

How Crabby learned to delegate (and get her life back)

Applies to: Microsoft Office Outlook 2007, Outlook 2003, Outlook 2002

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Crabby Office Lady

You're the one doing all the work all the time, and it's time to step back and let go a bit. Handing off some work isn't a sign of weakness; it says that you trust others and need to get rid of the bags under your eyes.

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You are a doer. You're a multi-tasking whiz kid, burning the midnight oil, taking the heat when the office burns down, and then putting out that fire. See, I used to be like that too. But then my family grew, and, well, it was a wake-up call to let me know that 1) I didn't need to do everything all by myself, and 2) I was not only stealing the thunder from my coworkers, I was also woefully underutilizing their considerable talents. So I learned the **D** word: Delegation.

The path to delegation is paved with good intentions

Like anything else you undertake, you can't just jump in there willy-nilly and start delegating everything to everyone. I did a little research and came up with this list to help you get started.

1. Figure out why you haven't delegated before. Is it because you don't trust others to do the job? Or is it because you just don't want to take the time (or don't know how) to explain what needs to be done?
2. Next, figure out what needs delegating. While you're at it, remember that there are some things that you should really keep for yourself (firing someone, writing performance reviews, volunteering to be a scout troop leader).
3. Find the best people for each task at hand.
4. Clearly, patiently communicate exactly what you expect of them; give them lots of information and set specific goals.
5. Let go. Check up when necessary. Give feedback. Let go again.

Now that you have a better idea what to do, it's time to figure out just how to use Office to make sure your delegation is successful.

Share the information...and thereby the love

We're taught early on that sharing is good. And you know, it *is* good. For a lot of reasons. It's good because it relieves you of some of the burden, and it's good because it gives other folks a chance to get their hands dirty, so to speak. Below are a few ways you can share some of your workload.

NOTE A majority of my tips below require that you use Outlook with Exchange Server (as if you needed more reasons to use Exchange....).

- **I give you permission to help me** Your private folders (such as your **Tasks** and your **Calendar**) are, by default, you guessed it: private. But if you want your coworkers to be able to see certain things that you're working on, perhaps you should give them sharing permissions on your private folders. You can set just exactly how deep these permissions go, too, by setting them up as read, modify, create, or delete.
- **Represent me, won't you?** You know what a delegate is don't you? (I mean, I'm writing this long after the election, folks — if you don't know what a "delegate" is by now, it's time to wake up and smell the politicians...) In this case, a delegate is someone to whom you've given permission to send messages for you, accept meeting and task requests for you, and actually manage information in your private folders.

More information about delegates (Office 2007)

- [Allow someone else to manage your mail and calendar](#)
- [Video: Delegating Access \(BrainStorm Inc.\)](#)

- [Video: Reply on another's behalf \(BrainStorm Inc.\)](#)

More information about delegates (Office 2003)

- [About delegate access](#)
- [Delegate access permissions](#)
- [Permit others to access a folder](#)
- [Delegate Access: Let someone else mind your busyness \(Training course\)](#)

You are an open book (parts of you)

Make your work an open book: Create a separate folder — a public folder — outside of your own mailbox that other Exchange users in your company can access (ah yes, Exchange once again). These are a great way to share information or work on projects together.

See, these public folders can contain any type of Outlook item such as messages, appointments, contacts, tasks, journal entries, notes, forms, files, and postings. When you're connected to your Exchange server, folders labeled "Public Folders" appear in the Outlook **Folder List** in the **Navigation Pane**.

Now everyone can share Outlook items related to a specific subject or project. You are no longer working in a vacuum.

More information about public folders (Outlook 2007)

- [Share information with public folders](#)
- [Create and share a public folder](#)

More information about public folders (Outlook 2003)

- [Create a public folder](#)
- [Open a public folder](#)
- [Troubleshoot public folders](#)

A tisket, a tasket, let's clean out that task basket

Now that you non-Exchange users are thoroughly disgusted with me, I'm going to give you a tip about how to delegate some work when you're not using Exchange Server.

If you're like me (or want to be like me, although I can't imagine why; maybe it's my sparkling wit/sparkling jewelry), you are a list-maker. And you probably keep a list of everything you need to do — for work and your personal life — in your **Tasks** folder. I frankly cannot do without this helpful little friend. I use it to keep track of everything from my daily tasks (read customer e-mail messages and sort the customers from the stalkers) to my personal to-do list (de-flea the Crabby Office dog).

However, sometimes this list gets a little, shall we say, bloated. Then it's time to share it. If you're a manager, "sharing" is also known as "delegating." If you're not a manager, "sharing" is sometimes known as "passing the buck."

See, you can go ahead and assign your tasks to someone else to finish in a specified timeframe. It's simple, painless (for you, anyway), and it'll lighten your load in no time.

More information about passing the buck

- [Video: Assigning Tasks \(BrainStorm Inc.\)](#)
- [Assign a task to someone else](#)
- [Share my Tasks](#)

- [Turn a message into a task](#) (I love this one: My manager sends me a message requesting something ridiculous of me, and I turn it into a task for you! So simple and yet so beautiful...)

Don't forget the kudos

Now that you've freed up a little of your time, make sure you take the time to give credit where credit is due. Acknowledge your delegates; you're more likely to not only give them more job satisfaction, but you'll also have more willing delegates next time the opportunity to lighten your load comes along.

"No person will make a great business who wants to do it all himself or get all the credit." — Andrew Carnegie

About the author

[Annik Stahl](#), the Crabby Office Lady columnist, takes all of your complaints, compliments, and knee-jerk reactions to heart. Therefore, she graciously asks that you let her know whether this column was useful to you — or not — by entering your feedback using the [Did this article help you?](#) feedback tool below. And remember: If you don't vote, you can't complain.

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