Determinants of Delegation:
A Study in Five Star Hotels

Sumi Jha

Executive Summary

In today’s business context, managing the ever increasing customer expectations and need is a key to survival and growth. Considering the people-centric nature of the service industry, particularly the hotel industry, managing the motivation of frontline employees and retaining them for continued customer relationship is a challenge for any organization. Since customers with different needs and aspirations have to be served differently, the frontline employees of five star hotels play a significant role in establishing relationship with customers. To retain the customers, they should be properly trained based on the job they do. Trained frontline employees would understand the characteristics of their job and would be more efficient while serving the customers. The superiors would also need to delegate tasks to the subordinates and this requires adequate knowledge of the job, proper flow of information, and sharing of resources between the superiors and the subordinates.

Based on a sample of 319 frontline employees of five star hotels in Mumbai, this study examines the direct and interaction effects of job characteristics and superior-subordinate relationship on delegation. The primary purpose of job characteristics is to measure job attributes that affect intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction. Job characteristics have been studied in terms of five factors:

- skill variety
- task identity
- feedback
- dealing with others
- friendship opportunities.

In the hotel industry, the frontline employees are required to deal with the customers daily and therefore strive to maintain a conducive relationship with them. Dealing with others and friendship opportunity in the job itself help them in enhancing the relationship with customers. Continuous feedback from the superiors also helps the employees in being effective in their work.

Superior-subordinate relationship is defined as the perception of subordinates about the information being shared and support being provided by the superior. It has been seen that if the relationship between the superior and the subordinate is not conducive, it hampers work as the superior may be reluctant to delegate tasks to the subordinate.

The basic concept of delegation in this study is the willingness on the part of the subordinate to accept a given task so that it will result in effective completion. Delegation is measured through three factors:

- amount of delegation
- process of delegation
- facilitating factors of delegation.

Using factor analysis, this paper studies the conceptual differences among variables like job characteristics, superior-subordinate relationship, and delegation. The factor structure that has emerged supports the view that job characteristics, superior-subordinate relationship, and delegation are conceptually from different domains and are independent of each other. Providing better characteristics of job gives the superiors the room to delegate tasks. Repetitive task with no variety in it will make the superior as well as the subordinate less passionate about the job. The major findings of the study are as follows:

- Direct and indirect effects of job characteristics and superior-subordinate relationship significantly influence delegation.
- Among the factors of job characteristics, feedback influences delegation the most, i.e., for effective completion of delegated task, continuous feedback is the key.
- It is imperative to retain frontline employees by providing challenging job and adequate information and by delegating effectively.
Delegation is a complex, multi-faceted process that includes assigning important new tasks to subordinates, i.e., giving subordinates responsibility formerly handled by the managers. Delegation is widely acknowledged as an essential element of effective customer service. In order to provide better customer service, employees must be trained and delegated to provide exceptional service. Here the claim is that these employees must be given the discretion to act immediately and sensitively to satisfy unpredicted customer requirements, recover consumer confidence byremedying service failures, and ‘delight’ customers by giving extra or unexpected service, all of which serves to increase customer perceptions of ‘functional’ quality (Grönroos, 1990). Service improvements usually mandate the establishment of service standards and the measurement of service quality. In any service company, regardless of its size and nature, service is given fundamentally by the personal contact between the customer and the provider. Companies must recognize that the employees who are in daily contact with customers are the ones determining their future growth. ‘Delegation’ has a long and wide ancestry, not only because it seeks to address one of the most enduring, intractable problems in the management of human resources — the need to secure both compliance and cooperation among employees — but also because the way in which it does so — advocating that employees should be ceded a degree of discretion over work performance and/or involvement in organizational decisions — carries echoes of earlier strategies.

Delegation is the process by which authority is shared throughout an organization and has three elements:
- assigning a function, duty or task to an employee
- allocating to that employee sufficient authority to command the resources necessary to accomplish the assignment
- creating an obligation on the part of the employee to complete the assignment satisfactorily (Tracey, 1988).

Bass (1990) aptly stated, “delegation implies that one has been empowered by one’s superior to take responsibility of certain activities.” Hollander and Offerman (1990) hypothesized that delegation (which involves distribution of power) is more of truly empowering people than participation (which involves only sharing of power).

