

***Leadership Lessons:  
Delegation***

**Donald Thompson**

# Introduction

Leadership Lessons is a guide for professionals who are responsible for leading and managing others, and delivering organizational results through others. Leadership Lessons is not a “silver bullet” to solve your management challenges but will provide you valuable thoughts and perspective on how to develop and leverage your team, maximize their potential and provide better results with less stress. In terms of meaningful learning outcomes, this eBook will help you to:

1. Develop an understanding of the relationship between delegation and leadership.
2. Explore the positive impact effective delegation can have on your organization.
3. Identify reservations that may be preventing you from delegating effectively.
4. Understand the importance of delegation to team and individual development.
5. Create a plan to delegate and manage delegated tasks.

***"You offend your team by doing for them what they can do well, can learn to do, or can do with your guidance."***

***-Donald Thompson***

# The Importance of Delegation

Imagine going out to dinner at a nice restaurant...

You pull up to the front and the valet parks your car. When you walk through the door the maître-d' welcomes you, shows you to your table and informs you of the specials. Within a few minutes your water glass is filled and your server comes and takes your drink and appetizer order. Once you're settled, the server is back to take your order and later visits your table to ensure your satisfaction with the food delivered by the runner. At some point during dinner, the manager stops by your table to make certain your dining experience meets your expectations.

Take a minute to think about the part of the restaurant you do not see, the "back of the house." The prep chefs chopping vegetables, the line and pastry chefs preparing the meals and desserts, and the dishwashers making sure that the china and silverware are spotless. All are doing their individual jobs but working together to give you the best dining experience possible.

Now imagine a different scenario...

The valet who parked your car sprints back to the hostess stand to show you to your table. That same person fills your water glass, takes your order and then runs over to the bar to make your drinks. After delivering your drinks, he goes back into the kitchen, puts on an apron and starts to prepare your meal. You watch him run around all night, from table to table doing every job in the restaurant. Finally, he brings your check and asks about your meal. What is your opinion of that second experience going to be?



Now ask yourself the same questions about your business. Do your clients and customers see a finely honed team working together, each person understanding his or her role and responsibilities, or do they see one person trying to do too much?

# Delegation Perspectives

In developing as a leader and building leaders, I have learned that one's perspective toward delegation allows you to measure leadership strength and maturity. The following self-evaluation will help you identify your current mindset regarding delegation and understand where your focus should be in improving this critical leadership attribute.

## **Individual Mindset:**

- It's faster just to do it myself.
- No one can do it better than me.
- I've never been happy with the results of delegating.

Successful delegation begins with knowing and understanding your team and their performance. How can you begin to evaluate your team's availability, capability and interests to facilitate successful delegation?

## **Concerns:**

- I don't have anyone on my team who is capable.
- I don't want others to outshine me.
- I don't see how this helps me as a leader.

Strong leaders expect the people around them to succeed and gain personal value from helping their team members achieve success. What can you do to develop your team and your role as a leader?

# Relationship Between Leadership and Delegation

A leader's performance is not judged by the work they do but on the production of the people who report to them. The challenge with becoming an effective delegator is that leaders often reach their positions because of the work they themselves have produced and end up struggling with the transition from "doing it" to "making sure it's done."

**Leaders need to understand the difference between what they are paid to do and what they are paid to be responsible for.**



A leader's first responsibility when it comes to delegation is not task focused, but people focused. A critical leadership element is having the right people on your team and if you do not, you need to have the courage to make changes.

Delegation is one of the most effective tools you have as a leader to motivate and retain your employees. Your high performers, the ones you need to maximize your production and take your organization into the future, are the ones who thrive on new challenges and opportunities. The stronger your team, the easier it is to delegate.

# Assessment & Action

**As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others.**

**-Bill Gates**

## **Questions for Thought and Reflection:**

- ✓ Do you inspire your team through communication and example?
- ✓ Who are the high performers on your team?
- ✓ Who do you have on your team that shouldn't be?
- ✓ Is every member of your team working on the right projects?

