

## Closed Loop delegation

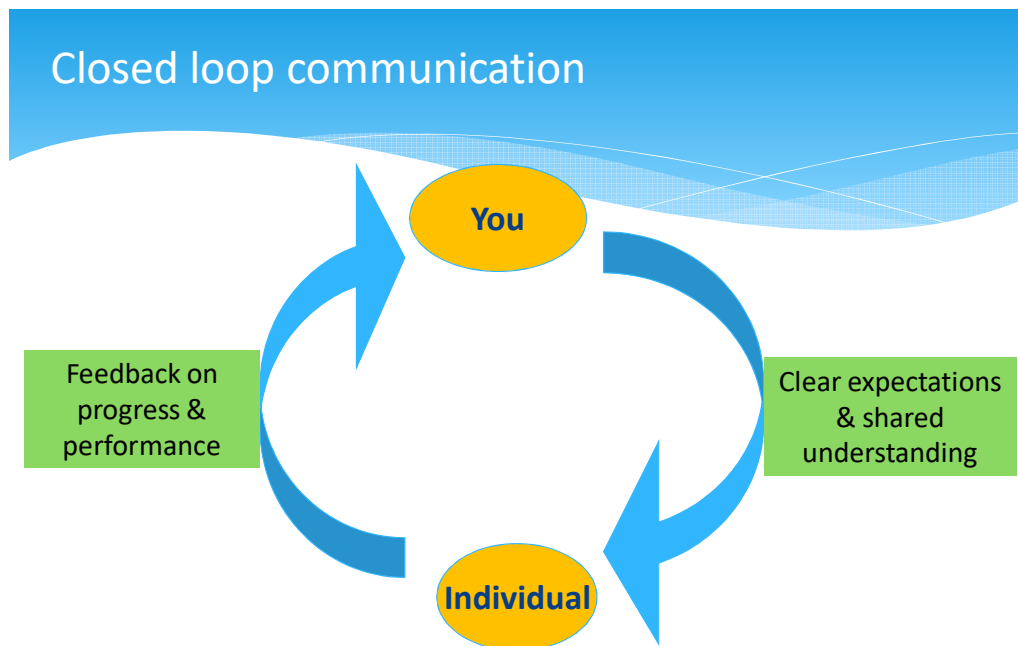
Have you ever found yourself disappointed and frustrated when someone fails to deliver something on time or does not meet your expectations? It's easy to find yourself wishing you had done it yourself, after all wouldn't it be quicker? That's the slippery slope to working stupid hours and failing to lead effectively.

Delegation is a core skill – it's how you get things done through others. Getting it wrong can have significant consequences. You and your team look bad, customers are disappointed, and the individual often feels upset, untrusted and demotivated. They tried their best. You and they wonder "where did it all go wrong"?

***Does anyone intend to do a bad job? I don't think so. So, what's going on? Why, despite everyone's best intentions does delegation fail? How do you avoid the common pitfalls?***

Here's a simple framework, we call it 'Closed loop delegation' (taken from the idea in engineering of closed loop feedback). There are 3 important ingredients:

**CLEAR EXPECTATIONS – SHARED UNDERSTANDING – FEEDBACK ON PROGRESS & PERFORMANCE**



## Recipe for how to delegate successfully

**Ingredient 1** Take time to share your expectations and test that you have common understanding of the outcomes you want. Without this you may both think you have the same view and you are likely to end up with an output that doesn't fit the bill.

**How?** This must be 2 way:

1. Be clear about what success looks like. What do you want to achieve? Why is it important? Are there any constraints (or non-negotiables) you need to share?
2. Think about how much detail the person needs. If they are experienced and skilled, it will be enough to share the outcome and give them freedom to shape the solution. Someone less experienced may need more detailed direction about how to approach the task and a lot more support and hand holding.
3. Test what the person has understood. You can ask them to play back their understanding (you'll never know what they understand until you ask). Seek their ideas and reactions e.g. What's your understanding of the result we need to achieve? What are your thoughts about how you want to tackle this? Note: Asking "are you clear"? May lead to them saying yes – but this doesn't really give you the information you need to be sure.

**Ingredient 2:** Create a deal about how to update on progress and share feedback. Without this, you may find yourself wondering what's happening and checking up on the person – a sure way to leave them feeling micromanaged and untrusted.

**How?** Create a clear deal – only then will you be able to let go and give them space

1. Ask yourself – what do you need in order to feel confident to leave them to get on with it?
2. Discuss with them: How shall we keep in touch on progress? If they are less experienced in this area or lack confidence, you may want to suggest regular reviews/ check ins. More experienced, confident team members will enjoy taking the lead and ownership for keeping you updated
3. Be willing to share why it's important to you. It's OK to share your foibles. If you have the control freak gene that means you will step in if they don't keep you updated, they won't want to do something that triggers that behaviour.
4. Be ready to give clear, timely feedback – people get a boost from knowing that their efforts are appreciated. They also want specific feedback about what to do to improve what they do.

That's the process. It sounds simple and easy in theory. Get it right and you get great results, people feel motivated, you free up your time and your team grow.

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***And there's one last tricky ingredient .... You and your own assumptions.*** Some of the common reasons we've heard are:

'It has to be done my way'

'No one can do it as well as me/ as quickly as me'

'I'll lose control'

**Do you think that's true?** Letting go can be the biggest challenge because stepping up to lead/ manage often means delegating tasks, which were your area of expertise in the past. It's likely that you got a sense of satisfaction and it's probably true that you can do it quicker. If you find that tricky you may be running old patterns that need the support of a coach to free up. (Have a look at Transactional Analysis or Google Kahler's Drivers to give you some pointers)

And if you don't delegate what are the consequences for you, your career development and the growth and development of your team? **So, what's stopping you now?**

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