

MANAGING MANAGEMENT TIME

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(As summarized and adapted
From *Managing Management Time* by
William Oncken Jr. and Hal Burrows)

Generally, Time Management courses teach you to be more efficient. The logic behind this is that the more efficient you are, the more you'll get done. Managing Management Time approaches time management through content rather than efficiency. This approach is best described in the following quotes from Benjamin Franklin's grandfather:

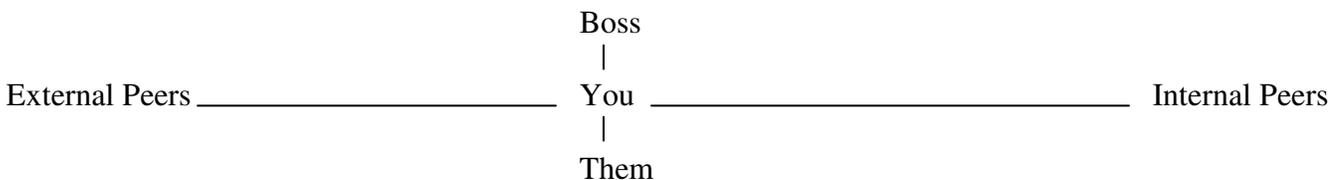
"It's better to do the right things haltingly than the wrong things with dispatch (if those are the only two alternatives facing you)".

"It's small comfort to do more efficiently those that you should not be doing in the first place."

"It is better to get something done on the vital few than the vital few get lost among the trivial many."

The logic behind the content approach to time management is that if you can learn to recognize what you should be spending your time on first, then when you apply the efficiency techniques, you'll be doing the right things efficiently!

To help identify what to spend time on, one must first look at how organizations work and where you fit into your organization. In order to do this, we'll borrow a concept from chemistry, the molecule. Webster defines the molecule as "*the smallest particle of an element or compound that exists in the free state and still retains the characteristics of the element of compound*". For the purposes of looking at an organization, Oncken and Burrows have developed the "managerial molecule". The molecule looks like this:



You are in the center of this molecule and each of the groups around you represents people in your organization that are external sources of your time and management problems.

The first and principal source of your time management problems is your boss. This does not necessarily mean the most frequent or the most disruptive, but the boss is still the principal source. This is because the boss has the inherent right to interrupt your day and send all of your well laid out plans right down the tube. The boss has this right because of the "Golden Rule of Management" which translates into "He/she who has the gold makes the rules". In order to stay employed in the organization (which pays your salary, pays for your house, sail boat, etc.) you need to maintain a good record of accountability. The boss is your channel to the rest of the organization and it is through his/her eyes that your accountability is shared with your organization.

The next most important external source of your time management problems are your subordinates. This is because your subordinates have "the ball" over you. This means that if they drop "the ball" you are in trouble. Supervisors (and leaders) often get sucked into doing subordinates' job for them because (1) they fear that the

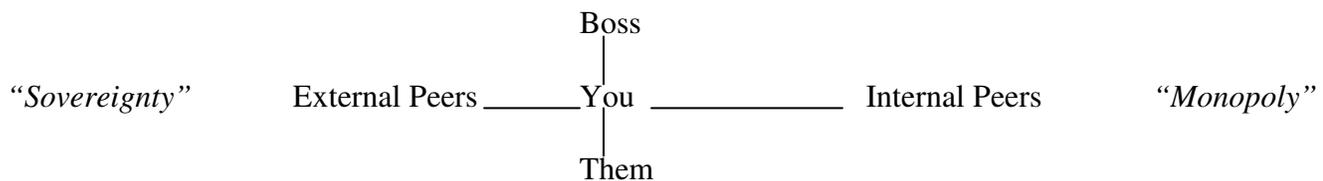
subordinates will “drop the ball”, or (2) they want to help their subordinates because they used to do that job and know the best way to do it. Both of these reasons lead the supervisor to do both their job and their subordinate’s job. This is why the “them” in the managerial molecule are the next most important external source of your time management problems.

The third source of our time management problem relates to our peers in the organization. There are two types of peers – internal peers and external peers. Both of these peers provide support to us in our job. Internal peers are those people in your organization who can make or break you by providing or withholding services and information. Usually these folks are responsible for giving you either administrative or specific functional support. Some examples of internal peers for us might be the IT department, business services, human resources, purchasing, or maintenance. You can usually identify these people through their job descriptions because it says in their job descriptions that they should supply support to you. The logical conclusion to this previous statement is that internal peers will, in fact, provide you with that necessary support/information. However, it doesn’t take much experience in the real world to realize that this isn’t always true.

Internal peers generally are the only ones in the organization that are responsible for delivering certain services. This fact gives them a “monopoly” over these services. Because they have a “monopoly” over “you”, these internal peers, if not managed right, can have a devastating effect on your time. The time management problems that internal peers give you are red tape hassles, and not delivering what you want, when you want it and where you want it. (This is better known as the mythical three point landing.)

