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How to Delegate – Three L's Shar McBee

Shar McBee is a motivational speaker and the bestselling author of *To Lead is to Serve – How to Attract Volunteers & Keep Them*.

If Elizabeth tells me she needs to “delegate” one more time, I am going to bolt! Elizabeth and I serve on a committee together. As chair, she started out enthusiastically. Now she’s wondering why no one else has volunteered to help.

Delegate does not mean dump. Delegate means to empower, to entrust. Unfortunately, when Elizabeth says she wants to delegate, she actually means she has taken on too much and wants to get it off her plate and onto mine. It’s become a child’s game of hot potato.

Why would anyone want to take on a burden? On the other hand, if the project is exciting, rewarding and fun, who wouldn’t want to join in? (Remember Tom Sawyer painting the fence.)

The next time you are required to delegate, consider this: People aren’t looking for ways to give up their time, but they are looking for ways to enrich their lives. Question yourself: What drew you to the project in the beginning? What is valuable about the mission? Where’s the joy? Offer an opportunity to do something great and use the Three L’s to delegate.

Look for Good People

You don’t want people to be growling through their tasks. You want people who will gleefully participate. Pay attention at meetings. Stand off to the side and see who is energetic in one direction or another and who just wants to get through with it.

Cub Scout leader Steven Gay says, “If you are in charge of the yearly camp-out, you’ll find that some people really like to camp and some people really don’t like to camp. The goal is not to force the people who don’t like to camp into camping. The goal is a high quality program. So pick individuals who are enthusiastic about camping and it will go off like clockwork.”

Listen to Them

Mary Castleberry has recruited a legion of volunteers for her church. She says, “Learn what people need from you before you try to delegate to them. By listening first, you learn what they like to do and what they want to do. Then delegate things to them that they like and want to do.”

Let Them Shine

Give credit to others. Steven Gay says, “It makes them feel more important and gives them a feeling of fulfillment. Of course, when they look good, it makes you look good too. In the meantime, it frees you up to concentrate on organizing the whole project.”