes and, often with little formal authority. Many managers gain power by knowledge or charisma or both. Some types of authority can never be transferred, regardless of the earnestness of the attempts.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, D. (1992, November). Supervisors and the 'hesitate to delegate' syndrome. *SuperVision*, 53(11), 9-11.
- Axley, S.R. (1992, September). Delegate: Why we should, why we don't and how we can. *Industrial Management*, 34(5), 16-19.
- Babbitt, B. (1987, September). To delegate or not to delegate. *Across the Board*, 24(9), 56.
- Baechler, M. (1996, April). I'm Mary, and I'm a workaholic. *Inc*, 18(5), 29.
- Battles, B. (2005, April). Directing: Accomplishing objectives through delegation and motivation. *Aircraft Maintenance Technology*, 16(5), 38-41.
- Bedi, H. (1994, August). Time for genuine delegation. *Asian Business*, 30(8), 16.
- Brown, M.R. (1998, February). Management by delegation. *Black Enterprise*, 28(7), 76.
- Bushardt, S.C., Glascoff, D.W., Harold, D.D., Frank, M., & Burke, F. (2010). Delegation, authority and responsibility: A reconfiguration of an old paradigm. *Advances in Management*, 3(9), 9-12.
- Caudron, S. (1995, February). Delegate for results. *Industry Week*, 244(3), 27-29.
- Davidson, J.P. (1986, June). Successful staff motivation hinges on enthusiastic delegators. *Data Management*, 24(6), 17.
- Dawson, S.L., & Kleiner, B.H. (1992). Lessons from successful women business leaders. *Equal Opportunities International*, 11(6), 1.
- Douglas, A. (1992, November). Supervisors and the 'hesitate to delegate' syndrome. *SuperVision*, 53(11), 9.
- Dunham, R.B., & Pierce, J.L. (1989). *Management*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman Publishers.
- Gunn, B. (2003). Delegating decisions. *Strategic Finance*, 84(7), 11-12.
- Helpdesk: How to tell your boss to leave you in peace. (2006, March). *TTG, Travel Trade Gazette, U.K. and Ireland*, 45.

- Hicks, N. (1988). How to delegate. *The Public Relations Journal*, 44(6), 31.
- Hughes, L. (2002, January). 9 to 5: If you want something done right, delegate it. *Women in Business*, 54(1), 13.
- Hunter, G. (2008, May). Are you an effective delegator? *Accounting Today*, 22(9), 26.
- Jones, P.A. (1985, December). What it takes to be the boss. *Black Enterprise*, 16(5), 68.
- Korenblat, A. (1994, May). Power to the people. *Inc*, 16(5), 31.
- Lemberg, P. (2008, January). Too much to do: Four keys to effective delegating. *Nonprofit World*, 26(1), 21-22.
- MacKenzie, J. (2003, October). Motivating and delegating. *Executive Excellence*, 20(10), 13.
- Marti, L.A. (2006, October). The joy of delegating. *Taxpro Journal*, 48.
- Masak, I. (1992, October). Dare to delegate. *CMA*, 66(8), 6.
- Master, M. (2001, November). Give it away. *Across the Board*, 38(6), 94.
- Maynard, R. (1996, July). Do you delegate as much as you can? *Nation's Business*, 84(7), 9.
- McConalogue, T. (1993). Real delegation: The art of hanging on and letting go. *Management Decision*, 31(1), 60.
- McMillan, J. & Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.
- Myrna, J. (2010). Strategic delegation: the key to increased productivity and higher performance. *Employment Relations Today*, 37(1), 51.
- Newman, M. (2008, March). At the top, women still can't get a break from stereotypes. *The Times Higher Education Supplement: THE*, (1836), 8.
- Nisbet, M.A. (1988, September). The art of delegation. *Canadian Banker*, 95(5), 36-39.
- Peters, T. (2002, April). Tom Peters revisited: The difficult art of delegating. *Office Solutions*, 19(4), 51-52.
- Pollock, T. (1986, December). Don't let emotions get in the way of delegation. *Production*, 98(6), 33.
- Protch, O. (2006, April). Delegation of authority. *SuperVision*, 67(4), 12-14.
- Staw, B.M., Sandelands, L.E., & Dutton, J.E. (1981). Threat-rigidity effects in organizational behavior: A multilevel analysis. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 26, 501-524.
- Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Urbaniak, A. (2005, April). Giving others authority. *SuperVision*, 66(4), 3-5.

Wilson, J. (2010, April). Consultant's Forum - The seven deadly sins of delegation. *Inside Public Accounting*, 24(4), 10-11.

Zhang, S., Tremaine, M., Egan, R., Milewski, A., O'Sullivan, P., & Fjermestad, J. (2009). Occurrence and effects of leader delegation in virtual software teams. *International Journal of E-Collaboration*, 5(1), 47-68.