



# How to liberate the people potential in your business by unleashing the power of initiative...

Wouldn't it be great if you could get your people to do a better job than you could do yourself?

It doesn't need to be so depressingly demoralising when your people get the job done, but only just. Wouldn't you feel reassured to see your people take more responsibility for results and make the business less reliant on you?

Here's a bitesize business breakthrough you can start implementing today so you can get more from your people more often. You can then do more valuable work or even enjoy more free time.

## In a nutshell

Smarter delegation of work and tasks results in greater initiative. Greater initiative results in improved performance from your people (and frees you up to do other things).

Encourage more initiative from your people by applying the delegation ladder to all your team interaction.



Let me explain...

At a recent training event held in a hotel, the tea and coffee failed to show up when planned, at 9.30am.

The event was scheduled to start at 10am. Some delegates had been travelling since

6.30am and had earned the right to have a hot drink and a pastry.

One team member asked the hotel staff twice to get the coffee sorted but with no effect. Delegates were getting thirsty and frustrated (to say the least). The speaker for the day was getting agitated too because his audience were in anything but a receptive frame of mind.

At 9.50am another team member got involved. She charmed the staff at the concession coffee shop in the hotel to come and take orders for 'posh' coffee for the delegates. The event started 5 minutes late but the delegates were impressed and also in the right frame of mind too.

## Here's a proven solution for you...

The delegation ladder gives you five steps for generating greater initiative and greater results from your team. And eventually frees you up from 'doing it all yourself'.



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### Initiative at work...

High-initiative businesses get more from all their people, with startling results...  
...where would Fred Smith be without a wedding dress and a healthy dose of initiative?

In the early stages of FedEx, the now international parcel courier, one employee responded to a delayed wedding dress with great initiative. She arranged and paid for a private jet to fly the dress across the USA, and land at a local airfield, in time for the wedding.

Naturally the bride (and groom) were delighted their wedding was uninterrupted. In fact this 'rescue mission' was the talk of the wedding. And this 'talk' resulted in FedEx winning a substantial parcel contract from one of the wedding guests (a senior exec in a high-user of parcel services).

It's reported that without this contract, Fred Smith the FedEx founder, would have failed to secure an additional round of funding. No wedding dress, no initiative, no contract, no funding, and probably no FedEx!

Clearly, initiative can have a profound effect on business results. And if you want to tap into this source of improved results you must encourage greater initiative, but how?

### Initiative can be learned...

Just like you can learn to drive a car, ride a bicycle, or learn a foreign language, initiative can be learned too...

...but only if you, as the leader, create an environment where initiative is encouraged.

### How do you share your initiative expectations?

You will have experienced different levels of initiative from your people.

Stephen R Covey in his book Principle Centred Leadership suggests five levels of initiative.

Covey also suggests that the same person can express all five levels of initiative. The degree of initiative expressed depends on what job they are doing and what expectations have been set by their manager or leader.

For example, an experienced delivery driver will be expected to deliver and report routinely on established routes. On new routes they might be encouraged to ask questions or make a recommendation. And when a new fork-lift is introduced they might be told to wait until instruction in the interests of health and safety.

### Delegation ladder or Initiative ladder?

Simple answer.

Both!

Only if you change your behaviour (the way you delegate work) will you increase the initiative from your people.

Few managers and leaders communicate what level of initiative they expect from their people. Use the delegation ladder and you'll delegate better and your people will show more initiative over time.

### BEWARE! Initiative is a risky business...

There's a risk connected to encouraging initiative. Initiative means people are making decisions and taking action with less and less control from you.

The greater the initiative the greater the risk, because people make mistakes!

For example, there's a famous story about Tom Watson, the founder of IBM, and his

attitude to mistakes. One of his executives, back in the 1960's, made a substantial error of judgement that cost IBM more than a million dollars in hard costs.

The executive took a deep breath before walking in for her meeting with Tom Watson and checked her jacket pocket to make sure her resignation letter was there. Tom Watson's reported response to the executive's expectation of being asked to leave was:

*"Why should I ask you to leave when I've just invested one million dollars in your education? Go and share your experience and new-found insights across the business so we never make the same mistake again."*

Your attitude and response to mistakes ultimately determines the initiative you are able to encourage. When you view mistakes as 'learning opportunities' (like Tom Watson) you support your people's increasing initiative.

You're unlikely to experience mistakes and risks as big as the IBM example. However you can, and should, manage and minimise the risk...

### Managing the risk is simple...

...take baby-steps towards greater and greater initiative. Use the delegation ladder in order to climb one-rung-at-a-time using the key skill associated with each step. On the back page and in the support tools you'll find all you'll need to help you do this.

*"Effective delegation takes emotional courage as we allow, to one degree or another, others to make mistakes on our time, money, and good name."*

- Stephen R Covey, from his book Principle Centred Leadership

When you use the delegation ladder you and your people take the valuable next-steps to greater initiative, with minimum risk.



**TIME TO DISAGREE:**

**“People either have initiative or they don’t. No matter what I do makes any difference to the way they behave.”**

Certainly some people display more initiative than others.

But most people can show more initiative when you give them opportunity and encouragement.

If you want greater productivity from your people, greater results for your business and greater freedom for yourself, encouraging initiative can help you.

**Is it worth the effort?**

**“I’ve tried encouraging initiative but no-one takes any notice! If I want a good job doing it’s quicker, easier and cheaper to do it myself.”**

Not an uncommon reaction! Most business owners experience the difficulty of getting people to do a great job, rather than a bare-bones job.

However, taking it all on yourself can only take you so far.

