



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
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UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand Business First 2020

Workshop Report

Letting go:

Effective delegation for enhanced decision making

Following a workshop 27 July 2020, facilitated by

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20 August 2020

Executive Summary

This report summarises the recent *NZ Business First Workshop for 2020*, titled “*Letting go: Effective delegation for enhanced decision making*” hosted by the Massey Business School, to engage local businesses. The initiative seeks to assist business leaders to highlight business problems and seek practical solutions in their pursuit of business excellence and sustainable competitive advantage.

The workshop was attended by 14 business owners and/or business managers from the Manawatu, Wanganui and Wairarapa and led by Massey Business School’s Associate Head of School of Management, Beth Tootell. Four Massey Business School staff were in attendance – Tanya Jurado, James Lockhart, Wayne Macpherson, and Jennifer Scott.

To date, this initiative has delivered four workshops. Two exploratory workshops in 2019 and two dedicated workshops in 2020 provided key outcomes, being:

- Discovery of common themes of concern among businesses in attendance
- Realisation of the potential for integration of Massey internship students with businesses
- Request for practical problem identification and solving led by Massey Business School, where businesses have tangible outputs to implement post-workshop
- Massey-led workshop development to provide facilitated discussion for actions and supplementary resources, which individual businesses can tailor as required:
 - (Delivered) Business models: Developing tailored business models and plans to work for you
 - (Delivered) Letting go: Effective delegation for enhanced decision making
 - (Planned) Working *on* your business: Identifying and leveraging opportunities to execute strategic moves
 - (Planned) Reflections for excellence: Review, refine, and next steps

Notable highlights from this workshop included:

- Effective delegation can enable business owners/managers the time and focus to work on their business rather than *in* their business (and can be more cost effective in the long run).
- Delegation can happen for differing levels of *authority* and *responsibility*, though the person delegating still has overall *accountability*. Understanding and choosing the right level is what will make delegation effective.
- Selecting the ‘right’ person for the job, explaining why you are delegating, providing appropriate resources and training, checking in and providing feedback (without micro-managing) are practical actions that will support effective delegation.
- Creating an environment/culture where people can speak up and approach you without hesitation and recognising that mistakes will happen no matter how hard you try to avoid them are elements of delegation to value and acknowledge.

1. Businesses in Attendance

Across the *NZ Business First* workshops to date, the following business have been represented:

Business	Sector	2019 Exploratory Workshops	2020 Dedicated Workshops
AFC Motorcycles	Powersports Products		✓
Ali Arc Industries	Structural Metal Fabrication	✓	✓
Avatar Honey	Honey Production	✓	
BakerAg	Agricultural Services		✓
Betacraft NZ	Workwear	✓	
Business Central	Business Development		✓
CEDA	Economic Development	✓	✓
Carousel Confectionary	Confectionery Manufacturing	✓	✓
Dowdeswell's Derlphinium	Horticulture	✓	✓
Education & Training Consultants	Education & Training		✓
Gallagher Fuel Systems	Fuel Dispensing Systems	✓	
Garden Barn	Garden Supplies		✓
GasNet	Gas Delivery		✓
Genoese Foods	Food Preparation		✓
Gillard Honey	Honey Production	✓	
Gropak	Agricultural Services	✓	✓
Henergy	Poultry Products	✓	
OBO	Sports Protection	✓	✓
Palliser Estate	Winery		✓
Prepack	Packaging	✓	✓
Property Brokers	Real Estate		✓
Quest Industries	Plastic Moulding	✓	✓
Speirs Foods	Food Preparation	✓	✓
Steelfort	Machinery & Equipment	✓	✓
Tasman Tanning	Leather Products	✓	✓
Turks Poultry Farm	Poultry	✓	

2. Workshop Summary

Associate Head of School of Management, Beth Tootell, led this workshop guiding attendees through consideration of why delegation is important, what types of tasks can be delegated, different levels of delegated authority and responsibility, and challenges associated with delegation. Attendees were challenged to consider what they would like to (or should) delegate, what is currently stopping them from delegating, why they are not currently delegating certain (types of) tasks. Through facilitated discussions, attendees also considered delegation 'failures' and strategies for effective delegation within their own business.

