



How not to delegate!

TN15 Training Notes series: Management

These notes were first published on the website in February 2004 and last updated in March 2008. They are copyright © John Truscott. You may download this file and/or print up to 30 copies without charge provided no part of the heading or text is altered or omitted.

You've probably read several articles listing principles on how to delegate well.

These short case studies take a different line. They describe what it feels like to the 'delegatee' when the 'delegator' mucks it up.

You are sure to have been in something like at least one of these situations yourself – or seen something similar happen to others in your church. But you'd never be the person who caused the problem, would you? *Would you?*

Are you brave enough to study each of the six case studies and then answer the questions at the end? It might just be a revealing exercise. To encourage honesty, it's best done in a group.

Six case studies

A **Marie**

Susannah is a busy person with a senior management job. She is organising the church's weekend away and is delighted when Marie offers to help. Susannah asks her to type and design the promotional brochure, since Marie is a secretary.

Marie duly spends several evenings producing the leaflet on her own, rather basic, computer and printer. She later hears that Susannah has criticised it at the church council meeting, apologising that it is not up to the required standard. But Marie, who did her very best, has no idea what this standard is.

B Joe

Joe takes over the enquirers' group from the Minister. This starts to produce a steady stream of new members for the church, and the Minister is only too happy to take the credit even though he is hardly involved with the group now.

Then one day Joe makes a misjudgement over someone. This results in strong criticism of the church from a prominent member of the local community. The Minister is quick to put the blame on Joe and makes it clear to everyone that it was all Joe's fault.

C Phil and Chris

Phil and Chris fall out over the barbecue and it's quite dramatic. Both clearly thought they were supposed to organise it, and neither is in any mood to give way. The Pastor tells them it's none of her business and they must sort it out as best they can.

D Charlie

The Director of Music asks Charlie to set up PowerPoint frames with visuals for a considerable range of hymns and songs. Charlie spends many hours doing this work, but receives no thanks or response at all. In fact the Director of Music receives a considerable tribute at the annual meeting for the work, and never mentions that he actually found someone else to do it for him.

E Stephanie

Paul leads the range of children's groups but is a rather casual person. He asks Stephanie, a 17 year old who has offered to help lead the 5 to 7s group, if she will do the session in two weeks' time, number six in the book, and gives her all the materials. Stephanie spends hours preparing ten days in advance as she is very conscientious.

Two days before the relevant Sunday, Paul sends her an email to inform her that he forgot to say that all the groups are skipping one session to tie in with Harvest, so when she prepares would she please do session seven.

F Dawn

The Curate asks Dawn to take over the missionary prayer meeting and gives her a manual he has prepared on how to do it. But she is a creative person and soon makes some changes to the evening's format. These are greatly appreciated by most of those who attend.

The Curate gets to hear about this from one disgruntled and influential member of the church council who is also on a national church body. The Curate reports this to the Vicar who tells Dawn that she had no right to change the format and that he is asking the Curate to take the meeting back again.

Questions to answer

There is not much detail given in each case study, so your answers may depend to some extent on additional information that you provide yourself.

- 1 In each case study what mistakes have been made, and by whom?
- 2 How could these mistakes be avoided in future?
- 3 If you were to advise all the parties as things stand now, what would you say?
- 4 If you are the 'delegator', which one or more of these six situations (not necessarily the specific context cited in each case) are you most in danger of causing yourself?
- 5 Would others who know you well agree with your answer to the last question? (Ask them!) If not, why not?
- 6 What do *you* need to do to avoid causing these kinds of problem in future?
- 7 What other kinds of problem have you seen in similar situations?

These notes are available at www.john-truscott.co.uk/resources/training/tn15.pdf. They cover one aspect of possible training events for Ministers or churches on topics such as managing volunteers or lay ministry. See also Training Notes TN24, *Church members can burn out too*, and TN30, *How to give and receive criticism*. For indexes of all items available on the site, visit the [resources page](#).

Contact John if you would like to enquire about the possibility of his running an event for you on some aspect of every-member ministry.

Cartoons are by Micki Hounslow for filing categories of Leadership, Management, Structures, Planning, Communication, Administration. File TN15 under Management.

69 Sandridge Road, St Albans, AL1 4AG Tel+Fax: 01727 832176 Web: www.john-truscott.co.uk