
Why, When, & **How** to Delegate.

A working guide for founders and executives who want to spend their week on the work they were hired to do, and hand off everything else with confidence.

01 WHY

The hidden cost of doing it all.

The day a leader spends doing everyone else's work is the day the work that only they can do gets pushed to the night.

“

Getting support changes the quality of **everything** around a leader. The decision to get help is, at its core, a decision made for the people around you.

30–60%

Share of a typical senior leader's week spent on work unrelated to why they were hired.

WORTH NOTING

AI tools haven't reduced the need for skilled support. They generate more ideas, and more unfinished work, than ever.

Studies show that most senior leaders spend between 30 and 60% of their week on work that has nothing to do with why they were hired. Scheduling meetings. Managing emails. Chasing follow-ups. Coordinating logistics. For many leaders, this kind of work fills the majority of their day.

For founders and early-stage leaders, that pattern has a clear origin. Doing everything themselves is how they built what they built. In the early days, taking on every task regardless of its size is not just practical, it is the job. Over time that behavior becomes a habit. It sticks around long past the stage that required it, because nothing ever forced it to stop. Many leaders, particularly women, find it hard to give themselves permission to ask for help even when the need is clear.

When no one is clearly assigned to a task, it defaults to the person at the top. Small urgent tasks get done first because they're easy. Bigger, harder work keeps getting pushed. Important decisions get less preparation than they need.

There is a cost to the people around a leader, too. When a leader absorbs work that others could own, colleagues lose the chance to contribute at a higher level. A leader doing everything becomes, in effect, a ceiling on what the team around them can do.

Leaders who delegate well report clearer priorities and faster progress on the work that matters most.

01 WHY

Find your delegation starting point.

i. EXERCISE ONE

The 100%

Write down every category of work you do in a typical week and how much of your time each takes. Then write what it **should** be, given your role. Be honest. Include the small stuff..

WHAT I SPEND MY TIME ON	% OF TIME NOW	% IT SHOULD BE
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
Total	100%	100%

— NOW FIND YOUR JOB DESCRIPTION

If you don't have one, list the 5–6 core things you were hired to do.

