



## Delegating Duties

presented by Chuck Sullivan, Director of Athletic Communications, Harvard University  
CoSIDA Workshop  
Nashville, Tenn. • July 3, 2006

### Overview

Whether you're a director who oversees a large staff of assistants, you work as a one-person shop, or you're currently an assistant director looking for professional growth, effective delegation of duties can go a long way toward making your operation run smoothly.

There's likely not a person in the sports information profession who can honestly admit that he or she has too much spare time. SIDs today are asked to serve a larger audience than ever —we're now expected to be the online voices of our departments, rather than just the intermediary between the school and the media. But at the same time we've taken on the role of "webmaster," the media relations component of our jobs has hardly diminished. On the other hand, the explosion of college sports media in recent years — through television networks, online news outlets, or locally produced webcasts —means that we're serving more external clients than ever.

With the increased expectations from our media, students, parents, alumni and fans comes an increased need to take a hard look at what we're doing and how we're doing it.

### Why People Don't Delegate

There are a number of reasons why people frequently don't feel comfortable delegating tasks or assignments. Becoming aware of these reasons is a first step toward "letting go."

- **Concerns about reduced performance** — If you assign this task to someone else, you feel it won't be done as well.

To be fair, it's likely that no one on your campus can do your job as well as you can, especially if no one else is trained to do so.

Keep in mind, though, that something that's done *differently* than the way you would approach it doesn't necessarily make it inferior. SIDs are perfectionists in many ways, but there are a number of facets of the job that don't necessarily require perfection. There are occasions when "good enough" is good enough.

- **Not enough time to train** — It may take more time to train someone to do the task than it would to actually do the task yourself.

This might be true in the short-term. By the

time it takes you to train someone to manually enter a box score in Stat Crew, you could probably enter multiple box scores yourself. In the long haul, though, training someone to do this properly could save you significant hours.

- **Personal satisfaction** — You may enjoy the particular task and the rewards it brings.

You may have a great relationship with a particular coach and truly enjoy working with a given sport. But if there are other options within the department that make sense, it's unwise not to consider them. If you send someone else on the baseball spring trip, maybe the extra time with your family compensates for missing a trip to a warm-weather climate in February.

### This Is A Two-Way Street

By delegating important tasks to other staff members, you're not only helping to refine your own focus, you're helping your staff with their professional development.

Chances are good that your staff *wants* to take on more responsibility, so find ways to make that happen. Put a staff member in charge of compiling and distributing your weekly all-sports release. Let an assistant handle pre- or post-game responsibilities in a high-profile sport. Encourage your staff to serve on committees within the department or the school. This will only help them when they're interviewing for a director's job.

You can also delegate assignments to help a staff member improve in particular areas. Or delegate a wide variety of assignments to someone to help him improve his versatility.

### But I'm A One-Person Shop ...

You don't need to have an army of assistants and support staff to find people who can help you with specific tasks. Effective management of a student staff will go a long way toward making your life easier. Make sure to take advantage of the athletic department support staff — administrative assistants and secretaries can be invaluable assets if managed properly.

You can even take this a step further. Name an experienced student worker your "team captain" and make her responsible for training underclassmen (now you're delegating delegation).

## QUICK HITS

### Let It Go

Proper delegation requires that the manager be prepared to let go of a particular project and that the staff member be prepared to accept it. Be sure to train effectively, provide the authority for your staff member to see the project through, and stay out of the way of the step-by-step process.

### Pats On The Back

It is especially important when delegating tasks to recognize staff members who successfully get the job done. It is extremely easy to forget or take for granted, but honest praise goes a long way.

### Keep It Delegated

If you've clearly set your expectations and chosen the right person for a job, the task should not end up back on your desk. Let the staff member fix his mistakes, learn from them, and see the project through to completion.

### Think Globally

Play to your group's strengths and think about ways to better serve the whole department. If one staff member is a particularly strong writer, find ways to have her write pieces that go beyond her assigned sports.

### Look In The Mirror

Understanding the effective delegation of projects will help you when things are delegated to you. When projects fall to you, take advantage of the opportunities for increased responsibility and diversity of experience.

### Nothing Lasts Forever

There are few things more rewarding for an SID who leaves a job than to see his protégé step in as a replacement. Delegating duties to assistants — at any level —prepares them to do your job when you're away and grooms them as potential replacements as you all move up the ladder.

### If You're An Assistant Looking To Advance

Everyone at this workshop likely has the technical skills to succeed in the sports information profession. The assistants who are able to demonstrate their managerial skills are the ones who find advancement in the profession the fastest, however. The ability to manage, and be managed, can separate your resume from the pack.