External peers also provide support for you. However, because these peers have the freedom to choose where to give their support, they have “sovereignty” over you. This “sovereignty” means that when they interrupt your day with a complaint, you need to drop everything and deal with their problem. In this, they are like your boss. Examples of external peers in our organization would be clients, perspective clients, government or state regulators employee unions, suppliers. The managerial molecule now would look like this:

“Golden Rule of Management”



“The Ball”

Each of the people in your molecule can negatively effect your time management. In order for you to be effective in your job, you need to: (1) have enough discretionary time to do your own job, and (2) have the active support of the other people in your molecule. If you can do this, you will have achieved control over the timing and content of your work.

There are three enemies of your discretionary time. They are: (1) Boss-imposed time – this includes all the interactions you spend with the boss, including those that you or he/she initiate, (2) Self-imposed time – there are two parts to this – a) discretionary time which is time for yourself and, b) subordinate imposed time spent doing things for or dealing with your subordinates, and (3) System-imposed time – this includes all time spent doing things you would not be doing if the system did not exist (internal/external peers) i.e., filling out forms, building relationships etc. The first part of this paper has been devoted to outlining the problems we have in getting control of the timing and content of our work. The second half of this paper is to teach you how to solve these time management problems.

Part of the solution to your time management problems is to change the type of interruptions you get from people in your molecule. The trick is not to decrease the number of interruptions, but to make sure most of them are welcome interruptions! This is where the management molecule comes in. The molecule identifies those people in your organization you need to get the “active support” of in order to do your job effectively. It also puts you in the position to be responsible for getting that “active support”.

Management Time vs. Vocational Time

Vocational time comes from time you spend doing things: i.e. *doing time*. It gives identity and direct feedback to the *doer*. It gives you one hour of product to everyone hour of work. However, when you are a leader or a manager, vocational time no longer is effective. You need to switch to management time. Management time is different. It's spent planning, coordinating, etc. It doesn't give you the pride of craft identity you used to have nor does it give you immediate feedback in your day. It also does not have a 1:1 ratio of work to results. If you are working on management time, you will get many more results for each hour you put in.

Intra-Company Politics

The process of gaining the active support of your molecule (which will give you time to do your own work) is called intra-company politics! **Question:** If you had a choice, when would you want to gain the active support of your molecule...at the time you need it or ahead? **Answer:** Ahead, naturally. Political activity is where relationships with other people are based on what they can do for you at some time in the future. This political activity of getting and holding the active support of people in your molecule consumes a very important part of your management time. What you get out of this is the control of the timing and content of your work which allows you to be more effective on your job.

The Art of Managee-ship

Learning how to manage your boss is the most effective way of gaining the active support of your boss. Your boss gives you more or less freedom depending on his/her anxiety over your work. As your boss' anxiety increases, your freedom decreases. One of the ways to decrease this anxiety is through your “political activity”. In addition to this, you always want to work from as high a degree of freedom as possible (but never fall below number 3). These degrees of freedom are:

Professional Behavior

1. Act on own, report routinely. Your boss has to have trust and confidence in you to give you this level of freedom. This will be based on your track record, etc.
 2. Act, then advise at once. Your boss has a little less confidence in you. He/she would be nervous if you didn't keep him informed. NOTE: Watch out for the fear of the unknown...it makes your boss anxious.
 3. Recommend, and then take resulting action. This is completed staff work with a recommendation. Your boss' anxiety is higher than in freedom No. 2. He/she wants to check your decision before any action is taken.
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Amateur Behavior

4. Ask what to do.
5. Wait until told.
6. Wait to be caught.

With amateur behavior, you lose all control over the timing and control of your work. In order to insure freedom for yourself, always work above the dotted line (Degree of Freedoms 1, 2, or 3). By working in the first 3 degrees of freedom, you are always in anticipatory compliance. This means that you anticipate your

boss' need or anxiety, develop a plan (that you feel is the best way to go) and proceed to package the idea for the boss. The boss, who is so happy that anyone of his/her staff is showing initiative, will say "yes" to your recommendation. You, in turn, will have structured to your liking how you are going to deal with a specific problem. This gives you more freedom over the time and content of your work.

On the other hand, if you were operating from the 4th or 5th or 6th degree of freedom, you would be in abject compliance to your boss. In other words, if you ask what to do and your boss tells you what to do, you will have a tough time changing his/her mind if you don't like their decision. You have to do what your boss tells you and once you ask, you've lost control of the timing and content of your work.

Managing Your Internal Peers

Because internal peers have a monopoly over you in the delivery of services, you need to develop a positive credit rating with them. This credit rating is not financial. It means that the internal peers feel appreciated for what they do and don't suffer negative consequences when they make an exception to their rules for you. If you have a positive credit rating with your peers, they will allow you flexible conformity, which means that you will sometimes be allowed to skip the red tape. If you have a low credit rating with internal peers, you will be forced into blind conformity which means that you will have to fill out every form 5 times before you get what you need from them.

