

**O[®]The
ne
Minute
Manager
Meets
the Monkey**

Books by William Oncken, Jr.

MANAGING MANAGEMENT TIME, 1984

Books by Kenneth Blanchard, Ph.D.

MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR:
UTILIZING HUMAN RESOURCES
(with Paul Hersey), 5th edition, 1988

THE POWER OF ETHICAL MANAGEMENT
(with Norman Vincent Peale), 1988

THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER GETS FIT
(with D. W. Edington and Marjorie Blanchard), 1986

LEADERSHIP AND THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER
(with Patricia Zigarmi and Drea Zigarmi), 1985

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE THROUGH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP
(with Robert H. Guest and Paul Hersey), 2nd edition, 1985

PUTTING THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER TO WORK
(with Robert Lorber), 1984

THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER
(with Spencer Johnson), 1982

THE FAMILY GAME:
A SITUATIONAL APPROACH TO EFFECTIVE PARENTING
(with Paul Hersey), 1979

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**Kenneth Blanchard
William Oncken, Jr.,
and Hal Burrows**

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The Symbols



The One Minute Manager's symbol—a one-minute readout from the face of a modern digital watch—is intended to remind each of us to take a minute out of our day to look into the faces of the people we manage. And to realize that they are our most important resources.



The Monkey Manager's symbol—a harried manager overwhelmed by a deskful of problems—is intended to remind us to constantly discipline ourselves to invest our time on the most vital aspects of management rather than dilute our effectiveness by “doing more efficiently those things that shouldn’t be done in the first place.”

I NTRODUCTION

Over a decade ago a real joy came into my life—Bill Oncken. I first came into contact with Bill and his monkey-on-the-back analogy when I was given a copy of his classic November 1974 *Harvard Business Review* article entitled “Managing Management Time: Who’s Got the Monkey?” that he co-authored with Donald Wass. I read it and light bulbs began to flash. At the time, I was a tenured full professor in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts. As such, according to Bill, I was a typical northeastern intellectual bleeding-heart social theorist who thought my role in life was to wipe out pain and suffering by helping everyone. In other words, I was a compulsive money-picker-upper.

Then several years later I sat in on one of Bill’s “Managing Management Time” seminars. Participants burst into laughter as they recognized the problems Bill discussed. Since crying in public is not an accepted practice, the only thing left for us to do was laugh. And laugh we did. Why? Because Bill Oncken, time after time, hit both the absurdities and realities of organizational life in America with such accuracy that it hurt.

Bill Oncken, more than anyone else, has taught me that if I really want to help others, I need to teach them how to fish rather than give them a fish. Taking the initiative away from people and caring for and feeding their monkeys is nothing more than rescuing them, that is, doing things for them they can do for themselves.

So when Hal Burrows, a longtime associate and principal of the William Oncken Company and one of the outstanding presenters of the "Managing Management Time" seminar, approached me about co-authoring this book, I was thrilled. In fact, I am honored to have this book as part of THE ONE MINUTE MANAGER LIBRARY.

Hal and I wrote several drafts of this book with Bill over about a three-year period. Then Bill suffered a serious illness and died as we were completing the final working draft of this book. So he never saw the finished publication. As I write these words my heart aches because of the loss of Bill. I am especially sad for those people who never knew Bill Oncken, for they suffer the greatest loss. My hope is that reading this book can soften that loss because it reads as accurately and humorously as Bill and colleagues like Hal Burrows have told thousands of managers about monkey management over the years. This is vintage Bill Oncken with the bite and insight left in.

What follows is a story about a harried manager who worked long, hard hours, yet never quite seemed to get caught up with all the work he had to do. He learned about monkey management and how not to take initiative away from his people so they can care for and feed their own “monkeys.” In the process, he learned to be more effective in dealing with his own manager and the demands of his organization. The performance of his department drastically improved as did the prospects for his career.

Bill Oncken's seminar and book, "Managing Management Time," include many wonderful insights about how organizations really function and present strategies for gaining the support of your boss, staff, and internal and external peers. The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey is adapted from the "staff" strategy.

My hope is that you will use what you learn in this book to make a difference in your life and the lives of the people you interact with at work and at home.

—Kenneth Blanchard, Ph.D
Co-author
The One Minute Manager

This book is dedicated to the
memory of William Oncken, Jr.

