

# Push decision-making to the front lines

Many leaders urge employees to take responsibility and make smart decisions. But some leaders interfere by insisting on signing off on those decisions. By delegating well, you can push decision-making down to the rank-and-file.

At one California health care organization, senior leaders met for a few days to figure out how to flatten the hierarchy and delegate more effectively to front-line staff. The executive team began by establishing three categories of decisions: personnel, financial and program.

They examined each one and asked, “Does the CEO need to be involved—or can we delegate this?”

Through this exercise, the management team realized that the CEO was holding onto too much authority for too many decisions.

Accepting the need to delegate more, they reviewed key types of decisions and asked, “If it’s delegated, what do we mean by that?”

They defined the parameters of authority that employees would wield. Clarifying the scope of staffers’ decision-making autonomy removed much of the ambiguity around the process.

The executives concluded with a written summary of who would make what decisions. The CEO agreed to teach employees how to make wise decisions and communicate the repercussions of those judgments to their colleagues.

Within a year, the new system proved a success. Freed from micromanaging, the CEO could focus on loftier strategic issues.

Granted more authority, midlevel managers began to thrive and took ownership of their business units.

— Adapted from *The Leadership Equation*, Eric Douglas, Greenleaf Book Group Press.