## **Actions Steps:**

- ✓ Identify a mentor outside your company who effectively works with teams to create successful outcomes.
- ✓ Work with your manager and Human Resources professionals to realign your team from a position of strength.
- ✓ Ensure your team understands the paradigm shift and the opportunities available to them.
- ✓ Read The Effective Executive by Peter E. Drucker.

# Employee Voice

By delegating properly, you can work closely with your staff to provide them with opportunities to learn and advance. Through these opportunities, you engage your employees, improving morale and motivation resulting in higher job satisfaction. Employees perform at their highest level for a strong leader who believes in them. Consider the following:



1. Employees want clarity when receiving performance-based feedback from their managers.
  - “I want to become a better professional so please tell me what I can do to make that happen.”
2. Employees want to be a part of the company’s future plan for success.
  - “Help me understand how I can play a part in the company’s future and provide me clear direction on the skills required.”
3. Employees want a manager that is involved in their success through an active mentoring relationship.
  - “Do you believe in me enough to explain the context and detail vs. just giving me tasks?”
4. Employees seek stretch tasks, support and guidance, that makes them better at their jobs.
  - “When you trust me with big tasks I have evidence that my opportunity with the company is significant.”

# Assessment & Action

**If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings and put compensation as a carrier behind it, you almost don't have to manage them.**

**-Jack Welch**

## **Questions for Thought and Reflection:**

- ✓ Is your leadership style the same for everyone or tailored to the individual?
- ✓ Does your team see a strong relationship with your manager that they should emulate?
- ✓ Do you provide an environment of high standards combined with strong support?
- ✓ Do you know the top motivators for each of your team members?

## **Actions Steps:**

- ✓ Review goals with your direct reports.
- ✓ Build a rapport with your manager that exemplifies the employee/manager relationship.
- ✓ Use a survey to measure employee engagement within your organization.
- ✓ Recognize employee contributions regularly and publically to increase morale among your team.

# Leadership Challenges

Delegation should be considered from an opportunity/cost perspective. As a leader, what opportunities are you missing by not delegating responsibilities to others?

## **Missing key deadlines**

Do you find yourself often delivering things at the last minute, or even worse, missing deadlines completely? It might be time to take stock of what you are doing that you really should pass to others.

## **Feeling stressed or under constant pressure**

When we start to feel stressed or just constantly under pressure, it impacts our ability to make decisions, solve problems or focus on the bigger picture. Stress increases fear and drains enthusiasm.

## **Poor performance rating**

As a manager, part of how your performance is assessed is through the productivity of your team. If you are focusing all of your time and energy on doing, rather than delegating, chances are you will be poorly rated.



# Assessment & Action

**No man will make a great leader who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit for doing it.**

**-Andrew Carnegie**

## **Questions for Thought and Reflection:**

- ✓ Are you losing revenue because you are not spending enough time on key customers or projects?
- ✓ Are you missing career advancement because you don't have the time to demonstrate your potential?
- ✓ Are you sacrificing the opportunity to develop the next generation of leaders?
- ✓ Are you forfeiting the potential to have the work done better than you may have been able to do it yourself?

## **Actions Steps:**

- ✓ Identify and rank your top five priorities.
- ✓ Identify additional tasks/projects that through delegating, would allow you to concentrate more on opportunities that move the needle.
- ✓ Determine those players on your team who would value the challenge of higher-level priorities.
- ✓ Speak with your manager about your priorities and objectives to ensure alignment and support.

# How to Delegate Effectively

Effective delegation starts by looking at the specific task or project. Remember that delegation is more than simply “high to low.” You can delegate to your boss and your peers as well as to those you lead.

**Do** – These are the tasks that are high in both importance and priority. They are tasks or projects that are important to the organization, you and/or your manager. These tasks have deadlines and require your skill set to complete.