In order to gain more discretionary time, always work toward flexible conformity with your internal peers.

Managing "Them"

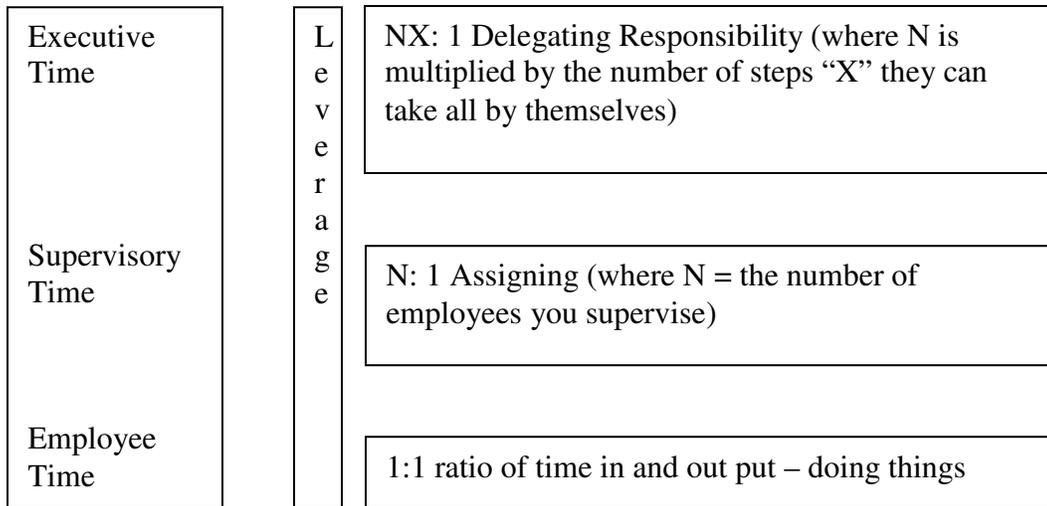
In discussing subordinates, Oncken introduces the concepts of monkeys to help illustrate how "you" end up doing their job. A monkey is a problem that belongs to your subordinate. You know when a monkey has been transferred onto your subordinate. You know when a monkey has been transferred onto your back when at the end of an interaction.....the next move is yours! Monkey management becomes the key to supervising your subordinates, because if you can keep your subordinates doing their job then you won't be spending your time doing it for them! The following rules apply to supervising monkeys:

1. Always identify whose monkey it is. If it's your subordinates, make sure that it stays on their back when they leave your room. If you don't then the subordinate will become your supervisor and check up on whether you've completed their monkey!
2. At no time "while I'm helping you with your money will your monkey become mine".
3. Monkeys usually leap when subordinates are operating from the 4th and 5th degree of freedom. Therefore, always get your staff to operate from 1-3 degrees of freedom. The way you do this is to change the degrees of freedom to levels of authority and assign a level of authority to each task they have. Only assign the first three levels of authority. The level of authority depends on the subordinate. Keeping them on the first three levels of authority teaches your subordinates how to take initiative, keep you informed and provides them with an opportunity to demonstrate their growing competence.
4. Monkeys shall be feed on the responsibility of the subordinate, at the time and place specified in the feeding schedule; bosses shall not be chasing down starving monkeys and feeding them on the fly, catch-as-catch can.
5. Monkey-feeding appointments may, in the case of conflict, be rescheduled at the suggestion of either party, but may never be indefinitely postponed; failure to make progress shall not be accepted as a reason for rescheduling its feeding appointments. If no progress has been made, it usually means something is blocking the successful accomplishment of the task. The feeding time is used to identify why no progress is being made and solve the problem.

6. Monkeys shall be fed face to face whenever possible; otherwise by telephone, but never by mail. Memoranda and reports must at times be used in the feeding process, but cannot substitute for it. (baby sitting monkeys) Memoranda or reports running to several pages or more shall be covered by a synopsis of one page or less to facilitate instant dialogue.

As a result of exercising monkey management, you will increase your ability to get your work done. This is called leverage. The more you delegate, the more leverage you create, thereby increasing the level of productivity for you and your organization.

Leverage looks like this:



Managing Your External Peers

If you have been successful in getting the active support of your molecule, then a high quality product will be delivered to your external peers. They in turn will support your organization because they receive what they need from you.

Summary

First, comply with the requirement that you consistently anticipate what your boss wants, and then expect your subordinates to do the same to you.

Second: Conform to the requirement that you maintain an intra-company "credit rating" with the system at your level in order to gain the flexibility in dealing with internal peers and expect your subordinates to do the same with the system at their level. These two strategies will generate the discretionary time through which you can serve your external peers and express your unique identity in the organization.

This increase in discretionary time will allow you to get your job done well and do it is a way that creates a place where people who work in the organization can achieve personal satisfaction and excellent results.

References

Oncken, W., (1984) Managing Management Time: Who's got the monkey? Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, NJ.