

# PREFACE:

## HOW A CAVEMAN CAME TO LIFE

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Are you cursed? What if you are but don't even know it—walking around day and night under an invisible curse? The kind that haunts you, drives you crazy, exhausts you, and makes you question why you even bother getting out of bed. If you were cursed, how would you know? You'd be stressed and grumpy. Never able to see the silver lining, never able to stop and smell the roses, never able to come up for air. You'd be ever-weighted down. Crushed and burdened. Living a life that looks light and fluffy on the outside but harbors a very dark center. If you were cursed, you wouldn't know what to do about it or how to get rid of it. You'd be lost and broken... hopeless.

That was my curse. I realized it one afternoon while riding on a lawn mower, listening to a leadership podcast and thinking something was missing. What curse was I living under? What curse might be plaguing your life too? It was the curse of capability—the curse of “I can, so I should.”

Are you a capable person? Do you know how to get things done? Maybe you're a planner, an achiever, an innovator. Capability comes in all shapes and sizes. My capability curse was

that I could do lots of things well—better than the average bear. Now you might be wondering, “Is this guy nuts?” Why would being able to get stuff done or having many strengths be a curse? Let me explain.

I was running a venture-funded startup that was growing fast. I was also the father of three daughters—ages 5, 4, and 2. We lived on a small 50-acre farm with chickens, goats, cows, and a dog named Maggie. The American dream, right? Well, maybe, but it didn’t feel like it. In fact, I was miserable.

Each morning, I’d rise early to beat traffic on my 50-minute commute, work long hours, and try to grow the business. In the beginning, I was chief cook and bottle washer—handling admin, marketing, support, training, HR, and anything else needed. When our church asked us to lead a small group at our house every Monday night, I thought, “I could, so I should.”

My wife was staying home with the kids, so to save money, I bought a nice mower to cut our grass. Doesn’t sound so bad, right? Who doesn’t love the hum of a mower on a Saturday morning? I could, so I should! But our yard wasn’t a half-acre—it was ACRES of grass with trees and fencing that needed not just mowing but weed-eating too. It took 8-10 hours to cut our yard in the country.

And that’s just scratching the surface. We haven’t even touched on the volunteer work, coaching girls’ soccer teams, or leading worship on Sunday morning (plus greeting at the front door before service). Sound like a real achiever? A real trooper? More like someone headed for a mental breakdown.

I was busy but not happy. Productive-ish but not thriving. What was I? Tired. The breaking point came when we bought an Airbnb next to our property. My wife picked paint colors, decorated the whole house, and booked our first guests. She decided we didn’t need a property manager or cleaner because “she could, so she

should!” The week before guests arrived, our builder—who was supposed to help finish some remodeling—completely bailed on us with just five days’ notice. I spent Labor Day weekend laying flooring for 14 hours a day just to have enough time to clean and furnish the last room before check-in.

No days off. No downtime. No breaks. So there I was, the next Saturday on my mower, listening to a leadership podcast (because that’s what “could-and-shoulders” do when they cut grass). The topic was delegation. The guest had his method of describing it, and I thought, “That’s great, but no one will ever remember how to do that when it counts.” Then it hit me: “I am HORRIBLE at delegation, and that might be why I’m so miserable!”

When we don’t have boundaries, when we’re very capable, when we’re pleasers—or all three—we tend to take things in but never give them up. If we’re being honest with ourselves (as I had to be on that mower), we’re lazy and scared.

It seems impossible to use the “L” word when describing such achievements. But it’s true, and that’s why the curse maintains its power. I didn’t want to do the real work of finding someone to cut my grass. I made excuses: they wouldn’t do it as well as me, it would be too expensive. Why pay a cleaner for the Airbnb when we could handle it in our “free time?”

What if no one could lead a small group like us? What if we needed to rotate less on the worship team? What if I needed to hire an executive assistant or more team members, and they weren’t capable? What if I needed to get rid of the chickens? For capable people, it’s easier to continue doing energy-draining tasks than to confront the idea of letting go.

