

DELEGATION, PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY for RESULTS

The Group Leader role is pivotal for the success of our grassroots work. This is where “the rubber meets the road”. Group Leaders create, strengthen and sustain the group through enrollment, inspiration, coaching and ensuring that volunteer advocates are supported in taking on and completing needed work.

There are standard planning tasks to be accomplished – the challenge is to harness, guide and channel the motivation and commitment of your group members and the group itself. This is no small task – especially without authority to rely on. Yet clarity regarding what needs to be done, by when and by whom, honors volunteer time and allows people to optimize the time they can contribute. This helps them experience their volunteer time as meaningful and well used.

How do you do this? The use of goal setting and planning, delegation and action oriented communication have proven effective. Really effective group leaders have strong skills in systematic goal setting and planning. They are also very effective at asking for participation, managing accountability and bringing plans in to reality.

A primary learning for Group Leaders is to share the work through delegation. It is a rookie mistake to try to do it ***all*** --- and over time, that approach ensures burnout. A hallmark of a more effective or seasoned leader is to focus on sustaining the group in order to expand capacity. Ensuring that incoming members are oriented and trained and that all advocates have opportunities to learn new roles or contribute differently is key to keeping them to engaged and, in turn, key to sustaining the group and expanding capacity. **Goal setting with planning, delegation** and effective **communication** are critical skills for a Group Leader to achieve a vibrant group that collaborates and produces results. **Understanding how groups shape and mature** also helps a Group Leader serve the group.

Group Dynamics

Each group is an entity unto itself --- when it is formed, it is immature and goes through a development phase. Often this phase can be challenging as members sort through who they are in the group, what matters to them and whether the group will grow in to something with a purpose and intent. Bruce Tuckman outlined 4 phases that each group will pass through: forming, storming, norming and performing. Understanding these natural phases and recognizing when they are occurring can inform and improve group leadership.

One key concept in a dynamic volunteer group is that each time that membership changes (member(s) joining or leaving), it is essentially a new group—that will pass through the phases again. Strong, purpose-oriented, well developed groups can often

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do so quickly. GLs can anticipate the possibility of the phases surfacing and help the group through.

Goal Setting with Planning

RESULTS and its partners set and achieve ambitious and far-reaching goals. Once these big goals are assumed and strategically framed, they are systematically apportioned amongst global and domestic regions according to the specific challenge and the needed results. As each advocate, each group, each region set and deliver on their goals, the results multiply and build.

The Group Leader is instrumental in this process by inviting and encouraging the team to strive for high performance; by engaging individual advocates and the group itself to set ambitious goals and to follow through; and by celebrating achievements. The GL also ensures that the various tasks needed to achieve the goals are undertaken and that group members are prepared for success.

Your Regional Coordinator will work with the Group Leader team to set regional goals and to think through group contributions in light of the challenge, group maturity and size and other factors. Your role as a Group Leader is to facilitate the engagement and commitment of your group to taking on a specific commitment and then to follow through to create the results.

Tools are on-going provided to through the group support structure to track and document work that, along with other group's and regions, build to the large goal that has been undertaken.

Delegation/Assuming Accountability

In an employment situation, managers are responsible for assigning and monitoring work. Even with this kind of authority build it, what makes the biggest impact on results is when individuals assume full accountability for producing a result. In our volunteer environment, RESULTS advocates have already taken process authority and chosen to join the group- a great demonstration of the commitment.

The skilled Group Leader will build on this commitment and leverage delegation skills in a way that invites and encourages advocates to assume accountability for specific tasks. It is both a delegation and a confirmation of agreement. The next section covers the communication aspect of this interaction. First, a look at the basics of delegation:

- 1) Define and Frame the Task-
 - clarify what the goal is and what outcomes are desired
 - identify whether this an individual or team task

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- 2) Make the delegation. To ensure your delegation will “take”, include the following elements from the well-known SMART approach to Delegation and/or work through them with the person who takes them on:
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Agreed
 - Realistic
 - Timebound
- 3) Agree on next steps / milestones for review

For more information on delegation strategies see citation below for Alan Chapman materials through Business Balls.

Communication that Produces Results

In addition to setting and planning goals and determining tasks or sets of tasks that will achieve the goal, it is essential that individuals assume accountability for specific assignments. This is where the Group Leader’s skill in communication can help make the group successful.