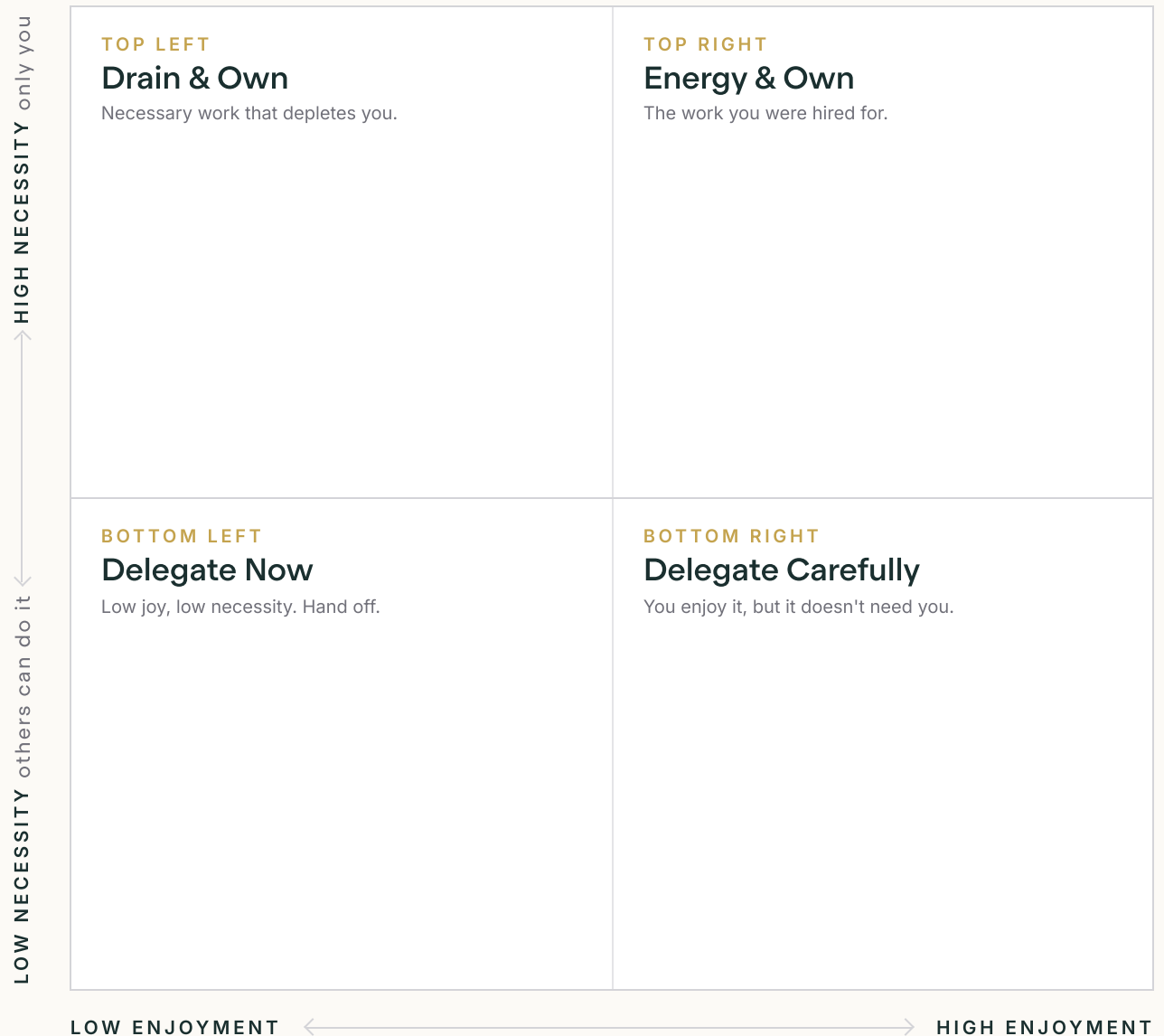
1	2
3	4
5	6

Compare this list against your table above. The work that does not appear here is your delegation starting point. Adjust your "% it should be" column accordingly.

ii. EXERCISE TWO

The Task Matrix

Plot your regular tasks into the quadrant that fits. Be specific. "Email" is not a task. "Following up on proposals that have gone quiet" is.



Where do most of your tasks land? What is one task in the bottom-right quadrant you could hand off this week?

02 WHEN

The signs are already there.

How a leader spends their time is the most honest reflection of how well everything around them is being managed.

FOUR SIGNS

1. Important work has moved into evenings and weekends.
2. Your week doesn't match your job description.
3. Your inbox or calendar produces dread.
4. People are waiting on you to move forward.



If a task is already running at **85 or 90%**, it doesn't need you. It just needs to be off your plate.

The clearest sign that delegation is overdue is when important work has moved out of working hours. When planning, thinking, and the work that needs full attention keep getting pushed to evenings and weekends, the day has been taken over by work that belongs somewhere else.

A second sign is a mismatch between how a leader actually spends their time and what their role requires. Auditing a typical week against a job description will often surface this quickly. Where the two do not match, that gap is where support belongs.

A third sign is dread around basic tools. An inbox or a calendar that produces anxiety has grown past what one person can manage alongside everything else they are responsible for. These tools are meant to make the day easier to run; when they feel like a source of stress instead, they need a dedicated owner.

A fourth sign shows up not in how a leader feels, but in what is happening to the people around them. When colleagues are waiting on responses before they can move forward, the leader has become the thing slowing everything down.

At the task level, signals are clear. A task is ready when it requires a person but not specifically the leader: scheduling, the inbox, prep, follow-ups. Or when a decision has been made and what remains is carrying it out. Or when it shows up week after week without getting done. Start with what's already working. Tasks still being tested are worth keeping for now.

02 WHEN

What is following you home?

i. EXERCISE ONE

The Sunday Test

On Sunday evening, step away from your desk. No email, no Slack. Give yourself ten minutes and write down every work thought that comes to mind, without trying. Don't filter. Don't organize.

What keeps coming up?

1

2

3

4

5

6

Mark each item:

S + O total

M needs me **S** stressing me out **O** someone else could own

WHAT IT MEANS

More than two S or O items means work that belongs somewhere else has followed you into your personal time. Those items are your starting point for delegation.

ii. EXERCISE TWO

The Bottleneck Reverse

Ask three colleagues: "Is there anything you are waiting on me for right now?" Write their answers below.

PERSON	WHAT THEY SAID
1	
2	
3	

Why has this not been done yet?