Wagner (1994) said that delegation has stronger relationship with satisfaction and performance than does participation and considered it as one of the important dimensions of empowerment. Yukl and Ping Fu (1999) found that greater delegation was associated with the following factors: Competence of the employee, sharing of managers’ task objectives by the employee, long-standing and positive relationship of the manager with the employee, and the status of the lower-level persons.

When used appropriately, delegation may improve the speed and quality of decisions, reduce overload of the manager, enrich the subordinates’ job, increase their intrinsic motivation, and provide them opportunities for development of leadership skills. Delegation is clearly relevant to many topics of current interest in the literature on management of organizations such as employee involvement, empowerment, decentralization, and self-managed groups.

According to social-exchange theory, leaders invest in their subordinates by providing them with support for self worth, freedom to make decisions or to change or modify their job and subordinates reciprocate by performing in accordance with the leaders’ preferences.

In traditional work structures, superiors have long been recognized to play an important part in developing roles and expectations of employees (Graen and Scandura, 1987). This function is also important when teamwork is introduced because superiors can play a key role in modeling team work and setting the ground rules for team members to engage in team processes (McIntyre and Salas, 1995).

Leana (1987) found that managers were reluctant to delegate for one of the three reasons: a lack of confidence on subordinates’ capabilities, tasks being seen as too important to be left to subordinates or tasks being seen as technically too difficult. According to her (Leana, 1986), managers were more likely to delegate when their workloads were greater indicating that they employed delegation when they saw themselves as needing incremental assistance from subordinates. It has also been found that the supervisors’ perceptions of their subordinates’ capability, trust-worthiness, and motivation to assume greater responsibility were significant predictors of delegation levels.

Leadership theories appear especially relevant for explaining how managers vary their use of delegation across subordinates. Managers typically develop a more favourable exchange relationship with some subordinates.
than with others. A subordinate who is dependable and trustworthy is more likely to be given more responsibilities.

Bass (1990) noted that “an autocrat may delegate because of lack of time to handle the problem directly. A transactional leader may delegate in exchange for subordinate support. A transformational leader will use delegation to develop his or her subordinates. A consultative leader may delegate as a result of being convinced of the subordinates’ competence and motivations to handle the problem. Delegation may be the consensus choice of the participant. A laissez-faire leader may delegate to avoid blame for possible failure.”

Subordinates who express an interest in receiving increased responsibility and willingness to undertake additional duties to help a leader and a unit function are given special resources and mentoring (Graen, 1989; Graen and Scandura, 1987; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1991). Yukl (1994) suggested that for delegation to be effective, subordinates need to have sufficient authority to make decisions, adequate resources, and the ability to do the work being delegated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Superior-subordinate Relationship

The literature described ways in which managers influence subordinates, including role modeling, goal definition, reward allocation, resource distribution, communication of organizational norms and values, structuring of work group interactions, coordinating subordinates’ perceptions of the work environment, and influence over processes and procedures used (James and James, 1989; Yukl, 1994).

This has also been found to be related to job attitudes, leader attention, superior’s support, participation in decision-making, and the amount of time and energy invested in the job (Crouch and Yetton, 1988; Dansereau, Graen and Haga, 1975).

Recent organizational theories have stressed the importance of self-management and self-leadership (Manz and Sims, 1987) of subordinates in teams. Superiors play an important role in structuring the work environment and providing information and feedback to employees. As a consequence, a superior’s behaviour has an impact on the affective reactions of the team members. Delegation is more likely to be successful if a subordinate has the job knowledge required by new responsibilities and will take the initiative to deal with problems without waiting for direction. Leana (1986, 1987) found that subordinate competence was correlated significantly with two measures of delegation, namely, a manager’s self reported use of delegation and an objective measure of subordinate discretion to settle insurance claims.

Research has shown that superior-subordinate relationship is negatively related to turnover (Graen, Liden and Hoel, 1982) and positively related to performance evaluations (Wayne and Ferris, 1990), and frequency of promotions (Wakabayashi, et. al., 1988). This has also been found to be related to job attitudes, leader attention, superior’s support, participation in decision-making, and the amount of time and energy invested in the job (Crouch and Yetton, 1988; Dansereau, Graen and Haga, 1975).

Hundreds of experimental studies (Honig, 1966; Honig and Stadden, 1977; Ulrich, Stachnik and Mabry, 1966, 1970, 1974) have shown substantial improvements in performance when desired performance was clarified and when contingent, frequent consequences were provided. The superior’s behaviour is fundamental in determining the level of interpersonal trust in a work unit (Likert and Willits, 1940). Superior’s behaviour includes those often used to delineate higher quality exchanges, i.e., sharing appropriate information, allowing mutuality of influence, and not abusing the vulnerability of others (Zand, 1972).

