
THE ART OF DELEGATION FOR SUCCESSFUL LAWYERS

April 23, 2008



Law Clerk Connection White Paper Series

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Delegation is the process of entrusting somebody else with the appropriate responsibility and authority for the accomplishment of a particular activity. The importance of delegation is often understood, but the steps involved in doing it successfully may not be so clear. Delegation allows you to perform your job better to achieve the results you desire. It is the key that allows you to spend more time doing what your expertise allows you to do best and less time on repetitive, non-essential tasks.

Symptoms that may indicate you need to sharpen your delegation skills:

No time to plan. First and foremost, planning requires the ability to decide what is important--in other words, the ability to prioritize. The more you have to do, the higher the probability is that you will focus your attention on just putting out the next fire. As a lawyer you need to create a broader horizon for yourself than that. Delegating can create windows of time that you can use to plan the direction that you and your firm are heading.

Not enough time to return telephone calls and e-mail. Somehow, most of us seem to be able to return the messages we want to, or have to. Not responding to others creates a barrier that can inhibit your ability to get recognized for the good work you do and to bring in further business.

No time to attend professional meetings. Networking is crucial for lawyers, especially those in solo practice, because it connects you with the people who need, or know someone who needs, your professional services. These are the critical opportunities you need to take advantage of to build your practice.

Missing deadlines. This can be dangerous to your future, and in some cases can be a career killer. Unless you are really self-destructive, you'll want to do anything to avoid this. Learning to delegate properly is an easy solution.

Working many nights and weekends-no time for yourself or your family. You have worked hard to get to the position you are in, sacrificing what you enjoy for the day when you can relax and enjoy the fruits of your labor. But some of you may be questioning when and if that day will ever come.

You'll notice that almost all of these symptoms involve time. That is why delegation is so crucial for good lawyers - it creates time for you to do what you want to do, whether it be spending time with your family, or working on the projects that require your expertise.

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The process of delegation accomplishes two tasks that are essential to becoming a better lawyer. The first is that it gets your desk clear for you to perform more specialized legal and fewer clerical or routine tasks. Second, it creates more opportunities for you to network with others, opening the door for more clients.

The problem with most lawyers is that they are typically the type to think “I can do it quicker (if I) do it myself, I can do it better myself, and I don’t have anyone I can trust to delegate this to.” The most successful lawyers have learned the process of delegation, letting go and accomplishing more.

The Five Components of Successful Delegation For Lawyers

1. **Define Your Project**– define objectives and sort workload into manageable chunks
2. **Select Your Delegate** – name delegates based on skills and experience
3. **Inform Your Delegate**– prepare brief, explain plan, state expectations and record process
4. **Monitor Progress**– control and manage - this does not mean micromanage, remember we are *delegating*
5. **Final Review**– appraise, review, and record outcomes

“What separates those who achieve from those who do not is in direct proportion to one’s ability to ask for help.”

--Donald Keough,
former President of
Coca-Cola

Effective delegation starts with systems. Develop a structure and stick to it.

Define Your Project

Determine what it is you want to accomplish – Complaint, Memorandum of Points and Authorities in Support of Demurrer, Demand Letter, Discovery Responses, etc. If your particular case requires multiple arguments, or a balanced memorandum of law for either side, consider delegating to multiple people, different arguments or sections of a memorandum.

The best investment in office equipment that you can make is a high-speed scanner. Scan all of the documents you have for a particular client into OCR’d PDF documents. This will enable you to quickly share documents with your delegate, even if that person is not onsite. It will also allow you to quickly and easily remove documents that you might not want to share.

Twenty minutes of preparation will save priceless hours of your time and that of others.

Select Your Delegate

Delegated tasks are typically given to a more junior member of an organization. But what about those of us who are an organization of one? That's where Law Clerk Connection, LLC can help. Law Clerk Connection offers you a nationwide network of Law Clerks from ABA-approved law schools at your fingertips.

If you are not under tight time-constraints, Law Clerk Connection gives you the ability to place your project up for auction (anonymously), to be competitively bid on by multiple Law Clerks. You have the freedom to evaluate the Law Clerk's credentials and choose the Law Clerk that you feel will be the best qualified. Plus, if you need more than one Law Clerk, you are free to choose as many as you like.

If you are under a tight time-constraint, Law Clerk Connection also offers you the option of browsing our "Premiere Gallery" of Law Clerks to send a direct message to a Premiere Law Clerk offering them the option of taking on the project.

Once you have chosen your Law Clerk, it's time to discuss the specifics of your project.

Inform Your Delegate

Whether you are putting your project up for bid, or directly soliciting the help of a Premiere Law Clerk, it is essential to communicate exactly what your project entails and what your expectations are. Any project request should include the following:

- Budget
- Deadline(s)
- Estimated time to complete
- End Product
- Jurisdiction (or options to be researched)
- Client (may remain anonymous, but at least include the client *type* – individual, corporation, public entity)
- Issue(s)
- Relevant Facts

Once you have chosen your Law Clerk, you should immediately begin communicating regarding timelines and milestones, regular check-in sessions, and address any questions your Law Clerk may have.

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Monitor Progress

If you and your Law Clerk have successfully satisfied the information stage, this should be no problem because you have already agreed on daily, weekly or bi-weekly progress meetings. Your Law Clerk is providing you with his or her status and tasks to complete future milestones. You and your Law Clerk exchange questions in order to clarify any matters that may be unclear and to bring the total project into focus.

Final Review

Your Law Clerk should deliver your requested product you via your online Private Conference Room at the agreed upon time. At this point, you should thoroughly review the work done by your Law Clerk in order to ensure that all of your questions have been answered and that you have received a quality product. You and your Law Clerk may need to tighten up communications a little better if the final product is not what you were looking for. Constructive guidance is the key to a successful delegating relationship.

**Risks in Delegating**

Of course delegating has inherent risks. Will the tasks be done properly, on time, and within budget? Concern over risks is what prevents some lawyers from achieving their goals.

The irony is that the even when you do not delegate a task, the risk of it being completed late or over budget remains. By not delegating a task the only thing you do is narrow the field of people attempting to get it completed. Law Clerk Connection can help alleviate that anxiety and reduce those risks by providing you with qualified Law Clerks with a wealth of resources.

Conclusion

The key to being a successful lawyer is the ability to effectively delegate those tasks that can be done by others. Once you have defined your key project, check in with Law Clerk Connection to select your Law Clerk. Don't forget – communication is the most important tool for successful delegation, so let your Law Clerk know exactly what you want, when you want it. Once your project is underway, don't forget to keep the lines of communication open. Finally, remember to thoroughly review your final product and provide feedback to your Law Clerk.

Remember, not only are you working towards your own success, you are empowering and mentoring the future lawyers of America – and perhaps even your future partner!

Learn More

Learn more about how you can improve productivity, enhance efficiency, and sharpen your competitive edge.

Check out what Law Clerk Connection has to offer you at:

www.LawClerkConnection.com

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