Part of my curse was feeling I “should” be able to do all these things, and if I couldn’t (while being a great dad), I was a failure. What a curse. When I stepped back, I realized I wasn’t living up to

my potential in almost any area of my life. I took shortcuts on the yard because I had to start at 5 AM to cut some before work so I could coach soccer on weekends. I was never prepared for practice because I came straight from work. I couldn't find 20 minutes each night to practice music for Sunday worship. I was living my worst nightmare—unable to keep up with the “shoulds.”

That's why I'm writing this book. That Saturday afternoon on the lawn mower, I became keenly aware of my need to say “no” and delegate better. It hit me like a bolt of lightning. My new delegation system was so easy even... well, you can finish the GEICO commercial. The Caveman Delegation System was born, and I started implementing it the next week.

Over the years, I've honed these ideas and become a much better delegator. Today, I'm more productive than ever before. I'm better at the activities that truly matter, and I'm a better husband and father. It's been years since I spent 8 hours cutting grass. We have an amazing cleaner for the Airbnb. I hired dozens of employees at the startup, and even after I transitioned out, it kept growing and recently sold for tens of millions of dollars. One of my early hires even became COO.

I believe in the importance of delegation. We need great leaders—not burnt-out leaders who are miserable. I hope the ideas and simple system outlined in this book help you take your delegation skills to the next level. If it seems overwhelming, just start by writing down one thing you can try to hand off when you finish reading this book. Happy reading!

# INTRODUCTION: OF ANTS AND ELEPHANTS

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In organizations and teams, there are big initiatives and vision statements. These are an organization's "elephants"—they're large, commanding, and you don't want to mess with their tusks, or you might get trampled! It's crucial that we align our actions and intentions with these elephants and our company's values.

For most people, this isn't a complicated idea. When organizations are clear on their mission, vision, and values—and intentional about creating a culture around them—they naturally promote people who align with these ideas. If you're a leader reading this book on delegation, you're well aware of your organization's elephants.

However, there's another creature lurking in every organization. One that's often overlooked and misjudged but can be more dangerous to a leader because of its unassuming nature: ants. There's a South African proverb that says, "Even an ant can hurt an elephant." This simple wisdom reminds us that even the smallest, seemingly insignificant things can have a powerful impact.

So what are the ants in our organizations? They're the small things that slowly sap your energy, take away your strength, and

drain your life while relentlessly pursuing your time. Ants are those minor tasks you're not particularly skilled at completing. They're team members who rely on you to finish their work. They're the piles of emails in your inbox. They're the things you know you need to address but keep shoving to the back of your mind. All these tiny ants are slowly but surely attacking your spirit.

The danger of ants shouldn't be underestimated. In 1903, a tragic story emerged from Australia. Michael Harold lived alone in a hut on the Thurgoona property of Mr. and Mrs. Day. After noticing his absence, the Days searched for him, only to find Mr. Harold lying unconscious in his hut, covered in ants that were eating into his body. The ants had entered his ears, nostrils, and mouth. He never regained consciousness and died in Albury Hospital later that week. This horrible tragedy illustrates why the South African proverb rings so true: **DON'T UNDERESTIMATE ANTS!**

Does this sound familiar? You're juggling a dozen tasks, your inbox is overflowing, and your to-do list seems to grow longer by the minute. If you're nodding your head, you're not alone. Welcome to the world of leadership, where the weight of responsibility often feels like a heavy backpack you can never unload. But beware—these urgent items can either distract you from the elephants or literally suck the life right out of you.

We need to lighten that load. To fight the ants! We need a way to accomplish more, empower our teams, and reclaim our time while staying focused on the elephants. That's where delegation comes in—the secret weapon of successful leaders.

