

## Learn to Delegate and Free Yourself Up

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**My partner's caught up in details. She won't let go. We don't have time to work on where the business is going. She ends up working really long hours, and expecting me to do the same. I don't see this ending up well, and I'm running out of patience.**

**Thoughts of the Day:** It's important to periodically step back and look at what's going on. Often it seems easier to "do it myself" versus training someone else. Delegation can be scary. Change will take time to implement.

Draw a map of the company's functions: sales, finance, marketing, operations, human resources, leadership. Put down on paper the tasks required in each area. Match people to the tasks - as things stand today. Identify several areas where the owners are currently assigned to tasks, and others could be trained to take over.

Start with a list of people inside the company who could pull extra duty. Identify tasks that could be grouped together and turned into a job for someone yet to be hired. Consider which tasks could be handled by professionals who come in to work part time.

Tasks such as bookkeeping, personnel, marketing campaigns, shipping, receiving and inventory management, are all ripe for vending out. Break out big subjects, such as sales and operations, into smaller parts and look for opportunity to hire part timers. Lead generation, customer service and production assistance are three common areas where part time help can make a big impact.

Many people hesitate to delegate in the mistaken belief that no one can do the task as well. They think it would be faster to just do the task, than it would be to train someone else. That's usually only true the first time. The second time the task needs to be done, and the third, and the fourth, valuable time is wasted doing a repetitive task that someone else could have learned to handle.

Some people won't delegate because they fear the person they're training will make mistakes. That's true, the person learning the task will make mistakes. And they'll have to learn how to recover - just like the owner did when he or she first learned how to do the task. It's okay to make mistakes - that's how companies learn to innovate.

Helping someone else step in will take time, practice, and oversight. But eventually the partner is freed up to work on higher level tasks. So build a list of activities that the partner could / should get to, but lacks time to do so. Have a vision of where this delegation / training process is headed, that benefits both the partner and the business.

Sometimes partners don't make time to work on the business because they're afraid of what they might discover - the business isn't growing enough, isn't profitable enough. Other times, the owner sees himself or herself as too essential to the tasks at hand - no one else could do it as well. In some cases, the owners simply lack the skills to pull back and make time to work on the business.

Start out with incremental changes. Insist on a twice weekly 1 hour meeting to discuss the business, where it is, where it's going. Spend time planning the future of the business, what it will look like, what it will need. Discuss challenges that have come up during the past week / month, and what to do about them. End the meeting at the 1 hour mark, and get back to day-to-day work.

Set goals and build a budget to pay for the additional help you need. Figure out how many more customers it will take to pay for the help. Keep notes about each meeting, to use the next time you get together. Practice lifting your partners' sights to a higher point on the horizon - where you both end up out of the day to day, enjoying the business more.

Looking for a good book? *The Partnership Charter: How To Start Out Right With Your New Business Partnership (or Fix The One You're In)*.

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