

18 Delegation Tools n Tips for New Frontline Leaders

Introduction

Stepping into a leadership role means shifting from doing the work yourself to getting work done through others. That's where delegation comes in.

Done well, delegation saves time, builds capability, and shows trust. Done poorly, it creates confusion, missed deadlines, and resentment. This short guide gives you practical tips, plus coaching questions and real-world examples, to help you get delegation right from day one.

Start with the Outcome in Mind

Don't just hand over a task. Define what success looks like. What's the final product or result? How will you (and they) know it's done right?

- Example: "By Friday, I'd like a draft client proposal that covers the three service options we discussed."
- Coaching question: If you were doing this task yourself, what would you aim to achieve?

Pick the Right Person for the Task

Consider who has the skills, time, and motivation to do the task and / or who could benefit from the learning.

- Example: Delegating the monthly reporting to someone who's keen to grow their Excel and data storytelling skills.
- Coaching question: Is this a task to build confidence, stretch capability, or simply get it done fast?

Clarify Expectations Upfront

People can't read your mind. Be explicit about deadlines, format, level of detail, and how decisions should be made.

- Example: "Use last month's report as a template, but highlight any variances above 10%. I'll review a draft Thursday."
- Coaching question: What would you want to know if you were taking this on for the first time?

Don't Just Dump and Run

Delegation doesn't mean disappearing. Provide background info, clarify priorities, and make it safe to ask questions.

- Example: "Here's some context: the client is sensitive about pricing, so highlight the value, not just cost."
- Coaching question: What extra info will help them avoid rework later?

Explain the 'Why'

People engage more when they understand how their work contributes to team goals or customer outcomes. Context!

- Example: "This summary helps our sales team position our offer better, so it's a big part of winning the deal."
- Coaching question: What's the purpose behind this task, beyond just ticking a box?

Set Checkpoints, Not Chains

Agree in advance on progress updates. This builds trust and avoids micromanagement.

- Example: "Let's check in Wednesday to review the first draft then I'll step back until final sign-off."
- Coaching question: How can you stay informed without hovering?

Be Clear on What's Non-Negotiable

Some things, like legal compliance or branding guidelines, can't be bent. Make those boundaries visible.

- Example: "All emails must go out via our approved template for compliance reasons. No exceptions."
- Coaching question: What parts of this task are flexible, and what aren't?

Delegate Authority, Not Just Tasks

If people need to make decisions or talk to others, make sure they have the backing to do so.

- Example: “You’re authorised to approve spend up to \$500 on this, no need to check with me.”
- Coaching question: What authority or access do they need to succeed?

Let Go of Perfection

It’s tempting to jump in if it’s not done your way. But if the outcome meets the goal, let them own their style.

- Example: “The format was different from mine, but the message was spot on and the client rang with great feedback.”
- Coaching question: Is your standard based on quality, or just preference?

Follow Up with Feedback

Debrief after the task. Recognise what went well and discuss what could improve next time.

- Example: “Great job on getting that across the line early. Next time, let’s tighten the intro. It went a bit long.”
- Coaching question: What feedback will help this person grow?

Tools: Structures and Processes

The Learning Staircase

Delegate differently depending on their development level:

1. Starter
2. Stuck
3. Steady
4. Star



The Skills Matrix

Who have you got? Who can do what?
Where are your gaps? How can
delegating bridge the gaps? (The
numbers come from the Learning
Staircase.)

	Skill A	Skill B	Skill C	Skill D	Skill E
Tony	4	4	1	4	4
Ali	2	4	2	3	3
Chen	2	3	2	3	2
Aroha	2	3	2	3	4
Kate	1	2	3	1	2
<u>Sione</u>	2	3	2	2	3

The Development Plan

Based on your skills matrix and your team's current and projected workload, schedule out any training, coaching, and learning-focused delegations for the next 3 months.

