

# MANAGING MANAGEMENT TIME™

*William Ouchterlony*

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*Executive Edition*

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**MANAGING  
MANAGEMENT  
TIME™**

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**EXECUTIVE EDITION**

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**Who's Got the Monkey?**

**William Oncken, Jr.**

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# Foreword

To say that I was pleased when Bill Oncken asked me if I would be willing to write the foreword for his book is an understatement. I was thrilled. In fact, I was honored.

Every once in a while someone comes along in a field who sees things clearer and more accurately than others in the field. Ted Williams was always considered that kind of hitter in baseball. The reason he hit for a higher average than anyone else was that he seemed to see the ball better. Well, Bill Oncken is that kind of person in the field of management.

The reason Bill Oncken has been consistently in such high demand as a teacher of managers for over twenty-five years is that he sees what's going on in organizations much clearer than anyone else in our field. The loud bursts of laughter that continuously echo from his training sessions are sounds of recognition. Since crying in public is not an accepted practice for managers, the only thing left for them to do is laugh. And laugh they do. Why? Because Bill Oncken, time after time, hits both the absurdities and realities of organizational life in America with such accuracy that it hurts. That is why I am so excited about this book. Now what hundreds of thousands of managers have learned in "Managing Management Time" seminars is being made available for every manager in America to read in the quiet of his or her office. Get out the handkerchiefs because this book reads as accurately and humorously as Bill tells it "live." This is vintage Bill Oncken with the "bite" and the insight left in.

There is one other reason I am excited about *Managing Management Time* appearing in its entirety in print. It shows the depth of knowledge that Bill Oncken has about management and organizational behavior. For years, everyone has known him for his "monkey-on-the-back" analogy either from hearing about it in a training session or reading about it in his classic November 1974 *Harvard Business Review* article, co-authored with Donald Wass, entitled "Management Time—Who's Got the Monkey?" Fewer people know the depth and breadth of Bill Oncken's knowledge and understanding. While I know practicing

managers all over the world will “lap up” this book, I think it would be a shame if it were not required reading for all students of management in our colleges and universities. It certainly will be in my courses. *Managing Management Time* is not just about time management, it’s a complete course in management.

“Why is Bill Oncken so insightful?” you might ask. First of all, he is one of the few people I’ve known who went to Princeton who was able to “get over it.” Most people can never seem to “shake it.” Recognizing that that comment comes from a Cornellian, we can get to the real reason—he paid the price. He spent over twenty years as a practicing manager before he decided to teach managers. Most management consultants and trainers, including myself, started as academics—students and teachers of management behind the “hallowed halls.” While we were getting our lumps trying to publish so we wouldn’t perish, Bill was out in the real world learning from experience. While our articles and books might have gotten us promoted, Bill’s bruises got him a graduate degree from the “School of Hard Knocks.” That is something I have learned to respect. In fact, I think Bill Oncken has probably forgotten more than most people in our field ever knew. After you finish reading *Managing Management Time*, you will know what I mean.

I know you will learn from and enjoy this book. That is a given. But what I hope you will do is use what you learn. The truths that Bill Oncken will give you can set you free and make your organization a more productive and satisfying place for everyone to work.

**KENNETH H. BLANCHARD**

Professor of Leadership and Organizational Behavior

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

and

Chairman of the Board

Blanchard Training and Development, Inc.

Escondido, California

# Introduction:

## An Ongoing Exercise in Time Perception

Could you increase the value of each hour you put in

- If your boss delegated more responsibility and assigned fewer tasks?
- If the paper work you do added up more often to something important to you, and not just to someone else?
- If you could successfully anticipate, and not have to wait for, the decisions of your boss and those of other departments? And if your subordinates would similarly anticipate you?
- If your own subordinates would assume more responsibility for day-to-day operating decisions—so they wouldn't even reach your desk?
- If you could ask for—and get—the operating information you need instead of having to dig it out for yourself?
- If you could deputize your subordinates to represent you—within clearly understood limits—at many meetings you now attend in person? And if your boss would similarly deputize you?
- If you could sign more documents prepared by your subordinates with full confidence that you were underwriting better papers than you would have time to produce yourself? And if your boss would more often do the same with documents you prepare?
- If your subordinates were already on top of more of the problems you now get called about? And if your boss were less often called about problems you already have well in hand?
- If your absence from your office for a month would delay only *one* aspect of your job—namely, planning?

- If you could maintain performance standards high enough to encourage your weakest subordinates to move on and challenge your strongest ones to stay?
- If your subordinates had routine ways for finding answers to more of the questions they now interrupt you for?
- If you could rely on your subordinates for more of the decisions they now depend on you for? And if your boss would rely on you for more of the decisions he or she now reserves for him- or herself?
- If interdepartmental conflicts and differences were resolved more often at those levels in the organization where they initially arise?
- If the reports you get from the field were more timely and meaningful? And if you got faster feedback from reports you send "up the line"?
- If sales, production and accounting (for example) could get together on more things that you now have to arbitrate?
- If you could become more accessible to your subordinates *and* have more time to yourself without having to put in longer hours?
- If information you need from other departments was in a form more useful to you (rather than in a form more convenient for them)?
- If others would stop bypassing you for decisions that are your prerogative to make? And if your boss stopped preempting you by making such decisions on his or her own?

If so, then this book will be invaluable for you.

When you have finished reading it, go over this list again, and notice the difference in your perceptions.