Fernando Flores researched language dynamics and whether the language had its intended effect. He distilled those dynamics to an essential set of speech acts that if used intentionally could accelerate clarity, alignment, commitment and follow through.

Speech Acts:

- **Assertions**
- **Assessments**
- **Declarations**
- **Requests**
- **Offers**
- **Promises**

Flores’ work became seminal to ontological learning across a number of leadership programs and coaching and consulting approaches. Effective use of these speech acts makes a difference in business environments, families, and in influencing others such as legislators, volunteers and RESULTS advocates.

As a result of both how important Flores’ contribution has been and how widespread the usage has become, there has been much written about these speech acts. You may have participated in learning or coaching programs that leveraged this material.

The theoretical and empirical foundation for this work is both interesting and extraordinarily useful in ensuring results that require many people and teams to collaborate. Alan Sieler writes: “It is important also to regard an organization as a **network of commitments**. Within their specialized roles, individuals need and rely on each other’s specialist knowledge and skills. Through continually providing service to each other, they enhance their own and others’ individual and team performances” (Promise Management: An Integral Part of Organisational Improvement- © Newfield

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Institute). This is one of the resources available for additional learning and practice cited below.

In the RESULTS Group Leader Training program, certain speech acts – **requests and promises**- are highlighted as intentional tools to forward results. These speech acts are particularly important for Group Leaders who are asking others to take on tasks and managing the process of delivering on plans.

These steps of DELEGATION show how these speech acts apply:

TASK to be done	Group Leader makes Request>	Advocate responds in one of 3 ways	Commit to commit later (Check my calendar, make arrangements, get coverage) -or- Agree/ Promise/ Commit (as requested or with counteroffer) -or- Decline / Cannot / Will Not
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When leaders and activists work together in a clear and principled way and assume positive intent, their intentional use of language to clarify and deliver on commitments supports breakthroughs in results.

Great group leaders build an understanding in the team that the ability to make clear requests and promises fuels the group's ability to deliver results by making clear and reliable commitments. Sometimes new Group Leaders are hesitant to direct and delegate work to other volunteers, yet learning to use requests and promises (commitments) clarifies expectations and facilitates planning and collaboration.

Keys for Group Leaders:

- Learn to make clear requests and allowing others to *respond* and *choose* to take on accountability
- Listen for and confirm those responses and the related expectations
- Recognize when a commitment has *not* been made – and with precision, clarify whether it is a decline or a commitment to commit later
- Reinforce personal responsibility and the team sense of identity and capability within the group
- Summarize and align on commitments (this is particularly important when group members' have interdependent roles) at end of the meeting.

REQUESTS

- Make a clear request: 'I request that you do "x" by "y" (time).
- Adapt your own language while being mindful to actually make a request with clear parameters.

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- Specify to whom you are making the request – especially when the action will require more than one individual to follow-through.
- Focus your request on a future action that the recipient is able to perform.
- Effective requests identify any conditions of satisfaction (how will I know when the action is complete)

PROMISES and other responses

- A promise is a commitment for future action
- As a group leader, you want to listen carefully to the responses to your requests. It is a good idea to confirm your understanding of what was committed.
 - The receiver might promise but want to renegotiate the conditions of satisfaction – this is called a counter offer. (Yes I will do that, but I cannot meet that timeline- I can commit to the following week).
 - The receiver might promise but not fully understand the request as you made it.
 - The receiver might seem open to the request but unable to commit in the moment. This offers the possibility of the individual committing to commit at a later time. GL can confirm when and how the advocate will commit.
 - At times, you will receive a direct decline. More often, you might get no response. Be sure to clarify when there is no response rather than assuming the individual agrees.
- A good practice is to establish a regular routine of confirming next steps and commitments made at the end of your group meeting –this can help surface any differences of understanding. This can then be used at the next meeting to check on progress.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING ABOUT COMMUNICATING FOR RESULTS

- Tuckman's Stages of Group Development
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruce_Tuckman
- Delegation – www.businessballs.com/delegation.htm - Effective delegation skills. Alan Chapman © Businessballs 2016 provides a comprehensive overview of various delegation approaches and related theories. A very useful overview.
- Alan Sieler: "Promise Management: An Integral Part of Organisational Improvement" Copyright © Newfield Institute
- Seven Stones Leadership White Paper
http://www.sevenstonesleadership.com/wp-content/uploads/Thought_Leadership_TheSpeechActs.pdf

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