Takes Time to Save Time

In training delegation, the number one reason participants claim for not delegating is "I don't have time. It's quicker to do it myself". I cannot argue. Looking at one task, they are right. But we cannot look at one task. We have to look at all of them. And, not just today but over time. Then the time investment to set up your delegation systems and tools, and develop your team's capability and capacity pays off. The costs are now and the payoff in the future. Classic time management conundrum. Here's one of my client's research that they use to promote that it's worth it. They found under-delegating departments experienced:

- Higher cost of delivery
- Seniors over-worked
- Seniors miss out on higher opportunities
- Juniors miss out on challenging work
- Clients received lower quality work at higher cost

The 10-Question Checklist

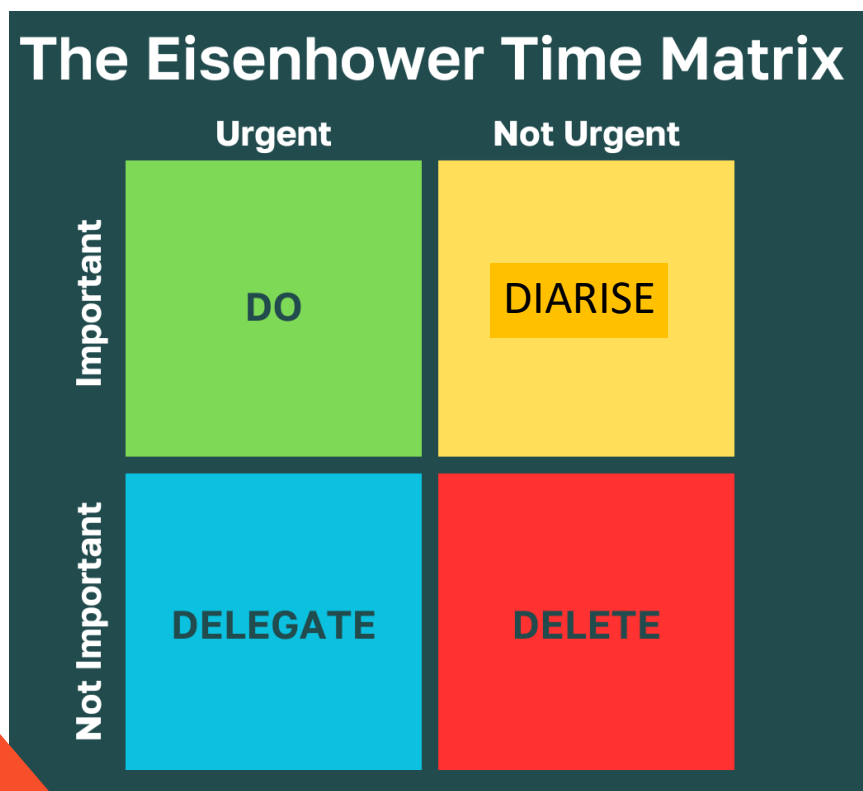
- Task

1. What is to be delegated?
2. What are you trying to achieve?
3. What results / standards are expected?
4. Deadlines?
5. Controls?