Job Characteristics

The primary purpose of job characteristics measures such as job diagnostic survey (Hackman and Lawler, 1971; Hackman and Oldham, 1975) is to measure job attributes that affect intrinsic motivation and satisfaction. These researchers tried to determine how work could be structured so that employees are internally (or intrinsically) motivated. Internal motivation occurs when an individual is “turned on to one’s work because of the positive internal feelings that are generated by doing well rather than being dependent on external factors (such as incentive pay or complements from the boss) for the motivation to work effectively.” Over the years, social scientists have developed a roster of psychological task attributes such as job scope, variety, autonomy, task identity, social interaction, feedback, recognition, challenge, pace control, and completeness. Sekaran and Trafton (1978) in their study on Indian bank employees
found that the measures developed in the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) do not empirically establish five distinct core dimensions as theorized by Hackman and Oldham (1975). Maneriker and Patil (1982) investigated the perceptions of job characteristics of 275 managers using the JDS and pointed out the areas of strength and weakness in the model. Sekaran (1981) found that job enrichment factors are significantly related to motivation and satisfaction in both the American and Indian cultures. In a subsequent study, Nair (1988) also supported the predictions of the model for Indian employees at the supervisory as well as non-supervisory levels.

A study of 459 employees from a glass manufacturing company also indirectly supported the job characteristics model. The company redesigned the work environment by increasing employee’s autonomy and participation in decision-making and then measured employee’s self-efficacy to carry out a broader and more proactive role 18 months later. Job redesign resulted in higher self-efficacy (Parker, 1998).

After a comprehensive review of literature on job attitudes, Locke (1976) concludes that work satisfaction is engendered by work which is a) varied, b) allows autonomy c) not physically fatiguing d) mentally challenging and yet allows the individual to experience success and e) personally interesting. On the other hand, role ambiguity and role conflict (Glisson and Durick, 1988) were found to affect job satisfaction negatively.

Two separate meta-analyses supported the practice of using the job characteristics model to help managers reduce absenteeism and turnover (Fried and Ferris, 1987; McEvoy and Cascio, 1985). A meta-analysis of about 200 studies of the job characteristics model found general support for its structure and for its effect on motivation and satisfaction and performance outcome (Fried and Ferris, 1987).

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of predictors like superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics on delegation, and focuses on the interaction effect of these predictors on delegation in five star hotels.

**Major Hypotheses**

Hypothesis 1: Superior-subordinate relationship of frontline employees (senior managers, junior managers, and supervisors) will positively influence delegation.

Hypothesis 2: Job characteristics of frontline employees (senior managers, junior managers and supervisors) will positively influence delegation.

Hypothesis 3: Interaction effect of superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics of frontline employees (senior managers, junior managers, and supervisors) will positively influence delegation.

**Minor Hypotheses**

- Relationship of frontline employees with their superiors will positively influence the amount of delegation.
- Relationship of frontline employees with their superiors will positively influence the process of delegation.
- Relationship of frontline employees with their superiors will positively influence the facilitating factors of delegation.
- Job characteristics that are intrinsically motivating will positively influence the amount of delegation that is received by frontline employees.
- Job characteristics that are intrinsically motivating will positively influence the process of delegation that involves frontline employees.
- Job characteristics that are intrinsically motivating will positively influence the facilitating factors of delegation that are present for frontline employees.

**METHODOLOGY**

**Variables**

Keeping the objective of the study in view, we consider delegation as a dependent variable and superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics as independent variables. The dependent variable is delegation: amount of delegation; process of delegation; and facilitating factors of delegation.

The independent variables are superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics such as skill variety, task identity, feedback, friendship opportunities, and dealing with others.

**Sampling**

We selected nine five star hotels in Mumbai, in operation at least since the last two years, for the study and examined...
the extent to which different factors influenced delegation in these hotels with employee strength ranging from 1,000 – 1,500. We used simple random sampling method to select the respondents after categorizing the sample of 319 employees into two categories, i.e., managers and supervisors. The sample consists of workers working in the same hotel since the last two years; all other employees were excluded. Frontline managers and supervisors were given more preference because of their day-to-day interaction with the customers. Eighty-four per cent of the respondents were male.

