

Managing “Self Imposed” Time

In my previous article I talked about “The 4 Rules of Monkey Management” (dealing with upward leaping monkeys) and said that I’d help you explore how to deal with sideward and downward leaping monkeys as well as your own monkeys.

So, how are you getting on with your monkey management?
Are you saying “no” to monkeys that should be someone else’s responsibility?
Have you identified all your current monkeys and returned them to their rightful owners (or shot them if necessary)?

Have you even started yet? Or did you just think my last article was interesting, but that it would take too much time! Or it’s not something my staff are ready for, so it won’t work for me?

Well, if you haven’t yet done anything about the upward leaping monkeys, then you simply won’t have any time to deal with your other monkeys! So can I suggest you take another look at my previous articles and start taking action now!

In his article “Managing Management Time” William Oncken Jr identified three types of time:

- self imposed (where we do things we decide to do)
- boss imposed
- System imposed (admin and peer associated time)

Within the first category – self imposed time - Oncken differentiated between subordinate imposed time (time spent working on staff’s monkeys - which is bad), and discretionary time (which is good and our most important time.)

You’ll notice he classed dealing with staff’s monkeys as self imposed i.e. you’ve chosen (even if not on a conscious level) to take responsibility for your staff’s monkeys!

There are certain steps you can take to manage your time more effectively, but the starting point is to eliminate subordinate imposed time because what you’re doing here tends to be things you shouldn’t be doing anyway.

In addition, remember, your people cannot impose extra monkeys on you without your cooperation, like your manager and peers can. So coach your staff towards greater self reliance – this will have a double benefit; it will increase their morale, and also give you more discretionary time.

The more you get rid of people’s monkeys, the more time you’ll have for your people, even though they may no longer have much time for you. (This would actually be a very good indicator of whether you’re succeeding – do you now have more time for your people than they have for you?)

If you're still resisting this first step and you're afraid to turn things over to your staff because you don't think they're ready, then I'm afraid it's your job to get them ready!

You need to start having the conversations with them that will prepare them for what you're proposing, and give them small "monkeys" (next moves) until they're ready to take on more.

But the bottom line is you've got to start, because there'll always be more monkeys clamouring for your attention than you'll have time to manage – and only you can do something about it!

If you make a start and are willing to consistently follow the 4 rules of monkey management then you will certainly create more discretionary time for yourself. And once you do this, you need to invest this time to create even more discretionary time!

In my next article I'll explore how to deal with boss and system imposed time.

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About The Author:

Julie Johnson, formerly a manager and development specialist, created The Leadership Coaching Company to help managers solve one of their biggest business problems: how to get the most from themselves and their staff. She is now a leadership success specialist and has attracted a loyal following who praise her down to earth yet inspiring approach.

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