**Delegate** – These are the tasks and projects that you can hand off affording you the opportunity to focus on business critical activities while allowing the people around you to stay motivated and develop professionally.

**Delay** – These are the things on your plate that may be important but aren’t a high priority. These items still need to be completed and you have some flexibility over when and how they get done.

**Discard** – These are the tasks that are of low priority and importance for both you and your team. Put them in the “Discard” bucket and get back to the things that matter.

## DO

- Advances your goals
- Deadline pressure
- You are uniquely qualified

## DELEGATE

- Job enhancement
- Balanced workload
- Development opportunity

## DELAY

- Important but not urgent
- Focus on high priority tasks
- May be an opportunity to delegate

## DISCARD

- Someone else assumes responsibility
- Has no business impact
- Not the right task for your skills

# Assessment & Action

**Nothing is less productive than to make efficient what should not be done at all.**

**-Peter Drucker**

## **Questions for Thought and Reflection:**

- ✓ Where can you add the greatest value to our team's performance — and as a result, where should you be spending your time and energy?
- ✓ What skills do you need on your team to accomplish your goals and play a value-added role for other projects/tasks?
- ✓ Which projects provide an opportunity to strengthen or develop another team member's skills?
- ✓ Do you listen to your team's advice before making key decisions?

## **Actions Steps:**

- ✓ Utilize the concepts and worksheets in this guide to begin the process of delegation.
- ✓ Review individual and organizational priorities with your team to enable understanding.
- ✓ Determine a hand off process for delegated projects/tasks and identify methods for follow up.
- ✓ Delegate responsibility and authority, not just methods.

# Leadership Leverage

As a business leader, your work product is structured into three main buckets: work that you directly do, projects that you delegate to your team, and strategic projects for your manager or corporation. In my experience, leaders work 40 hours to be successful in their current roles and an additional 10 hours per week to accelerate career or strategic initiatives.

## Direct Work

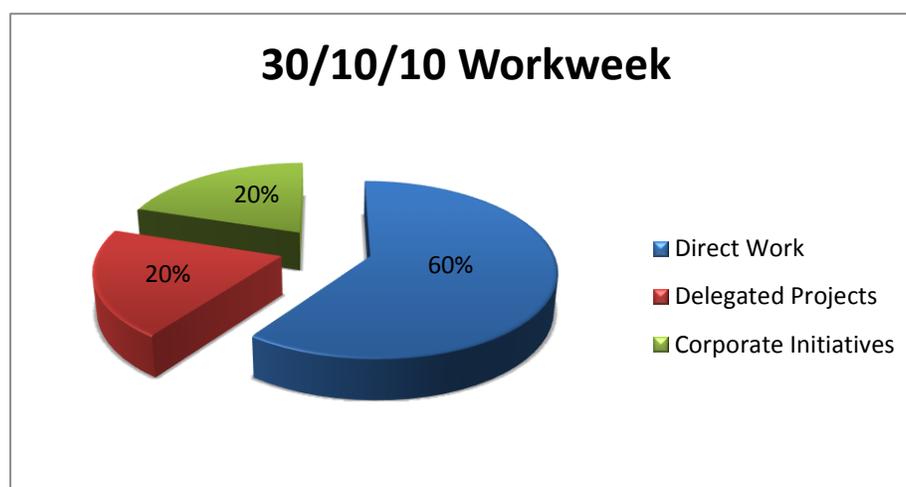
Direct work items have high organizational impact, and specifically require you to fully own the work product. As a leader, you need to be focused on key core organizational tasks – those jobs that keep the organization moving forward at the highest level.

## Managing Delegated Tasks

Remember, just because you have delegated a task doesn't mean that you can forget about it. Not only is the final product still your responsibility, you also have a responsibility to the people you've delegated to. Make sure that you are providing the support and guidance they need and also spending the time to tie the task into their professional development.

