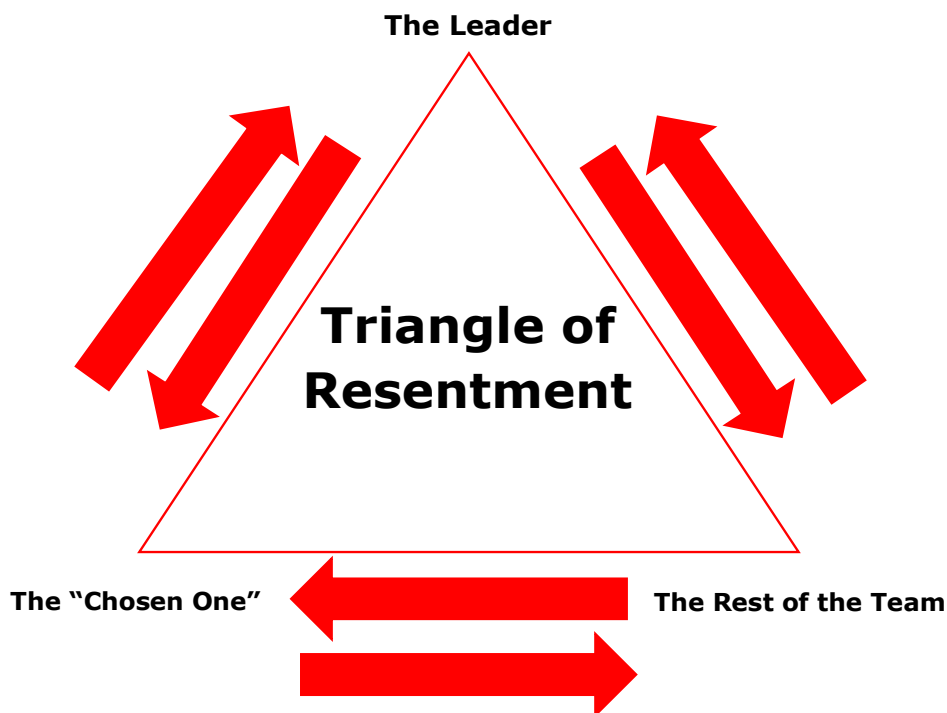


The Triangle of Resentment by Holly Eckert-Lewis, Sr. Archbright University Consultant

Let me introduce you to a common problem that destroys teamwork and morale as well as a powerful tool to overcome it.

Think about the team of people who report to you. They probably have varying levels of experience and skills as well as differing personalities. As a result, you may delegate the majority of new or interesting tasks or projects to one or two key people. You may think that you simply can't delegate to others because they just don't know enough. Maybe you don't trust them to work hard enough to get it done, or get it done right.

Now that makes sense, right? After all, certain people have proven that they can get the job done! And while that is true, we also must look at the impact this has on the team dynamic.



You see this triangle here? Here at the top is the leader (that's you). On one side is your "chosen one" and on the other side is the "rest of the team." When there is a "chosen one" in a team, this innocent triangle turns into a "triangle of resentment."

- The rest of the team resents the chosen one, who is clearly the boss's favorite.
- The rest of the team also resents the boss, who doesn't seem to value them.
- The boss resents the rest of the team for not working harder.
- And while the chosen one may enjoy their special status for a short time, they soon get resentful toward the boss for overburdening them.

- At that point, the boss can grow resentful of the chosen one who doesn't seem to have the cheerful attitude they used to.
- Lastly, the chosen one resents their co-workers, who are not stepping up to the plate.

So, we end up with six directions of resentment and poor team engagement. YIKES!

The way to overcome this dynamic is to shift your framework around delegation. Rather than seeing delegation as a tool to get work done as quickly as possible, delegation should be a tool to get work done while developing employees, strengthening relationships, and improving processes.

- 1. Developing employees.** If an employee is new to a task, don't give them full responsibility from the start. Look at the long-term benefit, and invest time orienting them to the task. Let them watch you do it. Let them try some of the steps while you are there. Give them partial responsibility. Gradually, while their skills develop, increase their ownership of the task.
- 2. Strengthening relationships.** Delegation is a prime opportunity to develop your relationships with team members. It is also a prime opportunity to encourage relationships between team members. Do you need train the person new to the task yourself? Perhaps you could assign one team member to teach another how to do it, setting the stage for them to increase their trust and connection. According to Adam Grant's research at the Wharton School of Business, the amount of help that peers give each other is the single strongest predictor of team effectiveness.
- 3. Improving processes.** You have your way of accomplishing the task, and the chosen one does, too. These are probably very good ways since you're smart people! And it is possible that the task can be done even better. Delegating the task to a new person will allow new perspectives to be considered that can be used to streamline the task, increase the quality of the product, or maybe even eliminate it altogether.

So where do you get started? The next time you are about to delegate a task to your "chosen one," ask yourself,

- "Who else could learn to do this over time?"
- "Can my regular go-to person teach someone new?"
- "Might a person new to this task have something valuable to contribute, given the chance?"