Bill Oncken, like Amadeus Mozart, was that exceedingly rare combination of masterful composer and virtuoso performer, the difference being that Bill used words instead of musical notes to fashion his works. His masterwork, *Managing Management Time*, is a timeless, enduring composition that captures the very essence of management, an art as old as organizations themselves. And anyone who ever saw him perform his work will never forget the experience!

—Hal Burrows



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IF you are someone who feels overwhelmed with problems created by other people, what you are about to read can change your life. It's the story of a manager, but it applies as well to other roles in life, especially parents and teachers.

This is the account of how my career went from imminent failure to considerable success after some wise counsel from two able people. My purpose in telling it here is to pass along their wisdom to you in the hope that it will help you as it has helped me.

The story begins some two years ago after a luncheon meeting with my friend, the One Minute Manager. I returned to my office, sat down at my desk, shook my head in amazement, and thought about what had just happened.

During lunch I had poured out my frustrations about my work. My friend listened and then told me the cause of my problems. I was astonished that the solution was so obvious.

What surprised me most was that the problem was self-inflicted. I guess that's why I couldn't see it without some help. But when my eyes were opened I realized that I was not alone; I knew other managers with the same problem.

As I sat there alone in my office I laughed aloud. "Monkeys!" I said to no one in particular. "I never would have suspected my problem is monkeys."

For the first time in a long time I remember smiling as I glanced at the picture on my desk of my wife and children. I began to look forward to enjoying more time with them.

About a year before the “monkey revelation” I had been appointed to my first management position. Things had started off well. I was initially very enthusiastic about my new work, and my attitude seemed to rub off on the people who reported to me. Productivity and morale gradually increased; both had been reported to be low before I took over as head of the department.

After the initial surge, however, the output of the department began to decline, slowly at first, then rapidly. The drop in performance was followed by a similar slide in morale. Despite long hours and hard work, I was unable to arrest the decline in my department. I was puzzled and very frustrated; it seemed that the harder I worked, the further behind I got and the worse the performance of my department became.

I was working extra hours every workday as well as Saturdays and some Sundays. I just never got caught up. There was pressure every minute, and it was extremely frustrating. I feared I was developing an ulcer and a nervous twitch!

I realized that all this was starting to wear a little thin with my family, too. I was so seldom home that my wife, Sarah, had to manage most of the family problems alone. And when I was home, I was usually tired and preoccupied with work, sometimes even in the middle of the night. Our two kids were also disappointed because I never seemed to have any time to play with them. But I didn't see any alternatives. After all, I had to get the work done.

My boss, Alice Kelley, had not been initially critical of me, but I began to notice a change in her behavior. She started asking for more reports on the performance of my department. She was obviously starting to watch things more closely.

ALICE seemed to appreciate the fact that I wasn't knocking on her door all the time asking for help. But at the same time she was more than a little concerned about the performance of my department. I knew I could not let things go on like that much longer. Consequently, I made an appointment to see her.

I told her I knew things had not been going well lately but I hadn't yet figured out how to improve the situation. I remember telling her my workload made me feel as if I were doing the work of two people. I'll never forget her reply: "Tell me who they are and I'll see that one of them is fired because I can't afford the overhead."

Then she asked me if perhaps I shouldn't be turning over more to my staff. My answer was that my staff was not ready to take on the additional responsibility. Again she responded in a way I'll never forget: "Then it's your job to get them ready! This situation is making me very nervous, and as Benjamin Franklin's grandfather once said:"

*

*It's Tough
To Work For
A Nervous Boss,
Especially
If You Are The One
Who's Making Your Boss
Nervous!*

*

AFTER my meeting with Alice, I thought a lot about what she had said. Those words “nervous boss” kept coming back to me. I began to realize that Alice was expecting me to handle this situation on my own, probably because she was extremely busy herself on a critical project. That’s why I had called the One Minute Manager for help. He was a senior manager in another company and a longtime family friend. Everyone called him the “One Minute Manager” because he got such great results from his people with seemingly little time and effort on his part.

When we met at lunch, my problems must have shown on my face because the first thing he said was “So, being a manager is not as easy as you thought, eh?”

“That’s an understatement,” I answered. I lamented that back in the good old days before I became a manager things were a lot easier because my performance depended strictly on my own efforts. In those days, the longer and harder I worked the more I got done. “That formula seems to be working in reverse now,” I told him.