## Working on Manager-Supporting (C-Level) Initiatives

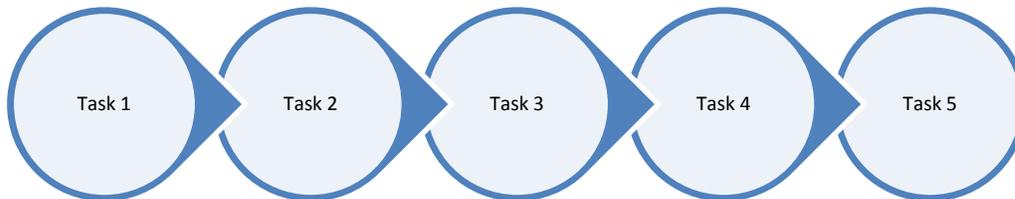
Delegating your less critical responsibilities allows you extra time to devote to the issues that are important to your manager. Effective delegation can have a major impact on your relationship with your boss which, in turn, can have a major impact on your career. Working on manager-supporting initiatives creates visibility, credibility and opportunity.



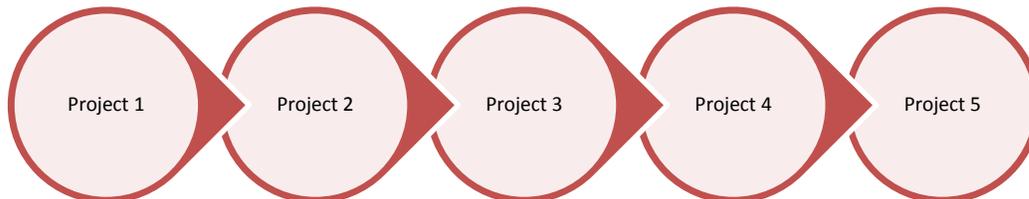
## 50 Hour Workweek (30/10/10)

Leaders are organized which allows them to have the mental clarity required to guide and develop others. The framework below provides a simple way for you to identify and document the projects and priorities of your team. By taking time to document your areas of focus, you create a method to minimize the mental Ping-Pong that accompanies trying to “do it all.” Additionally, you have a way to discuss your focus areas with your manager and gain the confidence that comes with being tightly aligned with your manager and team.

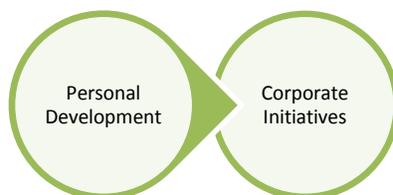
### Direct Work-Top 5 Priorities 30 hours (60% of your workweek)



### Mentoring/Managing Delegated Projects 10 hours (20% of your workweek)



### Personal Development & Corporate Initiatives 10 hours (20% of your workweek)



## Final Thoughts

Like a fast paced but well-coordinated restaurant, a high performing team makes large tasks and high achievement seem easy because people are working together seamlessly. The delegation mindset is not about passing an assignment, but about your leadership perspective towards building people and helping your company's stakeholders grow a world-class organization.

Delegation fails not from a lack of skill or talent but from a lack of communication. Leaders have a responsibility to provide clarity about what is expected; direct reports have a responsibility to let the leader know if those expectations are unclear. Each side needs to ensure they are in agreement before the actual work starts and to obtain clarification as needed.

Selfish leaders dictate rather than delegate. You can demand more of your team when they understand that you are building them professionally and care for them personally. Through delegation, you are creating mentoring relationships that will allow you to develop the next generation of leaders for your organization, get better results and increase winning outcomes.



## ***Worksheets***

# Project Profile Worksheet

To evaluate new project opportunities, brainstorm possibilities and clearly define a mutual definition of success, it's important to have a consistent process to explore and review projects before you begin. Once completed, projects can be evaluated and 'green lighted' or 'shelved' based on budgets and department goals.

