

Transcription - Case Study: Overwhelmed But Cant Delegate

Welcome back, I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec. We have a case study for you today, and I will read the case study and then Fulyana is going to talk about it first up.

"I am overwhelmed and feel that my job is beyond me, but I am in a senior position where both the business management and direction are my responsibility. I'm not comfortable delegating".

Well, two things, the first two words, well, the first two things, one is I am overwhelmed, big red flag, but glad that you, the person, recognize it. That's a good thing because that can lead to solution and we go from there. The other one is about not comfortable with delegation. We need to explore that.

Firstly, in relation to being overwhelmed, the alarms go off straight away because having, sadly, exposure to a lot of senior positions and people, it will lead to burnout. If you don't address it, it will lead to burnout. We don't want that. Obviously, in this case, hopefully we get it in time. In relation to not comfortable with delegation, need to explore that and be honest again, write it down and say, why don't I feel comfortable with delegation? And some of the things that I have come across in my experience when we discuss that topic with different people is because nobody could do it as good as I can. That's one, even though they don't say it that way, but that's the outcome. The other one is to say, basically, I don't want to be delegating because people think, oh, he or she can't do their job. I feel like, inadequate, and I should be doing that. No, I am not giving it to someone else.

The other one is, in the past when I delegated, it backfired big time. And therefore, I'm always scared. I tried it and it didn't work. I don't want to repeat that mistake.

Let's talk about the delegation aspect of it. The fact that you had those experiences, that's fine. Delegation is not one size fits all. I'm delegating something to someone. There is a way I would delegate to person A, to person B. It depends on a whole lot of things. One of them is person and job fit. Firstly, is it something that person has never done before? This is good to grow your skillset. It's good to be a win-win. There's a whole lot of things about delegation that we could talk about for hours about how to do that. You've got to take away from your mind a bit about, if I'm delegating, it looks like I'm not doing it and I'm not good enough.

You're in a senior role. Your role is to grow others. Your role is to make sure that the leadership is right by making sure that there is no single people dependencies. That includes you as the leader. And therefore, you need to encourage as much as teach.

If you are that sort of perfectionist, which is understandable, you can get them to do it and allow them to put their stamp on it. But show them how to do it at high standards. So again, it's really a leadership role and it's not just delegation and saying, "I don't want to do this, you do it." I don't want to talk about you anymore. You're running the show rather than about you doing tasks or one of the tasks.

So to me, that's really important.

The other thing is that when you're talking about why are you doing so many things that you are not doing your real job. And if you have tasks that other team members can do or should

do, then you're not doing what you're supposed to do. The strategic thing, the growing the business. As I said, the leadership, the bit that you encourage, you mentor and develop your people. So that's really important.

If after you thought about all of those and you have one of those personalities, which is not going to listen to any of that, no matter how many facts we show you and how many examples of why this will work, then you need to do something else.

You need to, well, firstly, I suggest you get yourself a mentor or a coach to help you get over that because that's something you really need to work on. Otherwise, you're going to burn out and we don't want that.

In relation to how to manage it, why don't you look at your structure then? Why don't you have a look at the different jobs, roles and responsibilities. And if you look at them, it seems to me like you draw out responsibilities, seems like a long list of tasks that take up more than 80% and leave you with less than 20% to lead. So why don't you look at that and see how is best to rethink that? Who should be doing what and why not because we've always done it that way and not because all this, it's like that. or he doesn't have the skills. Build it around people, build it around the organization, about getting the results, build it and if the person in a job needs to be helped or mentored or trained or or whatever it is into growing some new skills, that's on the allocated draw. That's great. Do it because everybody wins because they grow and they can do more and then they can come and do your job.

You've got to do it so that you build the team and build it for the future and it's not about you and your image. In fact, you are doing your image disservice by hanging on and somebody seeing you, you're working 24 hours and doing tasks that you shouldn't be. That's not very good. That's not a good image to have.

I will put the links to a couple of our guests that we've had. We've had a few talk about servant leadership and that, I think, is very important for you to understand as a concept, but also more recently towards the end of 2024, we talked to Tammy Alvarez and she gave an example, from her own experience, of how she had a team that were all geographically dispersed in many countries around the world, all doing a range of tasks that were related to that particular role. And they were all unhappy or she felt they were all unhappy and so she got them together and said, okay, what's the problem? And they wrote down the things they like doing and the things they didn't like doing out of their jobs. What came out of that was that there was one person who loves statistics and there was one person who loved the communication side of things and all of these other activities. She rearranged the structure within that team so that one person globally was responsible for statistics or whatever else it was rather than all the individual ones. She said to us, at the time, that they were all very happy. She was very apprehensive because she didn't understand how the reporting was going to work and the reporting was what happened that came back to her and then she had to use that reporting to talk about how the team was going when she was in her executive meetings. But in the end, that solved itself, they solved it amongst themselves.

