

## 4 HONEST REASONS YOU DON'T DELEGATE

By [Carey Nieuwhof](#) | View article online: <https://careynieuwhof.com/4-honest-reasons-you-dont-delegate/>



*This Post Is Written By Jenni Catron. Jenni Is An Author, Speaker, And Leadership Expert. As Founder And CEO Of The 4Sight Group, She Consults Organizations On Leadership, Team Culture, And Organizational Strategy. Jenni Is The Author Of Several Books And Is The Host Of The Jenni Catron Leadership Podcast.*

*By Jenni Catron:*

“I don’t have time to teach someone else how to do it.”

“It will be quicker if I just do it myself.”

Chances are you’ve used one of those excuses when you’ve taken on a task that you should have delegated.

The very thing we say we don’t have time for is the primary thing we need to give time to.

A number of years ago one of my leaders sat me down for some tough feedback. He simply said, "What you're doing is not good. You are going to wear yourself out." Our organization had grown significantly and as a result, my team had expanded exponentially. I was running myself ragged and was simultaneously exhausting my team.

Perhaps you're familiar with the story in Exodus 18. Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, pays a visit after God has delivered the Israelites out of Egypt. It's a victorious time and I can imagine Moses is feeling a bit reenergized as a leader.

Verse 13 tells us, "Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people". It's back to business as usual... a role that Moses likely felt confident in. Better yet, he was probably eager for his father-in-law to see him in action. It was an opportunity to prove that he is capable and confident in leading God's people.

To Moses' surprise, rather than praising his leadership, Jethro says, "What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone."

I bet you can relate... "you will only wear yourselves out", "the work is too heavy", "you can't handle it alone."

And as a wise leader would, Jethro goes on to give Moses a solution. He instructs him to delegate. He tells Moses to appoint leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens so that Moses is only handling the most difficult work.

As my leader shared the Jethro and Moses story I saw that I was doing the same thing. I was adding and adding but not appropriately delegating.

Delegation is a leadership skill that is extraordinarily difficult for most leaders. A big team and a busy schedule are often a badge of honor, but they are short-sighted and unsustainable.

Lack of delegation is a limit to your leadership that affects both you and those you lead.

Our responsibility as leaders is to be intentional stewards of our resources starting with ourselves and cascading to our teams. One of the most precious resources you have to steward is your time as a leader.

If you're trying to do too much... if you're too involved in the details... if you're trying to manage too many team members, you are going to wear yourself out and consequently your team.

For most of us, like Moses, our span of control has gotten too wide. We have convinced ourselves that we need to keep leading this person or this initiative. We keep adding and adding rather than developing and delegating.

In our desire to create highly effective teams we must first be willing to look at ourselves and consider where we may be inhibiting development by not adequately delegating. If we truly want to lead great teams, we must be committed to being honest about why we don't delegate.

#### **4 Reasons You Don't Delegate**

##### **1. You Don't Make Your Team A Priority.**

A simple way to make your team a priority is to commit to meeting one-on-one with your direct reports consistently.

Author and speaker Marcus Buckingham says, "The perfect span of control is the number of people you can have a check-in with every week."

Yes, the expectation is one-on-one, once a week. Maybe it's 30 minutes. Maybe it's an hour. The amount of time may vary by role and personality, but regular weekly time with your direct reports is essential to delegating well.

If you are not spending intentional time with your team weekly you are missing an enormous opportunity to train, develop, delegate and coach.

##### **2. You Don't Value Development.**

Your greatest work as a leader will be done through others. This perspective is essential for every leader to embrace. You are not in a position of leadership to do all the work. You are in a position of leadership to work with and through others.

Your team is your greatest investment. The more intentional you are to give them devoted time (ie, the weekly one-on-one meeting), the more aligned they will be with your vision, the clearer they'll understand what you value and the more empowered they'll be to take action.

If you are not prioritizing development, it is fool-hearted to expect your team to learn and grow.

### **3. You Don't Trust Your Team To Take Responsibility.**

I often hear leaders express frustration over the lack of initiative or ownership demonstrated by their team. When I dig a little deeper I find that the team doesn't feel trusted or empowered to take action.

What commonly occurs is that when an employee takes initiative and it doesn't quite meet the leader's expectations, the leader swoops in and redirects with little explanation.

Lack of explanation leaves the employee confused about what they could have done differently and as a result, they exert less effort the next time, essentially waiting for their leader to direct the details so that they can do what is needed.

They don't feel empowered so they don't take responsibility. The leader senses the lack of responsibility so they micromanage the details and the cycle repeats itself.

If you are not adequately empowering your team by providing feedback and direction, it is unfair to expect them to take greater responsibility.

### **4. You Don't Want To Look Bad.**

This one requires a bit of healthy self-awareness to honestly answer this question: Are you afraid a little bit of failure will make you look bad?

Mistakes are part of learning and growing. In order to empower your team, you must give them room to try and sometimes fail.

Will letting the ball drop allow them to learn? Will what the employee gains in experience outweigh the consequence to the organization?

Any miss or failure is likely to have some impact on the organization but is it one that can be easily absorbed in order to help the employee learn from it? Will the short-term cost be worth the long-term gain? Count the cost and make the best decision for everyone involved.

If you are worried more about your image than about helping someone grow, it is time to reevaluate your leadership priorities.

In order to get the best from our people, we must be sure they are getting the best from us. Leaders who are leading themselves well and developing the best in others lead healthy and thriving organizations!