



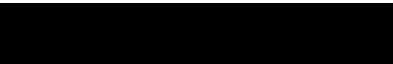
## Delegating Well: An Essential Guide to Stop Sweating the Small Stuff

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I am the current Managing Partner of WeirFoulds LLP, a law firm located in downtown Toronto, the professionals of which are evenly divided between litigators and business lawyers. As the managing partner, I am keeping a lot of balls in the air at the same time – managing my firm (or herding cats as they say), while simultaneously managing my clients and their expectations – that’s a lot of management. There are about 100 lawyers at WeirFoulds, numerous paralegals and clerks and an administrative staff that keeps everything running smoothly. In my practice area, I have 4 colleagues and 2 clerks who work with me. In addition, I am the lead lawyer on about 8 different RFP files. I also spend a portion of my time writing articles, giving speeches, attending conferences, etc. In other words, I work a lot – but I do try and get home every day around 7 or 7:30 and try not to work in the evening. I try never to work on the weekend.

How is all of this accomplished? I would like my colleagues to think it is because I am superwoman, but the older I get, the more difficult that line is to sell. The reality is that I have learned some skills that in some respects I now consider more important than any others - I prioritize, I compartmentalize, and most importantly, I delegate.

Let’s begin with the managing partner portion of my responsibilities. I did not have a business background when I commenced the practice of law. Over the course of my practice, I have learned certain basic business skills – how to read financial statements, how to prepare a budget, how to spend money (well, to be candid, I have been adept at spending money since I was a teenager) and how to manage costs. But my understanding of tax and accounting is really rather limited – I rely on accountants and tax specialists for advice. In fact, I rely on advice from a pretty broad cross section of professionals in my management position – administrative, financial, marketing, human resources, library services, associate and student development – to name a few. I also read everything I can get my hands on about the business of law. I am a relatively quick study (don't we all have to be?), and I believe that I know enough to ask the right questions and, hopefully, recognize the "icebergs" floating around so that I don't steer this ship into any of them. With respect to those professionals on which I rely, I listen to their advice and empower them to do their jobs because I have made every effort to hire them judiciously. I

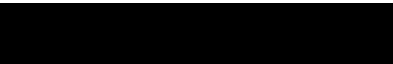


delegate to them the responsibilities in respect of which they have far better expertise than I. Over and above that; I delegate certain tasks to other of my managing partners and my administrative staff.

Insofar as my practice is concerned, I do not work alone. My colleagues – comprised of partners, associates, paralegals and assistants - are a team working in the service of our clients. We meet formally every month. We share war stories, we discuss new cases (which a student or an associate reviews), we consider client development initiatives, etc. I have been doing this for 20 years. So my juniors are now partners, who have juniors. We endeavour to teach all members of our team how to work efficiently, to use the technology that we have, and to think for themselves. We have been methodical about creating precedents and materials that we consider reliable in our area of practice. And on a daily basis, I meet with my colleagues and we chat; we check in with one another to make sure that the flow of work is being delegated to those who are best able to service the particular needs of the client.

Which is to say, we mentor and build teams so that we can delegate responsibilities to them easily and we don't have to do everything ourselves. We delegate to them not just the work that they do, but the responsibility to become better at it and to understand and service their clients better. We delegate not just because we don't have the time to do it ourselves, but because delegating provides an essential learning opportunity and enables others to achieve more (subject to oversight and guidance).

If there is one thing of which I am certain – delegation alone is not enough. The art of delegation is more complicated than empowerment – it demands that I follow up to see what is going with respect to those tasks that have been delegated. I am able to hive off tasks (compartmentalize various aspects of my various jobs, if you will) and sleep at night because I am always endeavouring to make sure that what has been delegated is being completed and being completed responsibly. In that regard, I check my blackberry 24/7 and I make lists constantly. Also, like you, I receive about 200 emails daily, but by the end of the day, I try and leave the office with no more than 3 or 4 in my in box. I go through them as a priority – and prioritizing what needs to be done every day is the first building block of delegating. If you don't prioritize, then you really can't sit down and figure out what it is you must do each day and what it is that you don't need to do, and what it is that someone else can do for you or is better able to do.



Second – once you delegate you need to communicate. To the person to whom you have delegated work; the timelines that are relevant to the performance of the work, the extent to which you expect them to interact directly with the client, the extent to which you expect them to report back to you. You cannot delegate into an abyss without calling your insurer first.

Finally, it is important that your clients and your colleagues know you are delegating. Clients like nothing less than having their work managed by strangers. In my experience, you had better let your clients and your colleagues know that you are delegating certain aspects of your job to others. The one essential fact about delegating – you can delegate the task but you can never abdicate the accountability for that task.

These are the general building blocks of my work as both a lawyer and managing partner.

I would be remiss if I did not add that for me it is equally important that I have a personal life, and I can only manage that if I delegate at home as well. My family understands that I am an ambitious, hardworking woman. And that means that my children have to be independent, and take initiative on their own. It means that my husband has assumed responsibility at home for a combination of tasks that he is best suited to perform (mostly dealing with cars(both buying and driving), home repair and lawn care, about which I know nothing and have no interest whatsoever). Those things that he does poorly – like organizing agendas and the food shopping (does he really do them badly or would he just prefer that I do those things? I will never know), he has delegated to me.

I truly believe that nothing made me better qualified and better trained for management and practicing law than having a family. It taught me to prioritize, not to sweat the small stuff, to seek balance, to compartmentalize so that the problems I have at work don't spill over into my personal life, and, perhaps most importantly, given me conflict resolution skills that have made me better at all of my jobs. What it didn't teach me was how to delegate. That I had to learn on my own.