Delegation isn't just about assigning tasks. It's an art form, a delicate dance of trust, communication, and strategy. It's about recognizing the potential in others and giving them the opportunity to shine. It's about focusing your energy where it matters most and enabling your team to grow alongside you.

But let's be honest—delegation isn't always easy. Many leaders struggle with knowing when and what to delegate. You might have thought, "It'll be quicker if I just do it myself," or "No one else can do it quite like I can." These thoughts are common, but they hold you back from becoming the most effective leader you can be.

In this book, we'll explore the ins and outs of effective delegation. We'll debunk common myths, tackle the fears that hold leaders back, and provide practical strategies to help you become a delegation pro. From knowing when and what to delegate to choosing the right person for the job, we'll cover it all.

You'll learn about innovative approaches like the Caveman Delegation Method, which offers a step-by-step guide to transferring responsibilities effectively. We'll also dive into real-world examples—both successes and cautionary tales—to illustrate the power of delegation done right.

Whether you're a seasoned executive looking to fine-tune your skills or a new manager taking your first steps into leadership, this book is for you. By the time you finish reading, you'll have the tools and confidence to transform your leadership style and your team's performance through the art of delegation.

As we journey together, you'll learn not only how to delegate but how to build a culture of accountability and trust within your team. Whether you're leading a small group or an entire organization, mastering delegation will elevate your leadership and help your team achieve more.

So, are you ready to let go of the reins a little and watch your team soar? Let's embark on this journey together and unlock the full potential of delegation in your leadership toolkit.





# CHAPTER 1:

## THE ART AND SCIENCE OF DELEGATION

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“Don’t tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.”

- **George S. Patton**

### **The Art of Being a Conductor**

Imagine you’re conducting an orchestra. As the conductor, your job isn’t to play every instrument – it’s to bring out the best in each musician, creating harmony from individual talents. That’s what great delegation looks like in action.

Delegation is more than just a management technique; it’s a fundamental leadership skill that can make or break your success. At its core, delegation is the act of entrusting tasks or responsibilities to others. But it’s more than just passing the buck. Effective delegation is about empowering your team, maximizing efficiency, and focusing your energy where it’s needed most.

When we conduct an orchestra, it’s clear that no single leader can play every instrument. Similarly, delegation is an essential strategy for unlocking a team’s potential and achieving success

within an organization. According to research, effective delegation can boost efficiency and improve employee performance (Leana, 1986). By sharing responsibilities, leaders allow team members to grow, acquire new skills, and make valuable contributions to common goals. This blend of teamwork and personal development is what turns delegation from a simple task into a transformative leadership practice.

## The Psychology Behind Effective Delegation

Why do some leaders struggle with delegation while others seem to do it effortlessly? It often comes down to psychology. Many of us have an innate desire for control, a fear of failure, or a belief that “if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself.” These mindsets can be major roadblocks to effective delegation

But here’s the truth: **letting go doesn’t mean losing control**. In fact, it often leads to better outcomes. When you delegate effectively, you’re tapping into the diverse skills and perspectives of your team. You’re creating opportunities for growth and innovation that simply can’t happen when you try to do everything yourself.

The best delegators see the potential in people, not just the tasks at hand.

Delegation is not about shirking responsibilities or avoiding work; it’s about focusing on the responsibilities that truly require your attention and expertise while empowering your team to take ownership of other tasks. This is where great leaders excel—they understand that leadership isn’t about doing everything themselves but about maximizing the potential of their teams. John Maxwell, in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, emphasizes that delegation

is a key way to empower others, increase your own effectiveness, and drive results. Take it from John Maxwell: As a delegator and leader, you can spend more time on the most important, strategic activities and activities that naturally give you energy.

## **Debunking Delegation Myths**

Despite the many benefits of delegation, many leaders hesitate to fully embrace it. This hesitation is often rooted in common fears or misconceptions about delegation. Let's address some of the most common myths and barriers that hold leaders back.

