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# **Time Management and Delegation: Science or Art?**

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# Time Management and Delegation: Science or Art?

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By Loren Smith

Managing one's time is a central topic in the business world, particularly for CEOs, but whether you are a CEO, engineer, manufacturing superintendent or self-employed handyman, the ability to prioritize and work efficiently can spell the difference between exceptional performance and poor performance.

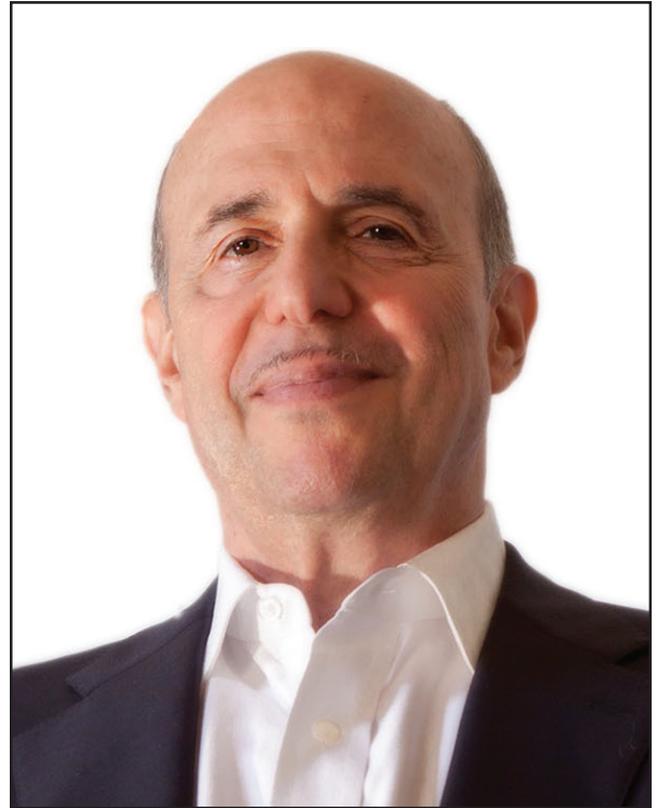
Many approach time management as a science, conducting research, writing books, presenting seminars, creating time management programs and courses and even developing applications for computers and smartphones.

Without knocking any of those pursuits or offerings - because I have gained insight from several - I just want to emphasize an under-appreciated, essential point for bosses and managers: the importance of effective delegating.

In my years in the wire harness industry, I have observed a strong correlation between the ability to delegate and the ability to grow a business. A primary reason many companies top out at a particular revenue level or number of employees correlates significantly to the founder or CEO's ability--or desire--to delegate. To put this more positively, I credit an understanding of the importance of delegation as a critical factor in growth from small- to medium-size operations.

The wire harness industry, and other fragmented industries, consists of hundreds of companies with revenues under \$10 million. While you might argue that the reason for this is low barriers to entry, I argue that fragmentation is often a function of one or more people at the top spreading themselves too thin.

So instead of looking at fragmentation as a result, let's look at fragmentation of priorities as a cause. We all know that chief reasons for resistance to delegation are a tendency to be con-



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trolling or the belief that no one can do this as well as I can. But I think there are other psychological issues at play:

One is that doing is often easier than thinking--or faster, in the short run, than assigning a task to someone who may need our guidance to accomplish it. For example, let's say a problem arises. A natural tendency is fixing it ourselves rather than delegating the fix to someone else or, better yet, teaming with someone to analyze why the problem happened and then giving that employee the responsibility of making a change to help prevent a recurrence. In that way, an employee feels our trust and has the opportunity to grow professionally, and we have more time to focus on the real priorities of running a company.

So here's an experiment: Don't throw away your to-do lists after you've checked off every item. Keep those lists for a week or a month. Then create some quiet thinking time and examine those lists. Are you allocating your time the way you should? Or is resistance to delegation fragmenting your time and keeping you from focusing on key business matters?

And remember, not having to do everything yourself means

you are also allowed to get help improving your delegation skills. Maybe an outside consultant or someone within your company can lend a hand in refining your management style so your efforts are pointed in the right direction. (You may have heard of heads of huge companies who have no papers on their desks. They want to be absorbed in thinking, learning and leading, not doing.)

So is time management an art or a science? I say both. In terms of study and analysis, more science. In terms of one's will and continual perfecting of one's skill with delegation, more art.

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