Data Collection

We used both primary and secondary data for the study. The selected sample of employees of five star hotels of Mumbai is the primary source of data. The secondary data were collected from various reports, magazines, journals, and official files of the organization.

Measurement

We have used structured instruments containing close-ended questions as a tool to extract information keeping in mind the objective and design of the study.

Delegation

The measure of delegation is divided into three parts:
• the amount of delegation (nine items)
• the process of delegation (eight items)
• facilitating factors for delegation (six items).

The split half alpha coefficient, based on data of 153 managers in an information technology company, was found to be 0.79 for the instrument (Pareek, 1997).

Superior-subordinate Relationship

Module five of the Michigan organizational assessment questionnaire, entitled Supervision, comprises 30 items to measure ten aspects of leadership, which involve subordinates, as perceived by those subordinates. The ten aspects are production orientation, control of work, work facilitation-goal setting, work facilitation-problem solving, work facilitation-subordinate relations, bias, consideration, participation, decision centralization, and competence. Among these ten aspects, only work facilitation-subordinate relations with seven items and with internal reliability of 0.93 (Cammann, et al., 1979; Seashore, et al., 1982), has been considered.

Job Characteristics

These have been measured by Sims Szilagyi and Keller’s (1976) job characteristic inventory which is an improved measure of perceived job characteristic from the scale provided by Hackman and Lawler (1971). Sims and colleagues have retained the initial set of four core dimensions, i.e., skill variety, autonomy, task identity, and feedback, and the two original interpersonal dimensions, i.e., dealing with others and friendship opportunities. From the core dimensions, autonomy has been excluded because the dependent variable, empowerment, has one dimension, self-determination, which measures autonomy. The mean, standard deviations, and alpha coefficients of internal reliability, found by Sims, Szilagyi and Keller (1976) appear to support the reliability of the instrument (Table 1).

Pierce and Dunham (1978) examined four of the job characteristics in a study of 155 clerical employees (47% female), with coefficients alpha as follows: skill variety, 0.90, autonomy, 0.85, task identity, 0.89 and feedback, 0.90. Brief and Aldag (1978) obtained job characteristics’ inventory responses from 155 nurses and 115 of their superiors. Coefficients alpha were calculated for both samples (Table 2).

Core Dimensions

**Skill variety:** The degree to which a job requires employees to perform wide range of operations in their work.

**Task identity:** The degree to which employees do an entire or whole piece of work and can clearly identify the results of their efforts.

**Feedback:** The degree to which employees receive
information as they are working which reveals how well they are performing on the job.

Interpersonal Dimensions

Dealing with others: The degree to which a job requires employees to deal with other people to complete the work.

Friendship opportunities: The degree to which a job allows employees to talk with one another on the job and to establish informal relationships with other employees at work (Table 3).

Conceptual Differences among Variables through Factor Analysis

The basic concept of delegation in this study is the willingness on the part of subordinates, to accept a given task so that it will result in effective completion. In the present case, we assessed subordinates’ perceptions of the delegation they received from their supervisors (Schriesheim, Neider and Scandura, 1998). Three dimensions of delegation had been administered: the amount of delegation that has been provided to subordinates in terms of resources, the subordinates being involved in the process of delegation, and the facilitating factors that help delegation to run smoothly (Pareek, 1997). Willingness on the part of the employees to accept delegation may depend on several factors, i.e., personality factors like locus of control, organization climate (presence of open and conducive climate), characteristics of job, and the relationship of superiors with subordinates (Schriesheim, Neider and Scandura, 1998; Hackman and Oldham, 1975).

Job characteristics provide information about job design. In the present study, job characteristics are the perception of subordinates about their job, i.e., whether the job that they are doing has skill variety and task identity, whether they share information through feedback, whether they have an opportunity to make friends and deal with others and, in turn, whether the job is intrinsically motivating (Sims Szilagyi and Keller, 1976; Hackman and Oldham, 1975). Though several other factors like autonomy and task significance can also be included in job characteristics, in the present study, dependent variable, delegation, has some element of autonomy and task significance (Cosier and Aplin, 1980) and it may result in significant relationship with job characteristics because of the presence of the common elements. Hence task significance and autonomy have been excluded from job characteristics. Since delegation is associated with high level of job characteristics (such as autonomy) and therefore related to having more autonomous and interesting jobs, this would normally be expected to be more intrinsically satisfying than jobs lacking these characteristics (Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Graen, Scandura and Graen, 1986).