### **Myth 1:**

*“I Can Do It Faster Myself”*

This is one of the most common reasons leaders hesitate to delegate. While it's true that doing a task yourself might be faster in the short term, it's not a sustainable approach. ***Delegation is an investment in the long-term growth of your team.*** It may take time to teach someone how to do a task, but once they've mastered it, you'll save that time many times over. According to a study published by Harvard Business Review, effective delegation can save leaders up to 20% of their time in the long run.

By holding onto tasks because “it's faster to do it myself,” you're not only limiting your own effectiveness but also preventing your team from growing into their full potential. A study published in the *Academy of Management Journal* highlights that **delegation positively affects job satisfaction and team member performance.**

## Myth 2:

*“Delegation is a Sign of Weakness”*

Some leaders believe that delegating tasks will make them appear less capable or less in control. However, the opposite is true—delegation is a sign of strong leadership. It shows that **you trust your team** and are focused on the bigger picture.

Delegation isn't a sign of weakness; it's a sign of wisdom.

Strong leaders understand that their success is tied to the success of their team, and delegation is one of the most effective ways to empower others and multiply your impact.

## Myth 3:

*“What if They Mess Up?”*

The fear of mistakes often prevents leaders from delegating. But mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. When you delegate tasks, there may be a learning curve, and that's okay. The key is to provide the necessary support, guidance, and feedback to help your team learn from those mistakes and improve over time.

As we'll discuss later in the book, delegation is a gradual process, and frameworks like the **Caveman Delegation Method** can help ensure that tasks are delegated in a way that reduces the risk of mistakes while building confidence.

## The Science of Successful Delegation

Holding on to myths about delegation can be harmful to both ourselves and our teams. Insights from the 2018 Work and

Well-Being Survey conducted by the American Psychological Association show that nearly one-third of U.S. workers reported that their workload makes it difficult to take time off. Additionally, around one in five workers avoid taking time off due to feelings of guilt, fearing that it may be perceived as a lack of commitment to their job. However, there is hope when leaders learn to let go of these myths and delegate effectively. According to a Gallup survey, **CEOs with strong delegation skills generated 33% more revenue in 2013.** So, it is possible to find success and, at the same time, take vacations guilt-free.

So, what makes delegation successful? It's about matching the right tasks with the right people at the right time. This is where methods like the Caveman Delegation Method come into play, providing a structured approach to gradually transfer responsibilities. Before we dive into the Caveman Delegation Method, it's essential to discuss a few tools to ensure we get it right. One of the most critical aspects of successful delegation and coaching is clarity.

### **Clarity: The Foundation for Effective Delegation**

In 2018, I wrote the book ***MOVE!*** and devoted significant time to the concept of clarity. In both our personal and professional lives, we benefit from clarity and actively seek it. Clarity involves moving from the general to the specific; it is about perceiving reality in a coherent manner. Delegation also begins with clarity. Without it, even the most well-intentioned delegation efforts can result in miscommunication, inefficiency, and frustration for both leaders and their teams. Clarity isn't just about knowing what needs to be done—it's about illuminating the purpose, narrowing the focus, and framing the task or responsibility. These three elements—**light, focus, and frame**—serve as a powerful foundation for making intentional delegation decisions.

## **Light**

Imagine walking into a dark room and being asked to find a single book on a shelf. Without light, the task feels impossible. Similarly, without purpose, delegation lacks direction. The first step in effective delegation is to shed light on the “why” behind the task.

Every task or responsibility exists for a reason. Leaders often assume the purpose is obvious, but team members may not share the same context. By clearly explaining why a task matters and how it aligns with broader organizational goals, leaders not only create a sense of meaning but also empower their teams to approach the work with greater commitment. Light is the “big idea” that sets the stage for all the action that follows.

**Example:** A project manager assigns the creation of a monthly report to a team member without explaining its purpose. The report ends up being a box-checking exercise, adding little value. If the manager had illuminated the purpose—such as helping the leadership team make data-driven decisions to outperform the competition—the team member might have approached the task with more thoughtfulness and creativity.

