

Squiggly Careers PodSheets



How to manage your monkeys

“ All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us. ”

J. R. R. Tolkien

“ Productivity is more about what you say no to than what you say yes to. ”

Graham Allcott

What is monkey management?

A monkey is a job to be done or an action you need to take.
In our day-to-day work, we're carrying around a lot of monkeys. Managing other people's monkeys in addition to our own is where managing our time becomes more of a challenge.

Best conditions for monkey management

High trust teams - where we feel safe to share how we feel and seek support without judgement
Personal productivity - giving people the space to use initiative, problem-solve and experiment.



3 ideas for action for better monkey management

1 Help people help themselves

Avoid unhelpful dependencies by providing feedback, comments and recommendations rather than by taking on someone else's task. Helping someone in this way encourages a growth mindset.



How can I help others to help themselves?

2 Develop your 'no-cabulary'

Saying no or not yet to other people's monkeys could allow you to spend more energy and effort on your own monkeys in the role that you do.



Do this by using If/Then statements and challenging 'urgent' tasks

3 Level up

Increasing your initiative can help avoid monkey adoption. Think about what you want to work on, how you want to manage your time and what impact you want to have.



How could you start your week with your answers in mind?

Coach Yourself Questions

? What directions are your monkeys coming from?

? What does managing other people's monkeys look like for you?

? What is stopping you from saying no to a monkey?

Map your monkeys



Are you a monkey-taker?

You are naturally inclined to help but often end up hoarding tasks and feeling overwhelmed.

Or a monkey-giver?

You default to delegating your monkeys to other people rather than taking the task on yourself.

Recommended resources



Management time: Who's got the monkey? One of HBR's most popular articles by William Oncken and Donald Wass



Four thousand weeks
5x15 talk by time management expert Oliver Burkeman



How to be a productivity ninja
Squiggly Careers Episode 74

Amazing if