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Which Tasks Should You Be Delegating?

By Christopher Earley

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Time is an attorney's stock in trade. —Abraham Lincoln

As attorneys, maximizing our time is mission critical. But far too often, attorneys fail to do this. When this happens, an attorney's personal efficiency and income suffer—and the attorney's level of stress increases. The best way for an attorney to maximize his or her time is to perform as much productive work as possible. This means also doing as little busywork as possible. One of the absolute best ways to accomplish this is through delegation. When done often and correctly, delegation can be a terrific productivity booster for any attorney. Here are some things to consider when it comes to deciding what to delegate, as well as how to do it effectively.

The advertisement banner features a teal background on the left and a dark blue background on the right. On the teal side, there is a white-outlined box containing the text 'BE A HERO TO YOUR CLIENTS. KICK ADMIN TASKS TO THE CURB.' in bold, dark blue, uppercase letters. To the right of this box, the text 'Fewer hassles. Less paperwork. More client love.' is written in a smaller, dark blue font. On the dark blue side, the text 'LEARN HOW mycase' is displayed in white, with 'mycase' in a larger, lowercase font.

Done is always better than perfect. If someone can do something 75 percent as well as you can, always delegate it, no matter what it is. Everything that does not require an attorney's expertise can and should be delegated to someone else. But, frequently, we as attorneys feel we must do everything ourselves. We feel and often actually believe that we are the only ones who can do a particular task correctly. That mindset is not only irrational but also extremely self-limiting because it is a total and complete personal productivity killer.

Attorneys, after all, should only be doing legal work that only we as attorneys are uniquely trained, experienced, and licensed to do. For everything else, let go of the reins and give that work to

someone else to perform. To do this, first identify the 20 percent of these non-lawyer activities that bring you 80 percent of your results. Then delegate the remaining 80 percent to someone else. Always consider what is the busywork (80 percent) versus the truly productive work (20 percent). Focus on the needle-moving productive work, the work that only you as the attorney should be doing.

If you are a solo, this is especially important because many solos drown in repetitive tasks. Solos who are tired of doing the busywork should consider hiring full- or part-time help to come to the office to handle tasks that need to be delegated. Virtual help is also an option gaining more and more traction with lawyers. There is no shortage of websites that can connect you to hard-working people throughout the country, as well as the entire world, who would love to take on the busywork you are tired of doing.

Regardless of whether or not you are a solo, the key first is to make a true and honest assessment of what you do each day. Do you spend precious time making copies? Do you order office supplies? Do you go to the post office? Do you do things you have absolutely no business doing? These little things really add up over time to significant hours of lost productivity. Therefore, begin today to delegate to others those things you need to stop doing. For a brutally honest exercise, figure out what your hourly rate is for your time. Then, ask yourself if you would pay someone your hourly rate to do a particular task that you do yourself. If the answer is no, then that work needs to be delegated to someone else to do.

Delegation, however, needs to be done correctly for maximum results. When delegating, always be clear about how the work should be done, what the finished result should look like, and when the work should be completed. Really good communication when delegating is very important.

Delegation can be made exponentially easier by standardization. This is where systems will set you free. Everything should be systematized in your office. If you put down in writing your systems for performing the work you want to delegate around the office, you save considerable time by not having to take time to explain how to do particular tasks. A simple checklist can break down the way the work should be done, what it should ultimately look like when done, and how long it should take to get done.

You will find the more you delegate, the more enjoyable and rewarding your practice becomes. This is because effective delegation will make you more money by allowing you to focus only on

high-level, productive work. More importantly, it also reduces the busywork that adds needless stress to your day. Commit today to delegate just one thing you need to stop doing. Do the same thing tomorrow. You will quickly wonder why you did those things yourself for so long. Email me at cearley@chrisearley.com and let me know how you make out.

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