<b>Project name</b>		<b>Duration</b>	
<b>Time investment</b>		<b>Cash</b>	

<b>Owner</b>	
<b>Work with</b>	
<b>Sign-off</b>	

Project overview		
<b>Opportunity</b>		
<b>Deliverable(s)</b>		
<b>Audience</b>		
<b>Primary goal(s)</b>		
<b>Success / Metrics</b>		
Project Timeline		
		__ hrs.
<b>Revision Date:</b>		

# Work Evaluation (4Ds) Worksheet

Using page 11 to guide you, complete this worksheet to assist in itemizing your task/project priorities. Communicate with your manager and your team regarding these items so that appropriate support and agreement is provided.

Do

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Delegate

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Delay

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Discard

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# Talent Evaluation Worksheet

When determining which projects to delegate and to whom, consider the current and potential capabilities of each member of your team.

Those individuals who fall within the **green** categories are able to manage a broad range of projects.

Be careful to delegate projects specific to the strengths of those in the **yellow** categories, and be aware that they may require more guidance.

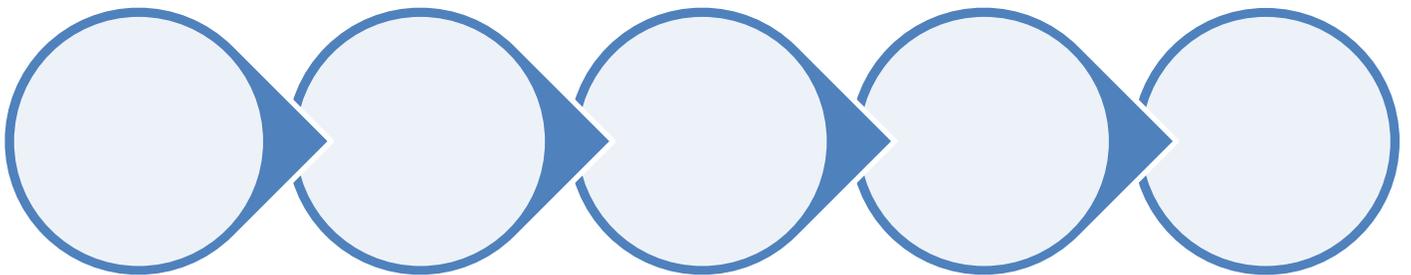
Do not delegate to those who fall in the **red** column as you should be preparing to transition those individuals out of your department or organization.

	Easy Delegation	Careful Delegation	No Delegation
<b>Mentor</b>	Coachable by Me	Coachable by Others	Coachable by No One
<b>Monitor</b>	Leadership Potential	People Conflicts	Mismatched Skills
<b>Move</b>	Up	Over	Out

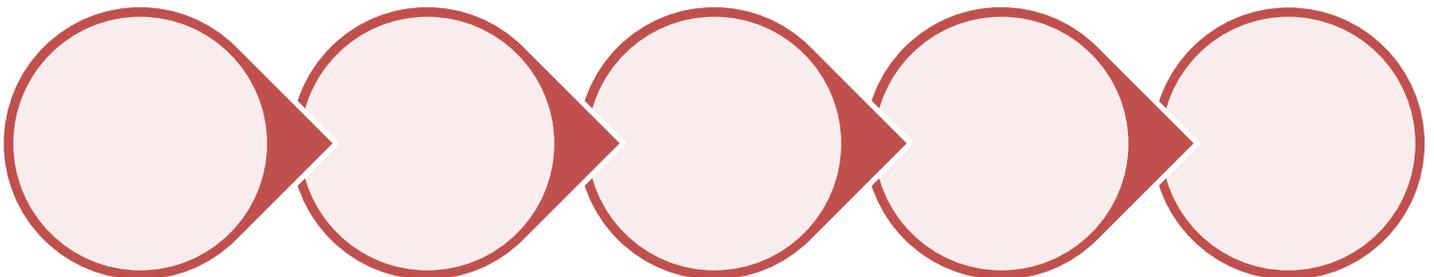
# 30/10/10 Worksheet

Structure your work week by listing your top priorities into the following circles utilizing the leadership leverage tools on pages 13-14. Remember that these items should be moving the needle of success for you, your team and your organization.

