
An Effective Public Works Leader Delegates



Public works leaders are busy people and finding ways to effectively handle the mountain of work is a critical skill. When people try to do everything, they often become exhausted and ineffective managers. By engaging the team, managers can dramatically increase their effectiveness. Many try to do everything themselves, effectively hoarding work. They believe that if they can do the job well and do it right, why delegate?

A public works manager's job is to manage work. The town expects the department to get things done and the volume of work is generally too great for one person to do alone. Therefore, the ability to delegate effectively is an essential skill for the public works leader and manager.

Effective delegation requires a combination of several core competencies.

- Communications Skills,
- Responsibility, and
- Managing Resources.

Communication skills are essential to effective delegation. One must clearly articulate their desired outcomes. When the mission is misunderstood valuable time and effort are lost. Even though poor communication is the issue, this causes some to revert back to "I should have done it myself."

Responsibility. Delegation does not mean that work is passed on and never thought of again. It requires monitoring and reviewing work to ensure the task is progressing as directed. If the manager is

asked about the status of a delegated project or task they need to know the answer. "I gave it to Bob" is not an acceptable response. The delegator has a duty to touch base with "Bob" occasionally to know the status of the work.

Managers are responsible to ensure delegated work is done effectively and correctly. Check on the progress, identifying mid-course corrections that may be needed. It is necessary to track delegated tasks. Some managers may want to use tracking software, others a handwritten list.

Managing resources is akin to delegation and leadership. Effectively managing a team of people is critical to providing quality services to the community. Delegation empowers others and builds teams with every success. Delegation is an indication of trust as the manager sends the message that the employee is trusted to do a good job. Over time, this helps employees to build confidence and become more skilled members of the team.

Through delegation, public works leaders can maintain balance with home, work, and community responsibilities. Learning to delegate is challenging. The ability to "let go" and the wisdom to know when to do this are important skills that take practice and perseverance. It is a valuable tool to build the skills and confidence of staff.

Source;
Hann, Susan, APWA Reporter, January 2005, pg 32-33

NH Local Government Conference Sessions

These are a few of the public works sessions scheduled for the Local Government conference on November 17th.

- New Hampshire Public Works Association: *Zakim Bridge & Wetlands*
- New Hampshire Mutual Aid: *Transportation Security Awareness*