

Transcription - Delegation

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. As you know, in the past I have railed against certain words in the management framework, she's already laughing, goals, targets, but one that was brought to my attention more recently is about the word delegation.

We've used delegation as a freedom agent, I suppose. For a long, long time in management speak, we have encouraged people to delegate. We've said this is how you can develop your team, this is how you can make them better, this is how you can free up your time to do the things that you're best at, all of the time we've used that word.

Over time, as with many things, it has come to have something, I feel, of a negative connotation. To delegate something means, to me let's be clear, to hand it off to someone because I haven't got time or I haven't got the inclination or I just don't want to do it. And now I'm going to delegate it to you because it will make me feel better. It's all about me.

Now we've heard quite a number of people over the last 12 months talk about servant leadership and talk about doing the best you can to make others do the best. That resonates with me because as you might have heard in some of the other podcasts, that my core value. My core value is being able to empower others to be the best that they can be. So my ruling out of the word delegation from now on is that I won't be using the word delegation but I'll be thinking of it in terms of who not how. So I'm not going to think about how can this task be done, how can I meet this deadline, how can this happen? I'm going to think about who can do it. First and foremost, if I think of it in that way, I'm not thinking about handing off a task. I'm thinking about giving someone else an opportunity. So it's about focus on developing someone else. I feel more comfortable about doing it because it meets my core values, my core needs of empowering these people. It gives me the opportunity of not just handing off tasks to someone whose always done it before or someone who I think might benefit from being able to do it, but I think who can do it best or who can learn from this task or who has the resources to do it and it means the focus is not on the task, but it's on the person.

So it becomes more about that leadership, that servant leadership, the team building, the team bonding, whatever else it is. For me it feels like it's going to be a better way to manage the resources and to manage the task, to manage the deadlines, all of those things.

I do like the idea of the "who" not the "what" for a number of reasons. If you focus on how, then you really don't need anyone because you think you've got all the answers. This is what needs to be done. This is how you would do it and you do it. To me, that's a waste of energy and resources and certainly nobody has the answers to everything.

With the who, you are really doing your job properly as a leader because you pick the best person for the job and it's a good point Kim made about saying not because they've always done it before and they're already proven. It's because you believe this person can do it, even though they haven't done it before and because they have exhibited some traits, skills, in other projects that they made it work. You have confidence they'll work here. So what you're doing then is you're saying I believe you can do it and I know that I'm here to back you and I'm here to support you in that sense. So what you're doing there is you're building that confidence.

As Simon Sinek is saying, it's our job as leaders to do that and guess what? Even if that person didn't get it right and they fell on some part of it, that's good, help them get up again. They're already stronger because of it and then they might fall again on another part. Great, that's what you're there for, to help them get up again. So, what you're doing then, is you're concentrating on you are getting the results and you getting the best results, you're getting your team to continuously learn and grow and see themselves and recognize their own values, the same as you value them. You absolutely doing your role, because that's what you're there for. More importantly, you're going to have a diverse team, a multi-skilled team that can grow, learn and learn other things, so that they can get you more results. It can only be a win. It's best for them, whether they work for you or someone else, they're growing and it's going to help them. So, I don't see anything but positiveness about that approach.

I'll give you two examples that helped reinforce this for me, that happened yesterday. Fulyana understands that I'm reasonably technically adept but I work with someone who is incredibly technically adept as she knows. He always says, you know, if you have a problem just let me know, I'll fix it. But he's also incredibly busy and I hesitate about asking him because I feel like it's interrupting the commitments and things that he's got to do. So I will persevere with trying to find a solution and those of you who have some degree of technology and knowledge will resonate with this. You look at an issue that might happen on the computer and this was about a whole range of websites I have, half of them updated and half of them didn't. I thought well, I don't understand

why this happened, I should have a look at it and I was doing the "how", how am I going to fix this? How am I going to make this right? And I laboured and laboured over it and in the end I sat back and I thought who else can help me with these, who else can fix this because I don't know what to do next. It was obviously the person I work with or it was the place where the websites get hosted who have a good reputation for support. I still hesitated because like everyone else, I don't want to look like an idiot. I don't want to look like I can't do it, there's probably a simple solution. Really that's all about me and what do I want? I want this resolved, so "who" can help me, not "how" am I trying to do it.

I put in the support ticket to where the websites are hosted and it was fixed within half an hour. They didn't ask any questions, just said we're happy to help anytime you need it, let us know if that hasn't resolved it. I came away thinking it's done, it's fixed. It was painless, I didn't have to interrupt the other person, it just all falls into place. Great reinforcement of "who" not "how". I didn't need to know how to do this, I just needed to find someone who could do. It didn't cost me anything. I don't have an enormous team so I have to look at other ways of doing things. It's not always going to be someone who's there on a hand.

Within 12 hours, I found another issue on the website and so this time I don't hesitate about "who". I don't think about "how", I just think I know "who", I'll go to them. What's interesting this second time is that you go into different levels of support. Entry level is level one support, they looked at it and within half an hour sent an email back saying I'm going to have to escalate this to level two support. So already they're thinking "who" not "how". They're not doing the "how". They have already determined it's beyond what they can do. Their first response is, not try harder, not work harder, but "who" else can help with the situation. They escalated the issue to level 2 support, it gets fixed within another half an hour and again, the email that says always happy to help, let us know if you have any other problems.

So it's about that reinforcement that taking the step away. Had I asked the business partner to look at it, I would have been delegating. I would be handing over my problem to him. This way, looking at "who" can help me, gave me to solutions faster and easier and reinforced that was the right place for the "who". If it hadn't been resolved, I would look for another "who", so it doesn't matter if the first "who" doesn't work, it's about that approach of looking for "who not how" to do it. Not how is it going to happen but who is going to do it? Who is going to make it happen?

It's actually expanding the number of options you have for the future. So you have more than one "who". It's the same as the example before it. By having

someone new doing this particular project is that then you have two people who are already experienced in and proven performance. So again you have who, who, who. And every time you pick a different "who" you're getting new thinking, you're getting new innovation and new approach. By doing that, all we are doing is getting better.

So we encourage you to think about "who not how" and remove the "d" word from your management speak. (Sometimes.) I'll be delegating some tasks to herself shortly! (She also got the power of technology so she'll cut that bit out!) She might, she might not. There are some listeners who enjoy....

For now, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.