Encouraging and expecting your people to do the job well is the only solution if you want sustainable growth for your business and your profits.

A UK business leader we know of recently suggested;

“Isn’t it interesting how our people perform DOWN to our expectations of them?”

Shouldn’t you be expecting more initiative from your people and sharing your initiative expectations with them?

**Use the Business Bitesize Support Tools And Resources to help you make the most of this edition of Business Bitesize – go here: [www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands](http://www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands)**

**It wastes my money...**

**“Why invest valuable time encouraging people if they up and leave the business after a few months or a couple of years.”**

This argument is often voiced when investing time and money in training people. Here’s the crux of this issue:

- Would you prefer to avoid encouraging and training your people and they end up staying?
- Or would you prefer to train and encourage your people and some of them leave?

Yes the ones who leave cost you. But the ones who stay are more capable than if you didn’t invest time and energy growing and training them.

In fact good people tend to stay with businesses that invest in them. Good people leave businesses that don’t invest in them.

**Use the Business Bitesize support tools to help you put the delegation ladder to work for you.**

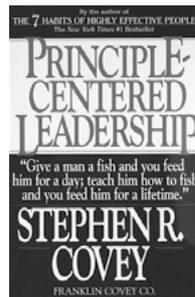
You’ll find our support tools on our Business Bitesize web page – see speech bubble below for the website.

**Tell me more...**

Leading and managing people and teams is a complex subject, and one worthy of greater study if you’re committed to growing your business.

If you like the ideas behind the initiative/delegation ladder you’ll benefit from studying the book by Stephen R Covey – ‘Principle Centred Leadership’.

It’s available on kindle, as an e book, audio book or in printed copy.



**Your feedback is important to us.** We’d love to know what you think of this edition of Business Bitesize and how you use it or plan to use it. Also we’d welcome your suggestions for future editions of Business Bitesize. To give us your thoughts please use the simple feedback form here: [www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands](http://www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands)

**4 helping hands for you...**

Put these 4 things to work for you and you’ll improve the level of initiative of your people and improve your business performance too:

- 1. Share your initiative expectations each time you ask for some work to be done using the delegation/initiative ladder**
- 2. Teach the delegation ladder to your people so it becomes a regular or even habitual conversation in your business**
- 3. Have framed delegation ladder pictures or posters in your workplace to encourage using it**
- 4. Acknowledge and recognise initiative when it is shown – catch your people doing it right**

**ULTIMATE ARGUMENT:**  
**“How do I know this will work for me and my business?”**

You don’t know the delegation ladder will work until you successfully test it. And you’ll prove it’s value if you test it first with your most compliant and supportive colleagues. Share the delegation ladder with them. Then support each other as you experiment with the delegation ladder, using the guidelines in this report and in the support tools to help keep you on track.

**STOP:** answering your people’s questions for them and encourage recommendations from them instead.

**START:** Sharing your expected level of initiative for each piece of work you delegate.



## Your next steps:

Here's your bitesize initiative and delegation action plan.

This checklist will help you improve the level of initiative expressed by your people and the results your business achieves.

## Start by taking responsibility:

Your people are the ones who do the work, but you delegate the work.

By sharing the delegation/initiative ladder with your team you can share your initiative expectations of them.

## More tools and information for you:

As well as the checklist here, you can use the forms and checklists in the online supporting tools.

Together they'll help you make more of this bitesize business breakthrough.

## Encourage greater initiative by using the delegation ladder...

When you ask anyone to do a job, you have an opportunity to share the level of initiative you expect. When you do this you encourage your people to perform at a more productive and valuable level.

The ultimate aim is to get your people doing work brilliantly, achieving the expected result and you only get involved when they routinely report results either weekly or monthly. When this happens your delegation skills and their initiative is at the top of the ladder.

### Level 5: Share your expectation to 'Do it and Report Routinely'

Key requirements from you: willingness to let go; setting up routine results reporting; commitment to routinely reviewing results.

You can move up to level 5 on the ladder when your people consistently report instantly on great results.

### Level 4: Share your expectation to 'Do It And Report Instantly'

Key requirements from you: be available instantly a job is done; see any mistakes as learning opportunities; agree specific process/time for reporting instantly.

You can move up to level 4 delegation only when you see and hear consistently well-judged suggestions about what needs to be done and how it should be done.

### Level 3: Share your expectation for 'Recommendations'

Key requirements from you: recognise questions are being asked; don't answer questions; acknowledge the question but ask for their thoughts, suggestions, and recommendations.

You can move up to level 3 delegation only when you see and hear consistently well-judged questions about what needs to be done and how it should be done.

### Level 2: Share your expectation for 'Asking Good Questions'

Key requirements for you: recognise good work; ask good questions about the work; encourage/insist they ask questions too.

You can move up to level 2 delegation as soon as you can. If you don't create an expectation for questions some people won't ask and they'll forever wait to be told what to do.

### Level 1: Share your expectation to 'Wait til told what to do'

Key requirements from you: be clear about what you want doing, how you want it done and why it's being done; show (rather than tell) people how it's done and watch them do it too; ask good questions about the work.

Because new people or new tasks require detailed and careful instruction it's OK to set an expectation on certain tasks so your people wait until told. If however you have too many people (or any) who remain permanently in a 'wait til told' mind-set on everything they do, you might ask yourself are they the right people for the job?

**YOUR SUPPORT TOOLS ARE HERE: Go to the link below and you'll find support tools to help you make better use of the delegation ladder and generate greater initiative in your business.**

**Find the support tools to help you here - [www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands](http://www.businessbitesize.com/pentlands)**

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