

Delegation of Authority

Definition: The **Delegation of Authority** is a process wherein the manager assigns responsibility to its subordinate along with the certain authority to accomplish the task on the manager's behalf.

These subordinates, finding the work assigned to them by their superior exceeds their "**Span of Control**" assign a portion of their works to their own subordinates. This process continues till all the tasks and activities are assigned to those who have the appropriate physical, psychological and professional abilities to do it. Delegation is the downward transfer of formal authority from one person to another. Superiors delegate authority to subordinates to facilitate the accomplishment of the assigned work.

The following three elements are in the scheme of delegation:

1. Assignment of duties or tasks.
2. Delegation of authority.
3. Accountability for performance of duties and exercise of authority.

1. Assignment of Duties or Tasks:

A manager has to assign a part of his duties to others under him or her because he cannot himself perform all the work. So, when assigning duties he should ensure that the subordinates, to whom work is assigned, perform their tasks sincerely and competently. Even after that a manager assigns duties and tasks to his subordinates; he continues to be ultimately responsible for the proper performance of these duties and tasks.

2. Delegation of Authority:

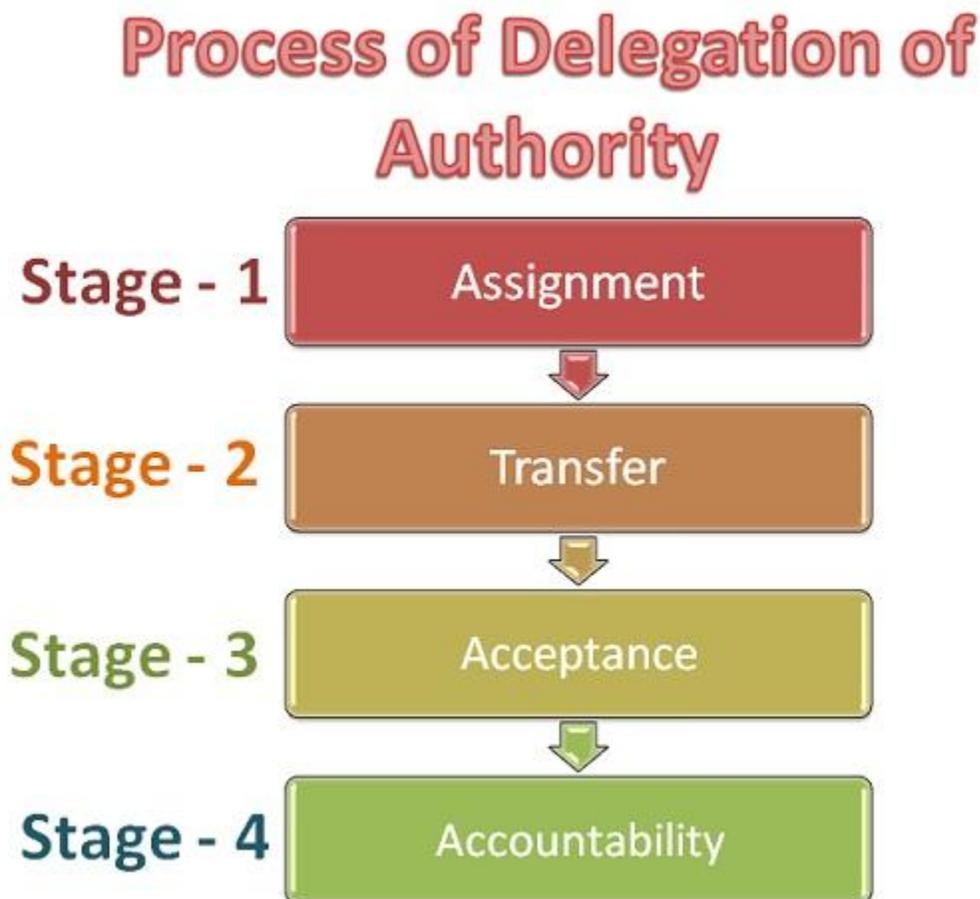
While the duties and tasks are entrusted to the subordinates by the superior, the authority should be granted them to perform those duties and tasks well. It is called as “delegation of authority”. This delegation of authority is considered as an essential to take all actions, which lead to accomplish their duties successfully, and the organisational goals.

3. Accountability for Performance of Duties and Exercise of Authority:

The person to whom any responsibility is assigned and authority is delegated should also be made accountable or answerable for the proper performance of the assigned responsibility and for proper exercise of the delegated authority.

Process of Delegation of Authority

The process of delegation of authority comprises of four steps which are as follows:



1) Assignment of Duties to Subordinates: Before the actual delegation of authority, the delegator must decide on the duties which he wants the subordinate or the group of subordinates to perform. Here, the manager lists the activities to be performed along with the targets to be achieved, and the same is spelled out to the subordinates. Thus, in the first stage, the duties are assigned to the subordinates as per their job roles.

2) Transfer of Authority to perform the duty: At this stage, an adequate authority is delegated to the subordinate which is essential to perform the duty assigned to him. A manager must make sure; that authority is strictly delegated just to perform the responsibility, as more authority may lead to its misuse by the subordinate.

3) Acceptance of the Assignment: At this stage, the subordinate either accepts or rejects the tasks assigned to him by his superior. If the subordinate or the delegate, refuses to accept the duty and the authority to perform it, then the manager looks for the other person who is capable of and is willing to undertake the assignment. Once the assignment gets accepted by the subordinate, the delegation process reaches its last stage.

4) Accountability: The process of delegation of authority ends at the creation of an obligation on the part of the subordinate to perform his responsibility within the powers assigned to him. Once the assignment is accepted by the subordinate, then he becomes responsible for the completion of the duty and is accountable to the superior for his performance.

Thus, the process of delegation of authority begins with the duties assigned to the subordinates and ends when the subordinate is obliged to carry out the operations as intended.

Delegation is an important managerial skill requiring a manager to:

- (i) Size up his total workload in operational terms,
- (ii) Divide his total workload into sub-tasks,
- (iii) Separate the sub-tasks which he has to retain for himself from those which he can assign to his subordinates,
- (iv) Work out the authority content required to carry out the assignable sub-tasks,
- (v) Distribute the assignable sub-tasks together with the authority content among his subordinates,
- (vi) Make his subordinates individually accountable to him for carrying out the assigned tasks and for exercising the delegated authority, and
- (vii) Instruct, guide and motivate the subordinates in discharging their responsibilities.