When you shine a light on the purpose, you transform delegation from a simple transaction into an opportunity for alignment and impact.

## **Focus**

Everyone has taken a blurry picture on their phone or camera. When you adjust your lens, you start to see clear details—where one object ends and another begins and the depth of the scene. The same principle applies to delegation. Leaders must identify which aspects of a task or responsibility require their unique skills and which can be entrusted to others. This requires an honest assessment of your strengths and the strengths of your team.

Without focus, leaders can fall into the trap of spreading their attention too thin or focusing on the wrong things and micromanaging every detail. Delegation thrives when leaders concentrate on the high-impact areas where they add the most value, leaving other aspects to capable team members.

**Example:** A sales leader struggling to manage client relationships and team performance decides to focus on nurturing top accounts while delegating administrative tasks like CRM updates and scheduling to an assistant. By narrowing their attention, the leader improves client retention and boosts team morale.

Focus not only prevents burnout but also ensures that leaders and their teams are working on the right things. When you delegate well, you increase your focus while helping others develop.

### **Frame**

Even with light and focus, delegation can struggle without the right context. Have you ever visited an amusement park with a room designed to resemble an old Wild West saloon? You can dress up in period clothing with your family, and when the picture is taken, it develops without vibrant colors, resulting in a grey or brown appearance reminiscent of photographs from the 1800s. The context we provide enhances our picture by adding color or taking it away.

Framing is about defining where the task starts and finishes and adding context—what success looks like, what resources are available, and what boundaries exist.

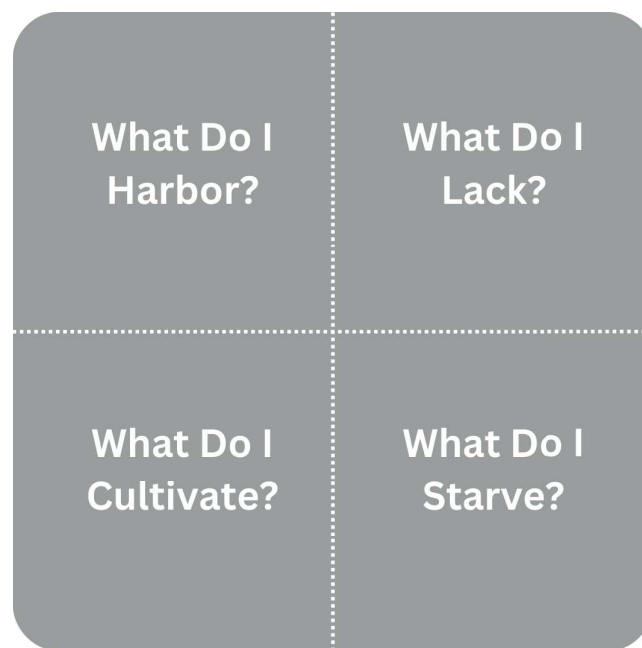
Leaders often hesitate to delegate because they fear losing control. However, a well-framed task gives both the leader and the team member confidence. It provides the structure needed for autonomy while ensuring accountability.

**Example:** A department head asks a team member to draft a presentation for an upcoming client meeting but fails to set expectations about the tone, key messages, or time allocation. The resulting presentation misses the mark. If the leader had framed the task by outlining its objectives and providing a sample template, the team members could have delivered a more targeted result.

Framing creates a shared understanding, enabling delegation to move forward smoothly. Now, we can look at a tool that was also covered in **MOVE!** and can help provide clarity on delegation.

### Applying the Mindful Quadrant to Delegation

The Mindful Quadrant provides a deeper layer of insight into how leaders can approach delegation with intention. It asks four transformative questions: **What do I harbor? What do I lack? What do I cultivate? What do I starve?** Each question serves as a lens for understanding your delegation habits and priorities. We can add them to the quadrant below and will discuss each one in detail.



