

Lesson 13: Delegation vs. abdication

 By [Alon Raiz](#)

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Over the past 20 years, I've learned many tough lessons and overcome many entrepreneurial challenges. Some of the most important lessons I've learned using a sequence that mirrors the typical stages of any entrepreneurial journey - from ideation through to scaling a business.



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One of the most common mistakes I see entrepreneurs make as their businesses begin to grow is confusing the concept of delegation with the concept of abdication. Delegation is the managed transference of responsibility of a job, task, project or target to another person in the organisation. Abdication, on the other hand, is the view that when you assign something to someone else, from here on out, it is their problem.

Abdications rarely feature a handover or expectations. They often come with an attitude of: Now it's your problem, so I can get back to whizzing around, shooting from the hip and dealing with all the urgent – but often not-so-important – things I need to get done.

Entrepreneurs who abdicate their responsibilities to employees see them as individuals who will lighten their workload and take responsibility for all the things they hate to do. I would be remiss if I didn't mention here that the two most common forms of abdication I witness in growing businesses are the abdication of sales and finances. Why not abdicate the unpleasant sensation of being rejected? Why not abdicate the monotony and discipline required to produce accurate financials? It's all too tempting.

The fantasy is that once sales and finance have been abdicated, the entrepreneur will have much more time to come up with the big ideas and somebody else will be responsible for going out and selling them, delivering them, and keeping the financial discipline in the business.

Both these common abdication types invariably result in tears. The fantasy turns into a nightmare.

Most often the new salesperson to whom sales have been abdicated is ineffective owing to a lack of training and understanding, and is hamstrung by the entrepreneur's refusal to give them authority to create solutions. The bookkeeper can only produce accurate financials if the entrepreneur actually takes the time to instruct them to produce invoices when sales take place, submit the slips that have been piling up in his or her wallet, and inform them about the discount structures that were agreed upon over a lunch meeting with a client.

In most cases I have witnessed, entrepreneurs do not take full responsibility for empowering their employees with proper handovers, appropriate authority and the information they need to do their jobs properly.

This is what "full-handover" delegation should look like in a growing business:

- the entrepreneur should carefully select the employee who is earmarked to take over a given function
- the employee should receive comprehensive training on the role he or she will be required to fulfil
- the entrepreneur must clearly communicate reasonable targets
- the employee should shadow the role he or she is taking on
- the employee should receive feedback
- the entrepreneur must tolerate some mistakes.

Slowly, over time, the entrepreneur can let go until the point where minimal time is required to support the employee. Delegation is now complete.

It is my strong view that the sales and marketing function in every growing business can be delegated but that the entrepreneur must never stop selling nor marketing their business. The same goes for the finance function; it can be delegated but the entrepreneur should never find themselves in a state where they are not on top of the numbers. Success comes from deliberate and planned delegation without ever relinquishing interest, attention and ultimate responsibility.

ABOUT ALLON RAIZ

Allon Raiz is the CEO of Raizcorp. In 2008, Raiz was selected as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum, and in 2011 he was appointed for the first time as a member of the Global Agenda Council on Fostering Entrepreneurship. Following a series of entrepreneurship master classes delivered at Oxford University in 2014, 2015 and 2016, Raiz has been recognised as the Entrepreneur-in-Residence at the University of Oxford's Saïd Business School.

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