

# The Importance of Delegating Work as an Attorney



Delegating work as an attorney can be difficult. Attorneys take pride in their work and want to make sure it's done right every time. This is especially true if they don't have [reliable systems to help support their team and keep their tasks organized](#). For instance, the Supreme Court of New Jersey admonished Andrew Rosenbloom because he missed discovery deadlines in four of the matters he handled. *This isn't the whole [story](#).*

Rosenbloom states that his employer “*set him up to fail.*” How does he know that? His employer *assigned him to more than **100 cases, all at once***. He represented The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (A&P), a regional supermarket operator.

## Was this attorney set up to fail?

It certainly seems that way. To make matters worse, Rosenbloom was required to represent his client in approximately 75 matters in New Jersey and 41 in Pennsylvania. He struggled mightily to meet the demand but eventually fell short

on four matters **out of 116 matters.**

That he was forced to juggle all at once, what's more baffling is the fact that, according to the news story, *"It wasn't until almost a year later that the firm gave him a part-time assistant to help him."* As a result, Rosenbloom started taking anti-depressant/anxiety medication in March 2014 and experienced "marital difficulties," the board said. **This was clearly unsustainable.**

Rosenbloom elaborated, explaining why he felt he was set up to fail.

- All A&P cases originated in the New York office. New York filed the answers before Rosbenbloom was involved;
- Seth Rubine, the New York managing partner and Rosenbloom's supervisor, was listed as trial counsel in all A&P matters;
- All mail went directly to the New York office, which calendared all events and deadlines, and then re-routed all notices to Rosenbloom; and
- Rubine sent matters to Rosenbloom after discovery deadlines had expired and told him to "fix it."

If this is true, it seems he really was set up to fail. This story is an example of poor delegation. It would be simple and naive to assume the worst about any of the attorneys or firm in this story. We don't know the full details of what happened.

## **Delegating work as an attorney starts with the right person**

It begins with "what." You'll need to know what needs to be done, what needs to be sent where, what you need from your clients, etc. Identifying *the what* is clearly the first step.

Many believe it's the only step which is exactly why they neglect the "*who*." Successful delegating work as an attorney requires that you, the delegator, identify the right associate for the job. Ask delegators if they have the right person for the job and you're likely to get silence. It's much easier to fob off work on any associate and demand that they get it done.

Most of the time, this works. Until you assign your task to the wrong *who* to your project, case or matter and things go horribly wrong; complicating things further, the right *who* isn't singular, it's often plural. You need the right people, at multiple levels, to get a project, case or matter finished.

## What the right who looks like

The right *who* can navigate a complex series of obstacles including:

- **Organizational obstacles**, i.e., who is ultimately responsible for quality? Who is accountable to the client? Who is responsible for communicating with the client?
- **Managerial obstacles**. Can delegators let go of the work once they delegate, or will they insist on micromanaging the work into dysfunction? It makes sense why many would-be delegators feel they can do a better job.
- **Situational obstacles**, e.g., clients demanding or expecting their matter to be handled exclusively by partners (i.e., don't delegate my matter to a junior associate). Client expectations, along with other issues, create a complex web of problems.

The right *whos* (plural) consist of:

- Delegators, those assigning tasks
- Delegates, those to whom tasks are assigned
- Managers those who manage delegation
- Troubleshooters, those who identify and fix any issues with delegation

Sometimes these roles are spread between two people; sometimes, it's spread between a small group of professionals. The task, your firm's culture and financial constraints dictate the *whos*.

## Asking questions identifies the right *whos*.

- Have delegators clearly and carefully outlined what needs to be done?
- Do delegates have the training, experience, materials and support to perform?
- If delegates don't have what they need, can you get them what they need?
- Do managers know how to manage delegation?
- Do troubleshooters know how to fix delegation issues?

This is how you determine who you delegate work to in your law firm. These simple questions solve a variety of delegation issues. Simple is difficult when you don't know that you should ask these questions.

## Successful delegation is the key to growth

Attorneys are overworked. Most are only paid for [30 percent of their day](#). The issue? Most attorneys spend their days dealing with busywork, administrative

tasks, business development and document management challenges.

**Attorneys need to delegate.**

As we've seen, most attorneys aren't taught how. Many are set up to fail from the very beginning. It's no surprise then that many make serious mistakes that harm their careers and future earning potential.

These mistakes are unnecessary.

Successful delegation starts with what but it ends with who. Ask the right questions, find the right who and you'll find delegation is simple, efficient and successful.

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