Review this list regularly thereafter—say, once a month. You will find that the progressive difference in your perceptions will materialize in the increasing value of each hour you put in on your job.

The ball is now in your court.

**William Oncken, Jr.**

# Preface and Acknowledgments

This book has been more than a quarter of a century in the making, although it was less than six months in the writing. Along the way there were many individuals who, unbeknownst to them, helped shape its philosophy, its central theme, its vocabulary and its imagery. I wish to acknowledge here those whose identities are still lodged in my memory.

*Michael J. Kane*, now deceased, was one of the "four horsemen" (Kane, Dietz, Dooley and Conover) of the Training Within Industry task force commissioned by the federal government during World War II. He used the "boss-imposed, system-imposed, self-imposed" trilogy in his oral presentations but never reduced it to writing. A close friend to me during his lifetime and especially during the early 1950s, he would have been gratified had he lived to see his insight become the backbone of the philosophy underlying this book.

*James L. Hayes*, chairman of the board, the American Management Association, used the leaping monkey analogy in his platform presentations during the mid-1960s for the President's Association to illuminate the subtleties of "reverse delegation" (introduced here in Chapter 4) and the management/vocational trapezoid that I make use of in Chapter 3. They, too, are indispensable building blocks in the structure of this book.

*Michael Kami*, long-range planning consultant, in some of his lectures used as a prop an actual mechanical gear train, much to the enlightenment and amusement of his audiences. I have made use of it in Chapter 3 and occasionally later in my treatment of organizational leverage.

*David Ewing*, managing editor for *The Harvard Business Review*, labored long and hard in restructuring my article (co-authored with Donald Wass) entitled "Management Time—Who's Got the Monkey?" to render it fit for publication in the November 1974 issue. Most of that article is repeated verbatim in Chapter 4.



*Lawrence A. Apply*, now retired as board chairman of the American Management Associations, held a unique view since the early 1950s of management as a *professional* activity and planted the seed from which grew the professional versus amateur contrast that underlies every page in this book.

As for the many "original" concepts I introduce—the management molecule, the "up needle-down needle" phenomenon, the intra-company economic system, the managER/managEE role conflict, the managerial freedom scale, the intracompany credit rating and many others—I am unable to trace their conceptual lineage, if any. Not yet ready to concede that I conceived them unaided, I am attributing them to Benjamin Franklin's grandfather until such time as their true parents come forth to claim them. Notice is hereby served that they must do so now or forever hold their peace.

Except for *Douglas McGregor* and *Abraham Maslow*, behavioral theorists (who often prefer to be called behavioral scientists) have produced little specific source material relevant to the message of this book. Either they have not been asking the relevant questions or their research methodology has been less than responsive to them. Not surprisingly, their principal impact has been on the academic rather than on the business community; witness the courses in "Organization Behavior" that MBA candidates must pass to earn their degrees. This book is thus unlikely to become required reading for academic credit. I hope the absence of the jargon of contemporary management theorists will not trouble those to whom the *practice* of management is now, or is soon to become, the principal source of their livelihood.

The message underlying this book has evolved since 1961 through the development and marketing of three educational vehicles: (1) a two-day seminar conducted initially from 1961 through the early 1970s by myself and subsequently also by *Donald Wass*, *Hal Burrows*, and *Richard Hagener*, who today conduct about 125 such sessions between them annually, (2) a video-assisted version of the "live" seminar produced by The Hewlett-Packard Corporation in 1976 and subsequently edited and marketed internationally by Deltak, Inc., and (3) an audiocassette version produced and marketed by *Charles E. Becker*. Donald Wass contributed to the structure of the "live" seminar as did Hal Burrows, the latter also contributing to the structure of the video-assisted version. All these contributions had a decisive influence on how this present book is organized.

More specifically, Donald Wass, Alan Boal and Allan Baker each made detailed suggestions on the first draft of the manuscript. Wass

made some sections easier to read, Boal suggested I change the order of the first four chapters—which I did—and Baker rewrote many key paragraphs, most or all of which I adopted. My son, *William III*, made a key-point analysis of the text for consistency and continuity. Patricia Virga brought her considerable managerial experience to bear in writing the “applications” exercises for the Executive’s Notebook section of this *Executive Edition*. It is a much better book as a result. *Bette Bond Hurst*, as a self-appointed archivist, preserved and made available the bulk of “The Collected Sayings of Benjamin Franklin’s Grandfather” that appears in Appendix D, and *Patricia MacKay* reviewed the manuscript for those troublesome writer’s devils—syntax and usage.

Finally, the manuscript would not have been ready for the publisher on time had not *Edwina Danley* of my office “ridden herd” on the typing and retyping that had to be done, often donating evenings and weekends voluntarily to this labor of love. Nor would it have been acceptable to my editor had not both she and her colleague, *Ramona Neel*, edited the manuscript so that, if any errors or omissions were later found in the proofs, it would be the typesetters, and not they, at whom the accusing finger would be pointed!

**William Oncken, Jr.**

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# 1

## **Principal *Objective* Sources of the Manager's Time Management Problems**

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Much of the wheel spinning in management ranks is due to the time that managers spend trying to reconcile management's requirement for *compliance and conformity* with its expectation of—and the need for—*creativity and innovation*. Resolution of this dilemma is, for each manager, the first precondition for effectively managing his or her time. Six widely followed but futile approaches to this problem are described and shown to be characteristic of management's also-rans.

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