



Delegate, Delegate, Delegate
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Backpacks come in all shapes, sizes and colors, letting the owner express his/her individual style. And when used properly, backpacks can be very functional. However, when a backpack is "overweight" it can cause back pain that is unnecessary.

Did you know that the spine is made of 33 bones called vertebrae, and between the vertebrae are discs that act as natural shock absorbers? When a heavy backpack is incorrectly placed on the shoulders, the weight's force can pull a person backward, sometimes causing the wearer to fall on the floor.

So, I am guessing right about now, Madame President elect is thinking, "OK Jolie, what does a backpack have to do with the topic of delegating?"

Well, I am going to make that connection right now...

I want you to think of what you believe or perceive to be your job responsibilities for the 2018-2020 Administration...visualize those responsibilities as actual books in your backpack.

As you take on your next leadership role in GFWC, you must utilize your strength to where your new path lies and be able to read the new books that will be placed in your backpack, while passing on books you've previously read to those who are tasked with positions that you have successfully accomplished.

Sounds pretty simple...you are the next leaders in GFWC, and for us to grow as individuals and as a Federation, each of us has to let go of some of the responsibilities we currently have in our Region, State, District or Club...to be able to focus on the upcoming two years.

As women, we tend to carry a heavy backpack and for some of us, you might even be carrying two or three at the same time. But if you truly take all your books out of your backpack, you will soon see that you are carrying home each night some weight that will certainly bring you to your knees over time.

GFWC needs strong, confident leadership...and delegating is one way in which you can help GFWC to grow more leaders and reach that goal.

Anyone know who James Cash Penney was?

Right, he was the founder of the JC Penney chain...he said, "The surest way for an executive to kill himself is to refuse to learn how, and when, and to whom to delegate work,"

When you grow as a leader, you have to know when to let go. You have to know when to delegate up, down and across so you can perform the duties of your new position and acquire new skills. I've learned that people will seldom let you down if they understand that your destiny is in their hands, and theirs in yours.

Leaders who do not delegate effectively are usually so busy carrying a heavy backpack that they can't even look forward due to the weight on their shoulders. (You have seen them, they walk like this because of the weight.) They become too busy to develop their people, too busy to plan, and too busy to think about how the big picture impacts their performance.

In short, they are too busy to lead. Delegation is not rocket science, but mastery does require deliberate practice. And it's never too late to learn.

Many of us seem to have little patience for delegation because we have had too many instances of assigning a responsibility only to have it completed incorrectly or not at all. This often leads us to conclude that "If we want it done right we have to do it ourselves." Anyone out there said that before?

I know, too, that there are a few others of you who do not delegate because you have trouble letting go of work or because you are a perfectionist. That reason for not delegating may be a bit harder to acknowledge.

By not delegating effectively, you will get pulled into a nasty cycle of being too busy to help your team members learn the skills they need to take on higher level work. And isn't building leaders one of the goals of the GFWC Strategic Plan?

I was going to spend some time on why tasks delegated do not get done or done right, but I felt that is was more important for us to figure out how to get some of those books "or responsibilities" out of our backpack instead of hanging on to them and adding new books into an already heavy bag.

One of the hardest things for many leaders is learning how to delegate effectively. Many of us have a clear idea of what we want, and many leaders are capable people with a great deal of drive. Handing off activities and paperwork just feels wrong.

It's impossible to do everything — and do it well — as your leadership experience grows your backpack will get so heavy that the straps give way and all your books crash to the ground or worse you give up on everything.

So, to keep that from happening, I would like to offer four basic suggestions on how to delegate effectively...how to lighten that backpack and be sure that you are giving your books away so that others can grow as leaders too. My thought process is, if you can remember four steps then you are well on your way to ridding your backpack of those extra pounds.

The first step is:

1. Are you really the only one who can do the "routine" task?

Sometimes the routine tasks are the ones that take up most of your time. Get the right mindset. It's important to stop thinking that you're the only person who can do a job well. Start trusting that others will do an equally good job, if not a better job, regardless of whether or not they've made a mistake in the past.

Don't forget to say thank you to those who have accepted responsibility. In order for others to truly learn, they need to feel that it's OK to make mistakes. Indeed in a learning environment, effort is as important as results. If they're stretching their abilities and trying new things, that in itself is an achievement and should be acknowledged.

Don't have unrealistic expectations – encourage them to put their unique footprint on the task. Remember that there is a difference between someone doing something "wrong" and them not doing it the way you would have done it. Style differences are just that. If they prefer circle bullets, and you prefer squares, keep it to yourself!

2. Utilize the Strengths of your Members and Allow Them to Soar

Handing out everyday tasks is just the first step to learning how to delegate effectively. You also need to understand the strengths of your team members. Some tasks are a better fit for the particular person you're delegating to than others.

This doesn't mean that they shouldn't stretch to develop new skills, but look for areas where they have unique ability, interest, or insight if possible. Maybe they're skilled in social media. Ask them to review your social media presence to make suggestions on how to entice new members. This task, while new for them, pulls on their natural strengths as well and provides them a "confidence cushion," so to speak. Chances are your state federations are built with multiple individuals who have something unique to contribute. If you want them to grow — and to feel challenged — you need to discover their strengths and learn how to delegate to them.

As you delegate tasks that help your team members grow, it will help you develop more assets for GFWC and your own State Federations.

3. Take a Deep Breath and Watch as Your Team Begins to Function

You aren't learning to delegate effectively if you micromanage your team's every move. Realize that members of your team might work differently than you do. Your job is to set expectations and let them know about responsibilities and deadlines, but then you need to step back and let your members succeed and grow the leadership base.

4. Concentrate on Your New Responsibilities

If you want to delegate effectively, you have to focus on other parts of your leadership responsibilities. The whole point of getting others to share in the workload is that you are able to channel your energy into the responsibilities of the new position.

Your time is valuable, and that's why you need to use it where it will do the most good. When you learn how to delegate effectively, you free up more time for you, and that means you have the chance to channel your passion and drive into growing GFWC.

When you are feeling overwhelmed, it's time to pay attention to how many books are in your backpack...weigh it regularly to make sure that it does not exceed the healthy weight.

A few other things I should caution you about: just because you think your backpack is large, doesn't mean you should fill it and by all means, if you experience back pain or numbness or weakness in the arms or legs, contact the GFWC physical therapist who can certainly assist you with your delegation health plan.

Sources used in this presentation and/or to read for further information:

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