Superior-subordinate relationship is defined as the perception of subordinates about the information being shared and support being provided by the superior (Cammann, et.al., 1979). The seven-item scale has two items related to information sharing and five items related to support provided. Each individual has filled the questionnaire from the subordinate’s point of view.

Schriesheim, Neider and Scandura, (1998) found positive correlation to exist between leader-member exchange and supervisory delegation. Subordinates who enjoy high quality exchange relationships with their supervisors are very likely to receive trust, informational and positional resources, and training that are prerequisites of delegation.

In the above discussion, the conceptual meaning of variables used has been defined. This study has tried to support the above findings through factor analysis (Table 4). Three factors for all the three variables, i.e., delegation, job characteristics, and superior-subordinate relationship have emerged. The principal component matrix with varimax rotation was used. The rotated

### Table 3: Reliability (Cronbach’s Alpha) of the Instruments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>No. of Items</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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Notes: DEL-Delegation, JCI-Job characteristics, SSR-Superior-subordinate relationship.

### Table 4: Factor Analysis

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<th>Component 3</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support provided</td>
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<td>.817</td>
<td>.634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of delegation</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Process of delegation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitating factors of delegation</td>
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<td>.520</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Skill variety</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task identity</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
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<td>Friendship opportunity</td>
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</table>

Notes: Method: Principal Component Matrix; Rotation: Varimax.
factor is given in Table 4. Factor loadings of 0.4 or above are mentioned. The factor analysis indicated three factors which explained about 65 per cent of variance. The factor analysis gives a clear picture stating that the three dimensions of delegation coming under factor 2 are highly correlated and the amount of delegation, process of delegation, and facilitating factors of delegation, though comprising three parts of delegation, are from the same domain. The five dimensions of job characteristics, i.e., skill variety, task identity, feedback, friendship opportunity, and dealing with others are dimensions for factor 1. Superior-subordinate relationship has two factors: information shared and support provided. These two dimensions are elements of factor 3. There is sharing for task identity dimension of job characteristics between factor 1 and factor 3 and it may be interpreted that items of task identity would have shown slightly similar meaning for both the factors. Task identity is a dimension of job characteristics and it has empirically been established by several researchers (Sims, Szilagyi and Keller, 1976; Hackman and Oldham, 1975).

The factor structure that has emerged does support the view that, though it seems that the variables like job characteristics, superior-subordinate relationship, and delegation are embedded with each other, conceptually, they are from different domains, have different meanings, and are independent of each other.

FINDINGS

Minimum-maximum range, mean, and standard deviation of all the variables used in the study are listed in Table 5. From the table, it is evident that the amount of delegation and process of delegation has comparable means but the mean of facilitating factors of delegation is slightly low. The amount of delegation has the highest mean of 25.9 and the facilitating factors of delegation have the lowest of 18.7 (N=319). Descriptive statistics of job characteristics are comparable except for the factor, friendship opportunity, which has the highest mean of 27.05. Dealing with others has the lowest mean of 12.19; it may be because of less number of items used to measure dealing with others.

Tables 6 and 7 show the inter-correlation matrix and multiple regressions respectively, between factors of job characteristics (JCI), superior-subordinate relationship (SSR), and delegation at .01 and .05 level of significance. There is significant positive correlation between superior-subordinate relationship, job characteristics, and delegation. There is positive correlation between two independent variables, i.e., superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics. This shows that superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics influence delegation. From the factor analysis, it seems

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<td>35.00</td>
<td>27.05</td>
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DELEGATION, SUPERIOR-SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIP, JOB CHARACTERISTICS, AMOUNT OF DELEGATION, PROCESS OF DELEGATION, FACILITATING FACTORS OF DELEGATION, SKILL VARIETY, TASK IDENTITY, FEEDBACK, DEALING WITH OTHERS, FRIENDSHIP OPPORTUNITY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
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<th>Maximum</th>
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DELEGATION, SUPERIOR-SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIP, JOB CHARACTERISTICS, AMOUNT OF DELEGATION, PROCESS OF DELEGATION, FACILITATING FACTORS OF DELEGATION, SKILL VARIETY, TASK IDENTITY, FEEDBACK, DEALING WITH OTHERS, FRIENDSHIP OPPORTUNITY

**Table 6: Inter-correlation Matrix**

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***Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.***

**Table 7: Multiple Linear Regressions**

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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>FDL</td>
<td>JCI</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.46*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at 0.001 level, N = 319.
clear that all the three variables are defining three different domain values and significant correlation is the result of high influence of two independent variables on the dependent variable. The significant correlation between superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics may be due to response error. Superior-subordinate relationship is interpersonal in nature (Graen, Scandura and Graen, 1986) and job characteristics are about motivating employees through job content (Hackman and Oldham, 1980).