**The Mindful Quadrant**  
Source: MOVE!



## **What Do I Harbor?**

Harboring refers to the things leaders protect or cling to, often unconsciously. Think of a harbor for boats or ships. It's a place of protection from the dangers of the open sea. While some harboring is positive—such as protecting high-value activities—other forms can hinder delegation. For instance, leaders might harbor a fear of losing control, perfectionism, or emotional attachment to tasks that no longer serve their role.

Evaluate what you're harboring. Are you holding onto tasks out of habit or fear? Conversely, what should you intentionally protect to delegate effectively? For example, a leader might harbor a sense of ownership over client relationships but delegate the administrative side of account management to maintain focus on strategy.

## **What Do I Lack?**

When we lack something, we are keenly aware of its absence. We can lack personal connections, money in our budget, project resources, or even time with our team members. Lacking clarity, trust, or systems can create roadblocks to delegation. Leaders might hesitate to delegate because they feel their team isn't ready or because processes aren't in place to ensure success. Delegation can also reveal gaps in team capacity or resources.

Identify what's missing. If you lack trust, invest in training and communication to build confidence. If you lack systems, create clear SOPs to streamline delegation. By addressing these gaps, you pave the way for more effective delegation.

## **What Do I Cultivate?**

When we think of the word “cultivation,” what comes to mind? One simple example is the act of planting, watering, and growing a garden. Cultivation is about routinely nurturing the conditions needed to produce success. Regarding delegation, this includes building trust, fostering team autonomy, and developing skills. Leaders who cultivate growth in their team members empower them to take on more responsibility.

Ask yourself what you need to cultivate within your team and your organization to delegate more effectively. This could mean mentoring team members, creating opportunities for skill-building, or fostering a culture of accountability.

## **What Do I Starve?**

Sometimes, there are areas in our work and life where we need to starve. As we look at what steals our time or energy during the day, some activities are unnecessary. When we starve something, we remove its ability to thrive. We intentionally want to see it wither because it is not helping produce our desired result. To create space for effective delegation, leaders must starve the habits, mindsets, or processes that no longer serve them. This might include perfectionism, micromanagement, or overcommitment.

Consider what you need to let go of to make delegation work. For instance, a leader who micromanages might need to starve the habit of constantly checking in and instead focus on setting clear expectations upfront.

## **Bringing Clarity to the Delegation Line**

With the insights from the clarity framework and the Mindful Quadrant, you are more equipped to begin the work of delegation. By examining what you harbor, lack, cultivate, and starve, you can address the deeper dynamics that influence your delegation decisions.

**Example:** A CEO reviewing their task list might realize they're harboring a fear of delegating operational oversight despite having a capable COO. By applying the Mindful Quadrant, they decide to cultivate trust through regular check-ins and starve the habit of double-checking every report, allowing the COO to take full ownership.

As you move forward, consider how these tools can help you approach delegation with greater confidence and intentionality. What will you illuminate, focus on, frame, harbor, lack, cultivate, or starve? The answers to these questions will define your leadership legacy.

## **Embracing the Art of Letting Go**

Wow! We are just getting started in our journey to becoming "Delegation Jedis." Delegation is as much an art as it is a science. It requires empathy, communication skills, and a keen understanding of your team's strengths and weaknesses. It's about finding the balance between providing support and giving autonomy.

As we move forward in this book, we'll explore practical strategies to help you master this delicate balance. We'll look at when to delegate, what to delegate, and how to do it effectively. We'll also address the fears and challenges that often hold leaders back from delegating.

Don't feel overwhelmed; becoming a great delegator doesn't happen overnight. It's a skill that you'll develop and refine over

time. But with practice and the right mindset, you can transform your leadership style and unleash the full potential of your team.

True delegation isn't about lightening your load—it's about strengthening your team.

In the next chapter, we'll dive into recognizing the right moments for delegation – because timing, as they say, is everything.