So I think that the approach of looking at what you're doing and how much time that's taking, actually writing down, you know, if it's the business management, business development and that's taking 50% of your time, why is it taking that long? Who else in the team should be involved, could be involved, would like to be involved and do that structural analysis of what you're doing?

What also occurs to me in this is that you've talked about business for both business management and direction are your responsibility. Management means that you manage other people as much as you manage yourself. So you really are going to have to think about delegation, and perhaps what we need to do in a podcast fairly soon, is that Fulyana and I will talk about delegation and the different ways you can do it and how you can do it. We understand it is not one size fits all, it is not just picking up this task and handing it off and saying, you do these reports now. It's about looking at what makes up that activity and how it can be broken down so that people can share it, so that you can still do part of it, so that you can work with others and get to know others while you're working with them, in that one to one environment, rather than handing it off and then waiting for it to come back. Using those tasks and those activities to actually get to know your people, to know what their strengths are, to know where they could grow, to know what other things they can do that you're not asking them to do at the moment.

Now we've talked about this in the past. We've talked about getting to know your team, getting to know what other skills they've got. I think it was a case study as well, where someone had some skills that weren't being used that they felt they could contribute to the organization but they didn't know how to address that. Maybe that's something else, you might have skills in your team that you don't know are there.

All of those things need to be explored but you need to come back to the idea that you're in a senior position, you're responsible for business management and business direction and that's where your focus should be and if it can't be in those places you've got to find ways of breaking up the tasks you're doing now that you think only you can do or that you have to redo or that had bad experiences within the past. Everyone's had situations where they've delegated something and it hasn't worked out the way they wanted it to. It's not unique, it doesn't define you and it doesn't define the person who didn't deliver the goods. It's just a situation that occurred and you have to move on from it.

My concern with this, knowing the situation, is that this is a person who wears the badge of overwhelm rather than want the solution and talks about being overwhelmed so everyone will think that he is very busy and very important and very dedicated to the organization. I think that that's an attitude that needs to be dispelled but that's only something that the individual can do. We're treading on very thin ice here, but I do think that if you feel that you're overwhelmed, you do need to do that navel-gazing a little bit and say why do I feel like I'm overwhelmed? Is it because I don't want to talk about what I'm doing? I don't think I'm good enough? We've got any number of guests and ourselves that have talked about Imposter Syndrome. Yes, it's a real thing and it's hard to get past but recognizing what it is is the first step and I think you've got to take some steps to understand why you think you are overwhelmed or why you use that word.

It's a nice fancy way of talking to people about how busy you are and that's just become part of the pattern of what you talk about when you talk about work. If that's the case, if you don't want to talk about work and the word overwhelmed has become your catchphrase, change the subject. When someone says "how's work?" rather than saying I'm overwhelmed, say "I don't want to waste my time with you talking about work, let's talk about something else". There used to be a great advertising campaign for the Sydney Morning Herald that was just,

you know, read the Herald, don't become to the single subject expert, read the Herald and have some other things to talk about. So go and get your YouTube, your Google feed and pick up a couple of new stories and read them and have some information in the back of your head.

I really do think that you need to look at why you think you are overwhelmed, what it is, write it down and analyze each of those things because it's not just one thing as with delegation. There's not a one size fits all. You might be just overwhelmed by one part of your work and that just throws the blanket over everything else. You might find things that are really encouraging and engaging and exciting. Why aren't you thinking about those? Why aren't you focusing on those rather than on this negative and destructive impression that you've got of yourself? And apart from analyzing, it might be useful to work with someone who you trust and a person that is confident, that would only be there for your best interests to help you work it through so that you can address those points. We're suggesting an independent mentor or coach, accountability partner, whatever you want to call it, that you find someone that you can talk to. It might only have to be one session, might not, but address the overwhelm sensation and then focus on what else you can do.

I think we've given you lots of ideas. We will do a podcast in the future just about delegation so we can both talk about delegating because we're both pretty well versed in that one way or another. We will leave it there for this case study. I'm Kim Baillie, she's Fulyana Orsborn and this is Inside Exec.