Significant positive relationship has been found between job characteristics and delegation and between amount of delegation and skill variety, task identity, feedback, dealing with others, and friendship opportunities, respectively. Significant positive relationship has also been found between process of delegation and skill variety, task identity, feedback, dealing with others and friendship opportunities respectively. Significant positive relationship has also been found between facilitating factors of delegation and skill variety, task identity, feedback, dealing with others, and friendship opportunities, respectively.

Significant positive relationship has been found between superior-subordinate relationship and delegation. When superior-subordinate relationship has been regressed with all the three factors of delegation, it gives significant relationship. Significant positive relationship has also been found between amount of delegation, facilitating factors of delegation, and superior-subordinate relationship. The overall variance explained by the independent variables with delegation is 0.28. Maximum variance has been explained by job characteristics, i.e., $r^2 = 0.23$. Table 8 shows the interaction effects of job characteristics and superior-subordinate relationship. Significant interaction effect has been found between superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics.

Table 9 shows the step-wise regressions among the factors of job characteristics. Only three factors out of five have been entered, i.e., feedback, task identity, and dealing with others.

The Chi-square test focuses on the actual number of sample respondents according to whom high job characteristics and high superior-subordinate relationship influences high delegation or low job characteristics and low superior subordinate relationship are not related to high delegation (Tables 10 and 11). In this study, delegation, superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics have been divided into three parts, i.e., high = 3, medium = 2, and low = 1. Significant Pearson chi-square value for job characteristics and superior-subordinate relationship has been found (Table 12).

**DISCUSSION**

Descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, univariate analysis of variance, and chi-square test have shown that independent variables explain dependent variables directly and there is significant interaction effect between job characteristics and superior-subordinate relationship with delegation. As significant positive relationship has been found between superior-subordinate relationship and delegation, which supports hypothesis H1, superior-subordinate relationship can be considered as one of the major factors that will affect the degree of delegation a superior is providing to the subordinate. Leadership theories are especially relevant for explaining how managers vary their use of delegation across subordinates. Managers typically develop a more favourable exchange relationship with some subordinates than with others. In particular when there is strong mutual trust and loyalty in the exchange relationship, subordinates are provided more responsibility and discretion. A subordinate who is dependable and trustworthy (facilitating factors of delegation) is more likely to be consulted for advice (process of delegation) and given additional responsibilities (amount of delegation) (Crouch and Yetton, 1988; Dansereau, Graen and Haga, 1975; Graen and Cashman, 1975). It has been found that the relationship may vary at the dyadic level, because
of demographic similarity between the members of a dyad, same personality types or same managerial style among them. The superior develops a different type of relationship or exchange with each subordinate. These relationships range from those that are characterized by downward influence and role defined relations (amount of delegation) to those that are characterized by mutual trust, respect liking, and reciprocal influence (Dansereau, Graen and Haga, 1975). Other things being equal (e.g., a superior’s personal characteristics, leadership style or organizational effectiveness), a subordinate will trust someone more with whom he or she has a small semantic information distance than a large one (Jablin, 1979). A few researchers (Crouch and Yetton, 1988; Dansereau, Graen and Haga, 1975) have argued that superior-subordinate relationship is related to job attitudes, leader attention, superior’s support, participation in decision-making, and the amount of time and energy invested in the job. The above factors could be considered as facilitating factors of delegation, i.e., if the subordinate is skilled, is willing to take the responsibility, and there is trust among superior and subordinate, then it will lead to effective delegation.