Through small table and broader group discussions, attendees considered delegation as the assignment of authority to another person (normally a subordinate) to carry out specific activities or tasks, while the person delegating remains accountable for the outcome of the delegated work.

2.1. Why delegate?

Key points in **support** of delegation included:

- Delegation empowers a subordinate to make decisions, builds trust within a team, and assists with professional development. It also helps you learn how to identify who is best suited to tackle different tasks or projects.
- People working for you will be able to develop new skills and gain knowledge, which prepares them for more responsibility in the future. It also provides them a clear signal that you respect their abilities and trust their discretion.
- Employees who feel they are trusted and respected then to have higher levels of commitment to their work, organisation, and managers.
- Delegation is important for leaders/owners/senior managers because they cannot (and should not) do everything themselves; effective delegation will help lighten your workload.

2.2. Challenges with delegation

However, the **challenges** with delegating are valid and need to be recognised:

- The time it takes to train someone on a new task (if they will not be repeating the task). However, if they will be repeating the task (or similar) then over time, the amount of time you will dedicate to that task (or one that requires similar skill, authority, or responsibility) will decrease.
- The cost of hiring someone additional if there is currently no workload available within personnel to delegate
- The person who should/could delegate is reluctant to have someone else undertake the task because:
 - they might see it as a sign of weakness (instead it is actually a sign of a strong leader)
 - they think they can do the task better than anyone else (be careful of such a bias – it could be a sign that there is room for improvement relating to trust within a team)
 - they are nervous about letting go (accepting you cannot do everything yourself is important) or giving up being the 'go-to' expert (remind yourself that your team wants to do good work and be successful too)

2.3. Effective delegation

Attendees participated in discussions about **when** delegation is appropriate, including the **which tasks** should be delegated, and were introduced to ten **levels** of delegation.

2.3.1. Types of tasks

Recognising that a common barrier to delegation is that leaders are often unsure of **which** tasks they should or should not be delegating, the workshop provided an opportunity to begin auditing tasks to help determine which can or should be delegated.

- **Tiny tasks** are little things that only take a small amount of time to complete but add up over time. These might be things an assistant could do: scheduling meetings, booking flights for business trips, or deleting spam/marketing emails from your inbox.
- **Tedious tasks** are mindless tasks, such as copying and pasting lead information from your marketing automation tool to your CRM. Tedious tasks require little skill and can be easily delegated.
- **Time-consuming tasks** are opportunities to break work into smaller chunks and delegate portions of the work to others. If you perform a task regularly that takes a lot of time, look for opportunities to hand off segments of that task to others.
- **Teachable tasks:** Do you have tasks on your plate that you could easily teach someone else to complete? If a task is entirely teachable—if it does not require expertise that only you can provide—it is a worthwhile candidate for delegation.
- **Terrible at:** Maybe you have no design skills, so it takes you six times as long to create graphics for your blog posts as it would a professional designer. It is better to delegate that task to someone who's more equipped to do the work quickly and well.
- **Time-sensitive tasks:** Maybe it would be better if you handled all of the tasks belonging to a time-sensitive project, but if you won't have time to complete it doing it all on your own, it's time to find ways to delegate parts of that task to other members of your team.

2.3.2. Levels of delegation

It is important to ask the other person what level of authority they feel comfortable being given. Some people are confident; others less so. It is your responsibility to agree with them on what level of freedom is most appropriate so that the job is done effectively and with minimal unnecessary involvement from you. Involving the other person in agreeing on the level of delegated freedom for any particular responsibility is an essential part of the 'contract' that you make with them.

These levels of delegation are not an exhaustive list. They are nuanced and complex which is why it is important to take time to discuss and adapt the agreements that you make with people regarding these delegated tasks, responsibilities and freedoms according to the situation and each person.

Each example statement below is simplified for clarity; in reality, you would choose a less abrupt style of language, depending on the person and the relationship. At the very least, a "Please" and "Thank-you" would be included in the requests.

1. **"Wait to be told." or "Do exactly what I say." or "Follow these instructions precisely."** These are all examples of instructions with no delegated freedom at all.
2. **"Look into this and tell me the situation. I'll decide."** This is asking for investigation and analysis but no recommendation. The person delegating retains responsibility for assessing options prior to making the decision.
3. **"Look into this and tell me the situation. We'll decide together."** This level of delegation encourages and enables the analysis and decision to be a shared process, which can be very helpful in coaching and development.