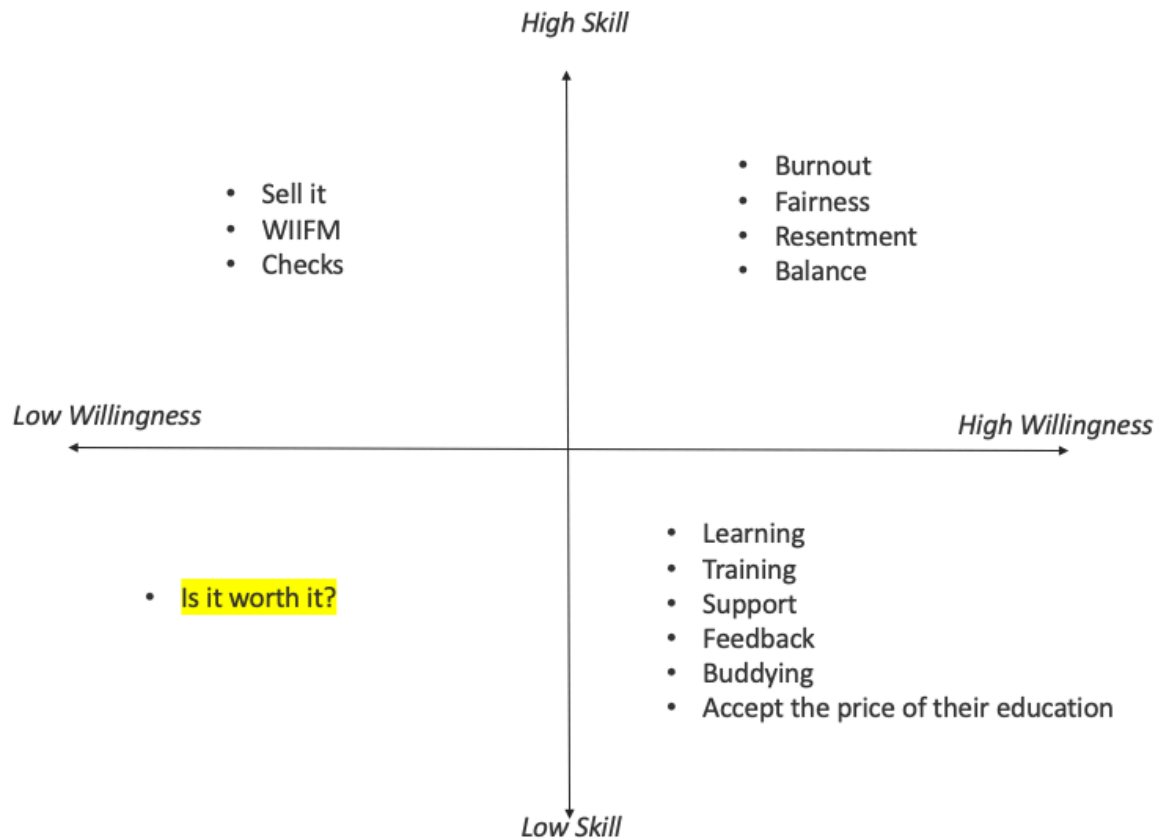
- Person

1. To whom?
2. Any learning needs?
3. How will you meet learning needs?
4. How willing & able are they? (Capacity)
5. What delegation style will you use?

The 4 D's & Importance Criteria



The Planning Grid



10 DELEGATION TIPS

for new frontline leaders



Start with the outcome

Be clear on what success looks like.

Consider strengths and development goals.

Match task to person



Set expectations on scope, timelines, and standards.



Be crystal clear

Provide context and support.

Don't dump and run



Explain the 'why'

Help people connect their work to the big picture.

Set progress updates without micro-managing.

Agree on checkpoints



Highlight non-negotiables

Clarify what can't be compromised.

Delegate authority, not just tasks.

Empower decision-making



Let go of perfection

Focus on results, not your preferred method.

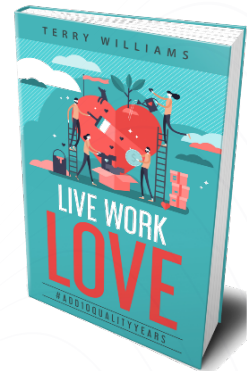
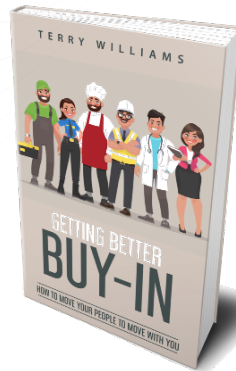
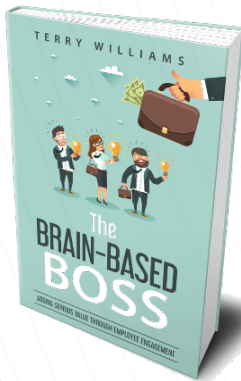
Always follow up with recognition and learning.

Debrief and feedback



TERRY WILLIAMS

THE PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT **EXPERTS**



Engage people; improve results!

Our books are about getting better at getting better - in life, at work, and in leadership, personally & professionally.