Management Time Executive Summary

By Ryan McFarland

*In the article Management Time: Who’s Got the Monkey? by William Oncken, Jr. and Donald L. Wass, the nature of handling a manager’s time properly is revealed. The article describes management time as a delicate balance between other activities that also require time. These types include Boss-imposed time, System-imposed time, Self-imposed time, Subordinate-imposed time, and Discretionary time. While each type is important, the goal of this article is unveil the ways a manager should reduce Subordinate-imposed time, therefore increasing discretionary time. Ultimately, this practice equates to putting more initiative on the employee rather than the manager. Establishing this type of environment will help to provide a more balanced and cohesive workplace.*

# Travelers

At my internship in Hartford, I have seen the analogy of the monkey on the back of the manager first hand. I was recently in a meeting with one of my superiors and many of his subordinates. He established the meeting to get a progress check on the different stages of the development of the large project going on as well as to establish the overall cost of the project. What I did not notice until after I read this article, is just how much is being put on him at once. Now it is no wonder to me why things take so long for him to complete; there are just so many projects that he needs to make decisions on all while answering to a boss of his own. This also explained why it is very difficult to get a meeting or a quick one on one with him – he is simply too busy. I would describe him as a very kind and hardworking person. But now it is clear to me that he might need to start standing his ground to get all of these monkeys off his back. Many of the decision could easily be evaluated and made by the employees or by a meeting with him. But instead, he is left to review and decide each and every one by himself. My advice to him would be to start refusing to take the monkey from the employee and instead let them come to a resolution together or on their own. The article describes an approach that I believe to be the perfect solution:

*“At no time while I am helping you with this or any other problem will your problem become my problem. The instant your problem becomes mine, you no longer have a problem. I cannot help a person who hasn’t got a problem.”*

If he were to have said that in the meeting that I was a part of, that would have drastically changed the amount of work that he would need to be doing. Instead he would have more discretionary time to help his employees if and when needed. In addition, I’m sure he would enjoy the benefits of using discretionary time for other means such as leisure and family. Unfortunately, it seems as though many of the employees who put all this work on him during that meeting did not even realize just how far things are stacking up. Decisions that might seem quick or easy to the employee if they were in charge will take time with the manager as he will need to evaluate thoroughly before coming to a decision when there already piles of other decisions to make. Ultimately, that means that the workload is nobody’s fault but his own. When he transitions to a new management position in the company next month, I hope he starts to take the ideas explained in this article into consideration.