

HOW TO KNOW WHO'S READY TO TAKE ON MORE

The heart of effective delegation is solid decision-making. Managers must be able to assess their team and determine how to best effect results. Does leadership need to offload critical tasks to be more strategic? Is the business positioning itself to explore new possibilities? Or does the operation need to ramp up internal bandwidth for competitive growth?

When faced with such considerations, it can be tough to make a call – to decide which employees can be entrusted to spread their wings. But you don't have to second-guess your choices: These are the seven factors to weigh when it comes to delegating dutifully and without doubt.

Their bases are covered. If an employee consistently does his or her work, producing expected deliverables or completing core tasks satisfactorily and on time, then he or she can probably do a bit more. Reliability brings peace of mind. You don't want to dole out more tasks to someone who can't meet deadlines, always has an excuse, submits sub-par products or only periodically does the basics.

They have a career vision. When you ask employees where they want to be in five years, a select few have a clear answer. Even if they don't name a specific title, they can describe the kind of work they aspire to do and why. Individuals with clear goals and dreams are more likely to be vested in their growth. They won't shy away from the chance to show what they're really capable of.

Everyone wants (a piece) of them. If you can't seem to stop the flow of requests from other teams for a specific employee's help, input or time, that's a sign that you've got a good thing on your side. It shows that others trust the guidance, work and results this person contributes. Plus, he or she probably showcases sound people skills – communication and collaboration.

Their performance passes the test. Review your team's performance appraisals. Look for patterns. Is there a track of record of exceeding expectations? A history of improvement? Annual employee reviews provide a great baseline for quantifying who truly has the chops to take on next-level assignments.

They are full of ideas. Does an employee always seem to have something brewing in his mind? Is he often offering new perspectives, fresh ideas or novel insights? If so, he's probably interested in not only his own growth, but also that of your industry and company. That excitement is a tell-tale cue that the same enthusiasm will be brought to new duties and tasks.

Learning and growth are like air and water to them. You've spotted a team member who subscribes to industry journals, belongs to professional associations and attends career-focused Meetup groups in her free time. Maybe she's even earned a new credential or two on her own dime. Such talent is probably ready for what's next – and they may be a flight risk if not given expanded opportunities.

They shine under pressure. Your star staffer has never encountered a challenge she couldn't handle. She neither bends nor breaks (or complains) under pressure. Emergency requests, last-minute client demands, unexpected needs to work late...this go-to-player is always ready to go up to bat. In fact, the seemingly impossible lights a fire under her.

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