Recent organizational theories have stressed the importance of self-management and self-leadership (Manz and Sims, 1987) of subordinate in teams. Martin (1983) concluded that although supervision consumes a large portion of time and energy of supervisors, it is largely unnecessary for the completion of work by the subordinates. The concept of self-managed teams is emerging from delegating tasks to skilled workers with greater involvement, open communication, and by providing adequate resources necessary for completion of task. Though this study supports the findings of earlier results, most of the research done is in manufacturing sector and is not confined to frontline employees. In five star hotels, delegation is a must for frontline employees (senior managers, junior managers, and supervisors) as they are the persons dealing with customers on a one-to-one basis; they take important decisions to make customers happy and simultaneously help in the growth of the organization. Empowerment helps these frontline employees in taking important decisions and make them more responsible as they know that decisions will have an impact on customer service.

The above discussion supports hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, which says superior-subordinate relationship will influence all the three factors of delegation, i.e., amount of delegation, process of delegation, and facilitating factors of delegation.

Significant positive relationship has been found between job characteristics and delegation which suggests that if employees perceive a job as highly motivating, tasks can be easily delegated to them and this supports hypothesis 2. Delegation is basically distribution of authority and responsibility to the subordinates who will be able to do a job and a subordinate who has experience in performing the job (Tracey, 1988). If job characteristics are defined properly, then employees with affiliation for a particular job will perform better or can be delegated. After a comprehensive review of literature on job attitudes, Locke (1976) concludes that work satisfaction is engendered by work which is a) varied, b) allows autonomy, c) not physically fatiguing, d) is mentally challenging and yet allows the individual to experience success, and e) is personally interesting. In this study, when factors of job characteristics have been regressed with the amount of delegation, only skill variety and task identity have been found significantly related. Job enrichment, which means providing more varied and skillful job is found to be related to job characteristics.

The above discussion supports hypotheses 1, 2, and 3, which says superior-subordinate relationship will influence all the three factors of delegation, i.e., amount of delegation, process of delegation, and facilitating factors of delegation.

Table 10: SSR1*DEL1 Cross Tabulation

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Table 11: JCI1*DEL1 Cross Tabulation

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Table 12: Chi-Square Tests

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<td>Pearson chi-square DEL*JCI</td>
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and task identity. Similarly, when the process of delegation is regressed with factors of job characteristics, only feedback, dealing with others, and friendship opportunities are found to be significantly related. As the process of delegation involves subordinates, free interaction and better communication, amount of agreement between the manager and subordinate priorities, goal congruence, and give and seek feedback make the environment more conducive for delegation (Yukl and Fu, 1999; Leana, 1986). The third factor of delegation, i.e., facilitating factors of delegation, shows significant relationship with skill variety, task identity, and feedback. Leana (1987) found that superiors are reluctant to delegate if there is a lack of confidence in the subordinate’s ability and if tasks are seen as too important or technically too difficult to be left to subordinates. In this case too, variety and importance of a task and ultimately the subordinate’s ability to do it will act as factors favourable for delegation; in case they are absent, delegation will not be effective. Similarly, proper feedback is necessary for subordinates even if superiors have delegated their jobs. Feedback will help the subordinates know their position and resolve the deficiencies, if any.

Customers are very unpredictable in nature and, therefore, the nature and design of job of frontline employees keeps changing, i.e., frontline employees do not work in defined boundaries. To take care of customers, they have been empowered to take important decisions and take responsibility and authority for the tasks provided. The above discussion supports hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 — job characteristics will influence the amount of delegation, process of delegation, and facilitating factors of delegation.

After carrying out step-wise regression of factors of job characteristics, only three out of five factors were selected, i.e., feedback, task identity, and dealing with others. As expected, feedback has been entered first with \( b = 0.445 \). Feedback is a major tool to run the process of delegation smoothly. Any delegation activity will be successful only if the superior seeks feedback and gives feedback to the subordinate about the activity delegated; otherwise, neither will be able to locate the exact status of the job delegated. Many world-class organizations have a coherent strategy for encouraging feedback and strategy systems to collect it and use it as a strategic means for improving performance and thus profit (Roebuck, 1996). Delegation also deals with the idea of giving the subordinate autonomy to perform a given task and, because of this fact, task identity \( (b = 0.21) \), which deals with full autonomy, is entered after feedback. Unless the superior provides autonomy to the subordinate to do a given task with timely feedback, that work is not delegated. The third variable that is entered is dealing with others \( (b = 0.15) \). It deals with the nature of the superior to deal with his/her subordinate and peer group. This variable also plays a vital role in delegating a task to a subordinate because only when a superior knows who is capable of doing a particular job and who should be delegated a task, will it result in the successful completion of a task.