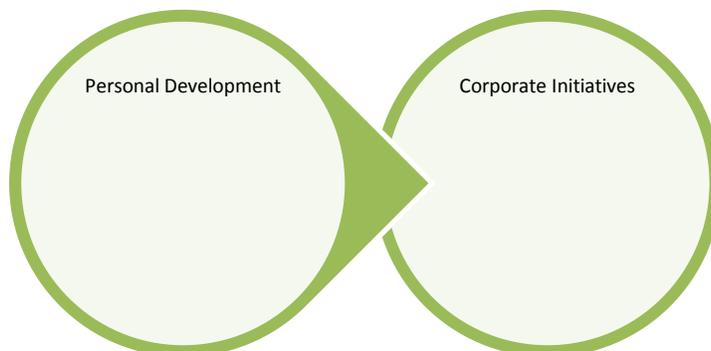
## Direct Work-Top 5 Priorities



## Delegated Projects



## Corporate Initiatives



# About Donald Thompson

**“Everyone wants to be on their organization’s Valuable Employees List. The right mindset can get you there.” - Donald Thompson**



Donald Thompson is a leader known for solving business problems where no formula exists. He develops competitive and sustainable solutions for global companies, entrepreneurs and emerging leaders.

As the CEO of the technology company, I-Cubed, where he was given the reigns at age 36, Donald dramatically grew the organization in our recent downturn economy. With no outside capital, the company flourished, going from 16 to 130 employees recording annual revenue growth of 30%, from 2008-2013.

In 2014, I-Cubed was acquired by the global technology enterprise, [KPIT](#). Currently, Donald leads global teams, heading KPIT’s PLM business for North America and serves on the Board of Directors for iCiDIGITAL, a spin off business from I-Cubed.

With a belief in **“optimizing the potential of your people,”** Donald groomed his [iCiDIGITAL](#) successor from technologist to President.

Donald is an emeritus member of the strategic advisory board for North Carolina State University’s [Computer Science Department](#), is Executive Chairman for [O3 Creative](#), serves on several upstart company boards and is also franchise owner for the [Navi Mumbai Sabres](#) of the [Elite Football League of India](#).

As a thought leader, business strategist and keynote speaker, Donald was once named among the Top 25 Technical Professionals in Research Triangle Park, NC by Business Leader Magazine. He has been heralded as the **“[American Dream](#)”** in the media and is often referred to as **“the unlikely CEO.”**

Donald’s personal philosophy is **“continuous improvement,”** an approach to success he communicates to business leaders and employees, including Millennials, for which he has earned an esteemed reputation.

His ability to clarify strategic thinking and promote problem solving has benefited many with their own personal success-two reasons why Donald is highly sought as a mentor and speaker globally.

Donald's leadership abilities extend to involvement in the Young Presidents' Organization ([YPO](#)) and Information Technology Senior Management Forum ([ITSMF](#)). In associating with global business leaders through these prestigious peer networks, Donald stresses training and lifelong learning.

***“Developing the business frontrunner in you,”*** is a theme in Donald's work. It's led him to create a series of eBooks: ***“Leadership Lessons,”*** which are aimed at professionals, entrepreneurs, business organizations, and educational communities looking to optimize business practices and be better able to compete.

With a philanthropic focus on students and veterans, Donald supports many organizations that provide financial assistance and opportunities that foster professional and personal success. His pro bono work includes speaking engagements and seminars for military and millennials, such as the [Shelton Leadership Forum](#).

Donald is future-focused and intent on the next challenge. For more on leadership, driving revenue streams, social responsibility and Donald's availability as a speaker, go to [www.donaldthompson.com](http://www.donaldthompson.com).