



TOOLKIT 15 – LET GO TO GROW

- ❖ **Delegate successfully in order to grow your business and yourself.**
- ❖ **Create a team-managed business.**
- ❖ **Remove any major obstacles to growth.**

One of the biggest challenges that growing businesses face is empowering a team managed business. This allows the leader to focus externally on longer-term issues rather than the day-to-day performance of the business.

A study by London Business School revealed that 84% of growth businesses had found the capacity of the management team was the biggest internal barrier to growth.

Why? Maybe because individuals responsible for the business face:

- Many demands on their time and energy
- The need to work on several things at once
- Being consumed by the day to day and obsessed about the future
- The reality that they can only really work through other people

Many of the traditional business remedies to this problem don't really work very well; I know because I have tried most of them:

- Attending a time management course
- Attending a team building workshop
- Trying to 'delegate' to people

When top managers do try to let go, they either can't, so they fiddle and annoy people, or they abdicate. Neither approach is very effective. You are going to be smarter than that ...

STORY – A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

In 1995 I was running a £5m consultancy business from 14 offices across the UK. We had started off on the dining table in 1987 and by 1995 employed 100 people.

As my role changed from doing everything to Chairman, I realised that I had to let go and delegate more to my team. I found this hard, so I went on a time management course about setting objectives, prioritising and delegating. I understood the theory at an intellectual level about my need to delegate, but like many owner managers I found it impossible to do in practice.

I was the business and the business was me, I couldn't give up doing the things I enjoyed and I thought was pretty good at.

My team was getting increasingly frustrated at my apparent unwillingness to trust them, delegate and let go.

Then one day my doctor told me I could only work one day a week for three months. This was an instruction not a suggestion!

For the first time in my life I had to ask myself – what is it I do that my team can do? What is it only I can do? What is it I do nobody should be doing? (There was quite a lot of that!)

I was forced to let go and delegate – no choice. This was a watershed in my business because once I let go I realised that I didn't want to run the business. I had been too busy being busy that I failed to recognise the fact that I was bored with the business and wanted out.

I sold my business to my team for a healthy profit and moved on. This was the best decision I ever made, because I love what I do now.

The point of this story is not to sell up but how it took an illness to make me let go and delegate and how difficult that process is for entrepreneurs.

What can you learn from this story? If you are struggling to let go and delegate to your team, imagine you can only work one day a week and ask yourself these questions:

- I have a day a week, what is it that only I must do in my business?
- What is it that I do that my team could do?
- What do I do that nobody should do?

Be tough in answering these questions; maybe ask your partner, wife or husband to help.

STORY – DAVE OSMOND, COMPUADD COMPUTERS

'When I was promoted to the role of Managing Director from Sales Director I really found it difficult to let go and allow my managers to manage.

'I loved sales, so I could not stop myself from getting involved in the details of sales. My team suggested I attended a workshop on time planning – the principles were obvious, set your objectives then plan your time. Intellectually I understood it but emotionally I could not let go of sales. I realised that perhaps deep down I didn't trust the sales team; I felt I needed to be involved in the detail.

'Then one day I discovered the 'Let go to grow' process and put it into practice. It worked like a dream for me. I am now focusing on the key tasks of the MD and the whole business has benefited.'

Here's how to do it

This is a time-tested way of dealing with the emotional issue of letting go, delegating and sleeping easy in your bed.

STEP 1

Clarify your role in the business for the future. What should be your priorities?

- Try using the prioritising method i.e., our strategy/plans/priorities call for therefore I should be focusing upon
- If you are the leader then your key leadership tasks include:
 - Setting the strategy
 - Picking the people capable of delivering the strategy
 - Spending time building the business for the future, perhaps as much as 50% outside the business with customers and stakeholders
 - Encouraging working ON your business

EXAMPLE

Tom Hunter of Sports Division enjoyed being the team leader and he was the best buyer in his business. He decided to focus on these roles and dropped other things.

STEP 2

Once you have decided your role priorities using toolkit 12, 'Clarify the key roles in your business', consider what aspects of it you intend to delegate to others.

- Consider who is really capable and ready for development?
- Who are the people for the future?
- Pick people with energy and commitment who will relish the challenge.

TIP: Try picking some young people. You don't have to be 64 to manage projects or companies!

STEP 3

Tell the people you have selected to delegate to that you intend to focus on some key areas and you intend to delegate part of your role to them personally. Say you believe they are ready to take on a bigger role and give them the responsibility and accountability to undertake the new tasks.

- Agree the objectives with them in detail (the WHAT).

Example

'To look after the distribution of our products and improve the delivery performance from 65–95% on time over the next 6 months.'

Or

'Launch three new products by the end of 2002 as part of our agreed business development process.'

STEP 4

Ask the individuals to produce a one page action plan of the steps they intend to take to achieve the objectives (the HOW).

- This plan (mental rehearsal) lets them do the thinking. This develops them and gives them ownership of the task.

E.g., see action plan in 'Providing leadership', toolkit 5.

- It also allows you to check their thinking and plans, before taking any action.
- You can then either sign off the plan or coach them in any areas for improvement. Either way you sleep easy in your bed, they own the task and the job gets done.

STEP 5

Make sure you spend enough time with your people, passing on your wisdom about the way you want your business to be run.

This is particularly important when you are moving from an owner managed to a team managed business.

Remember you know how to do things, you have probably spent years working at it.

The tasks may well be new to your people, you have to invest time in passing on your experience. So delegate and coach don't abdicate and hope...

TIP: Don't fall into the bureaucratic trap of trying to record everything you do in a systems manual. You need to build the business by building your culture (see 'Creating a preferred culture' toolkit 27.

STEP 6

Continue to show interest in their work. Use the action plans to assess progress. Congratulate them publicly on their successes.

STEP 7

Focus on your new role without falling into the trap of either getting over- involved in the delegated task or abdicating and then worrying about what's happening.

TIP: Learn to master the three Ds: Do it, Diary it, or Dump it and you will create time for the really important tasks you need to complete.

SUMMARY

If you let go well, then you will create time to focus on the important aspects of your role.

Step 1 Clarify your role	our strategy/plans/priorities call for therefore I should be focusing upon
Step 2 Highlight tasks to be delegated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • •
Step 3 highlight key personnel and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • • •
Step 4 Discuss delegated task and ask for 1 page action plan from each person	
Step 5 Review objectives and coach	
Step 6 Publically recognise a job well done	
Step 7 FOCUS ON YOUR ROLE!	