4. **"Tell me the situation and what help you need from me in assessing and handling it. Then we'll decide."** This opens the possibility of greater freedom for analysis and decision-making, subject to both people agreeing this is appropriate.
5. **"Give me your analysis of the situation (reasons, options, pros and cons) and recommendation. I'll let you know whether you can go ahead."** Asks for analysis and recommendation, but you will check the thinking before deciding.
6. **"Decide and let me know your decision, then wait for my go-ahead before proceeding."** The other person is trusted to assess the situation and options. Additionally, they are deemed competent enough to decide and implement too, however, for reasons of task importance or perhaps externally changing factors, the boss maintains the control of timing.
7. **"Decide and let me know your decision, then go ahead unless I say not to."** Now the other person begins to control the action. The default is now positive rather than negative. This is a very liberating change in delegated freedom.
8. **"Decide and take action - let me know what you did (and what happened)."** This level enables a degree of follow-up by the manager as to the effectiveness of the delegated responsibility, which is necessary when people are being managed from a greater distance, or more 'hands-off'.
9. **"Decide and take action. You do not need to check back with me."**
The most freedom that you can give to another person when you still need to retain responsibility for the activity. Feedback and review remain helpful and important, although the relationship is more likely one of mentoring, rather than coaching per se.
10. **"Decide where action needs to be taken and manage the situation accordingly. It's your area of responsibility now."** The most freedom that you can give to the other person. Often this shift to a strategic responsibility occurs with a formal change of a person's job role.

As a summary of 'how to delegate tasks effectively'

- ✓ Choose the right person for the job
- ✓ Explain why you're delegating
- ✓ Provide the right instructions
- ✓ Provide resources and training
- ✓ Delegate responsibility AND authority
- ✓ Check the work and provide feedback
- ✓ Say thank you

2.4. Delegation 'failures'

Attendees were also encouraged to consider and reflect on a delegation that might have not gone according to plan, by considering:

- What was the task?
- What happening before delegating the task?
- What happened during the delegation of the task?
- What happened after the delegation of the task?
- What would you do differently?

As a reminder:

- Mistakes are going to happen no matter how hard you try to avoid them
- Very few mistakes are fatal, and/or irreversible
- Mistakes most often can be turned into opportunities and teachable moments
- An environment that fosters people making mistakes, and allowing for growth and change, is the best of environments in which to grow
- Pressure and stress, in the right measure, usually brings out the best in people
- Know how to push and pull, and more importantly, create an environment where they can come to you without hesitation if something goes wrong

3. Proposed Next Steps

This workshop was the second in a series of four workshop planned for 2020. Noting the changes to timing due to COVID-19 disruptions this year, the next two workshops are proposed:

Workshop	Overview	Tangible Takeaway	Logistics
Working on your business: Identifying and leveraging opportunities to execute strategic moves	<p>Massey-led workshop focusing on opportunity identification and taking calculated risks for strategic moves.</p> <p>Recognising that there will be a 'new normal' for businesses post-COVID, you will consider how to identify and leverage opportunities for innovation and competition.</p>	At the end of the session you will have the ability to recognise potential opportunities for your business and be able to prioritise which areas to focus on to develop strategically.	<p>Date TBC – late Sept/Early Oct</p> <p>1:00 – 5:00pm</p> <p>Afternoon tea provided</p>
Reflections for excellence: Review, refine, and next steps	<p>Massey-led session to review your business growth and development, achievements, and recognise areas for continued improvement.</p> <p>As a broader group, there will be opportunity to suggest plans for the following year and review how the facilitated sessions throughout the year impacted your business/operations.</p>	At the end of the session you will have conducted a review of your business, and its performance related to the key areas of workshop focus this year.	<p>Late Nov/Early Dec?</p> <p>4:00 – 6:00pm</p> <p>facilitated session with nibbles and drinks provided</p>

4. Thank you

We would like to thank you for your continued participation in these workshops, and welcome any feedback, comments, ideas, or questions you may have. Please note, if there are any issues or amendments required, we would greatly appreciate your feedback on this report. Feel free to contact the group via Dr Wayne Macpherson, W.Macpherson@massey.ac.nz.