Though superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics influence delegation individually, the interaction effect among them is also significant which supports hypotheses 3. It is obvious that if only the content and characteristics of the job is very enriching but the relationship is not good, a superior probably will not delegate good opportunities. Similarly, if the relationship is very conducive but the job has not much to offer, the process of delegation will still remain ineffective. Thus, the presence of both the variables is necessary for delegation. In other words, if both the variables are present, it will help each other to make better impact on delegation. Graen and Scandura, (1987) and Graen and Uhl-Bien (1991) also supported the above concept and found that subordinates having high quality relationships with their superiors are more likely to be delegated meaningful and developmental, as opposed to trivial, tasks. These meaningful tasks are related to task related satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham, 1980).

The frequency distribution through chi-square test clearly shows that if there is low superior subordinate relationship and low job characteristics, there are very less chances of effective delegation. High superior-subordinate relationship and high job characteristics lead to effective delegation. Though there is very less change in frequency after medium superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics to high superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics, it seems likely that there will not be much change in effectiveness of delegation if adequately satisfying job and relationship are present. The Pearson chi-square test for significance is also found to be significant which predicts the relationship between job characteristics, superior-subordinate relationship, and delegation. It further supports hypotheses 1 to 6.
For the process of delegation to be effective, both better superior-subordinate relationship and well-defined characteristics of job are necessary. Subordinates, who are trustworthy, dependable, and knowledgeable, who require autonomy in work, and who seek feedback, share a better relationship with their supervisors and, in turn, supervisors delegate more.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study measures the influence of job characteristics and superior-subordinate relationship as well as the interaction effect of job characteristics and superior-subordinate relationship on delegation with a sample of 319 frontline employees from different five star hotels of Mumbai. Delegation is a dependent variable and superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics are independent variables. It had been hypothesized that job characteristics and superior-subordinate relationship will positively influence all the three factors of delegation, i.e., amount of delegation, process of delegation, and facilitating factors of delegation. Delegation, superior-subordinate relationship, and job characteristics have also been categorized into three parts, i.e., high, medium, and low, to see the interaction effect of both the independent variables on the dependent variable and to know the pattern of frequency distribution with high superior-subordinate relationship and job characteristics with high delegation. This study indicates significant positive relationship between superior-subordinate relationship and amount of delegation, process of delegation, and facilitating factors of delegation as well as between job characteristics and amount of delegation, process of delegation, and facilitating factors of delegation.

In the competitive business scenario, the frontline superiors as well as subordinates in any service industry, particularly the hotel sector, will have to play a vital role. In order to train the subordinates properly for continued customer relationship, the superiors will need to effectively delegate tasks and delegation requires knowledge, understanding, experience, intuition, and skill. There has to be adequate knowledge of job and proper flow of information and resources between superiors and subordinates, so that superiors can delegate subordinates a few important tasks that a superior will otherwise not delegate. The other important dimensions of delegation are: feedback, task, identity, and dealing with others.

The implications of the study for the service industry, in general, and hotel industry, in particular, are as follows:

- In order to retain customers, the hotel sector should focus on keeping the frontline employees happy by providing motivating jobs and through better relationship with their superiors.
- It is essential to define the job of frontline employees properly to know the amount and nature of authority to delegate. Depending on the employee’s response to a given task, jobs can be delegated.
- There should be proper flow of information and support from the superior which will keep frontline employees updated so that they can give better response to the customers. Information and support leads to open communication and sharing of ideas between superior and subordinate.

To conclude, the process of delegation requires good understanding of the job itself and the nature and characteristics of subordinates working with the superior. Further, superiors should have continually evolving relationship with their subordinates so that delegated tasks can effectively result into successful outcome.

REFERENCES


Sumi Jha, a Research Fellow (OB and HR) from National Institute of Industrial Engineering, Mumbai, and is presently working as a Lecturer in the area of HR and OB at Guru Nanak Institute of Management Studies, Mumbai. She teaches quantitative techniques in HR and Perspective Management. She has presented research papers in the area of assessment centres and employee empowerment and imparted training on conflict management, leadership styles, and effective feedback. e-mail: sumijha@rediffmail.com

The quality of mercy is not strain’d,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath: it is twice blesst;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
’Tis mightiest in the mightiest: it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself;
And earthly power doth then show likest God’s
When mercy seasons justice.

William Shakespeare – The Merchant of Venice