ITEM	NOT ENOUGH TIME	NOT CLEAR WHAT'S NEEDED	OTHER
1	☐	☐	☐
2	☐	☐	☐
3	☐	☐	☐
4	☐	☐	☐
5	☐	☐	☐
6	☐	☐	☐
7	☐	☐	☐
8	☐	☐	☐
9	☐	☐	☐

ii. EXERCISE TWO · CONTINUED

Who could carry it?

For each of the nine items from the previous page, mark which of the following is true.

ITEM	SOMEONE ELSE, ENTIRELY	SOMEONE ELSE, MOSTLY	GENUINELY NEEDS ME
1	☐	☐	☐
2	☐	☐	☐
3	☐	☐	☐
4	☐	☐	☐
5	☐	☐	☐
6	☐	☐	☐
7	☐	☐	☐
8	☐	☐	☐
9	☐	☐	☐

For the items where someone could do most of this, what would you need to hand over upfront for that to be possible?

WHAT YOUR ANSWERS MEAN

If most items stalled because of **time**, the issue is capacity. If they stalled because the need or deadline wasn't **clear**, the issue is communication. Either way, items in the first two columns above are your most immediate delegation opportunities.

03 HOW

The brief is the whole game.

A weak handoff is a communication problem that shows up later as a results problem.

A GOOD BRIEF COVERS FOUR THINGS

1. **What** the task is and what done looks like.
2. **Why** it matters: the goal behind it.
3. **Where** they decide vs. ask.
4. **Background**: relationships, history, preferences.

“

Just because a leader **can** do something does not mean they should be the one doing it.

TWO PRACTICES

Share goals at the start of each week and month. Send a short daily brief, a voice memo or note, covering everything that has come up since the last check-in.

The quality of delegation comes almost entirely down to the quality of the brief. Think about how AI tools work. A vague prompt produces a vague answer. A detailed prompt, one that explains the goal, the context, the tone, and what a good result looks like, produces something useful. Delegation works exactly the same way.

Above everything else, the person needs to understand why the task matters. When someone understands the real goal, they can make good decisions on their own when something unexpected comes up. When someone only knows the task and not the goal behind it, any small obstacle sends them back to the leader.

Most leaders run into the same set of concerns. Fear of letting go: start with one small task and build trust. Belief they would do it better themselves: work done at 80% of a leader's standard still produces strong results. Concern that it would be faster to do it directly: true the first time only. Knowledge compounds. Doubt the person can handle it: ask before assuming. Many people have skills that go undiscovered simply because no one thought to ask.

A useful question to apply to any task is whether it requires specifically the leader, or whether it just requires a person. Most tasks fall into the second group, even when they feel like they belong in the first.

03 HOW

Write a brief worth following.

i. EXERCISE ONE

The What vs. The Why

Pick one task you plan to delegate. Write two versions of the instruction below.

The What. Describe the task and how to do it.

The Why. Describe what you're trying to achieve and why it matters.

ii. EXERCISE TWO

The Gap Test

Write a brief for a task you want to delegate. Include what done looks like, why it matters, what decisions the person can make alone, and any background they would need.

My brief:

Now read it back. What is the first question the person will come back and ask?

1	☐
2	☐
3	☐
4	☐

Keep going until you cannot think of another question. Every question on that list is a gap in the brief.

Rounds

✓ A ONE-PAGE REFERENCE

The Delegation Checklist.

Use this every time you hand something off.

01

Before you delegate

- ☐ I have named this task clearly enough that someone else could own it without my context.
- ☐ I know what a finished result looks like.
- ☐ I can explain in one sentence why this task matters and what I am trying to achieve.
- ☐ I have identified which decisions the person can make on their own and where they need to check back in with me.
- ☐ I have shared any background they would need: relevant relationships, history, tone, or preferences.
- ☐ I am handing off the authority to act, not just the task itself.
- ☐ I have shared my current goals so they understand what matters most right now.

02

When you hand it off

- ☐ I have given the why, not just the what.
- ☐ I have agreed on a check-in point rather than leaving it open-ended.
- ☐ I have asked if they have everything they need before they start.

03

When it comes back

- ☐ I am asking whether my feedback is essential or preferential before I make changes.
- ☐ I have noted what gaps the brief had so I can fill them next time.
- ☐ I have closed the loop so the person knows the outcome of their work.