



Strategic People Reminders for the Busy Executive

Volume 26 – Special Edition for MLTA

Five Key Steps for Making a Change Work

Since the MLTA convention this summer, I've had a number of conversations with people looking to make changes in how they manage their time. I thought this was a good chance to write a follow-up trU Tips focused on helping you make some of these changes stick. Here are five tips toward accomplishing that end.

Step 1: Observe Your Normal Behavior

We are action-oriented people, and too often we jump into solving a problem without really understanding it. This step is about understanding what your natural behavior is, so you can start to recognize those moments in which you need to choose a different direction. This is called "self-awareness" and "self-management."

Over three to five days, take 10 minutes at the end of the day to journal about the situations where the behavior you're trying to change popped up. For example, if your goal is to take on fewer monkeys (i.e., problems or tasks) from your team, your journal questions could be: "What tasks on my to-do list were not there this morning? Where did they come from? What am I learning by looking back at my choices during the day?"

Step 2: Set Your First Goal and Keep It Small

One major mistake I often see is setting goals that are too big. For example, if your goal is to shift your monkey-collecting habits, making a goal to change your management style with your entire team today is too big. Select one or two key relationships and focus on your conversations with those individuals. Select people who are ready and willing to take on more, and make it a goal to ask them three simple questions each time they bring you a monkey:

- "What solutions have you considered?"
- "Which solution would you recommend?"
- "How can I support you?"

Don't keep your goal a secret. Share what you're trying to do with the individuals you've selected so that they understand what you're trying to achieve.

Step 3: Get Support

Every successful change effort has a built-in support structure. Two examples that come to mind are Weight Watchers and Alcoholics Anonymous, programs that exemplify how significant, lasting change takes a community. If possible, find two people to support you. The first should be a person who can be present when you're making the behavior changes. His/her job is to give you feedback and to help with the change. The second person should be someone who's already skilled in the behavior that you're trying to achieve. His/her role is that of mentor, helping you to think through changes and to provide you with wisdom when you get stuck.

Step 4: Monitor Your Progress

Monitoring progress looks a lot like Step 1. Sit down daily or weekly to assess how you're doing. Stick with a single change goal for one or two months; a change takes 21 days to become a habit. Be accountable to your supporters (Step 3) or your leader. Reporting back to them is a great way to leverage their commitment to your growth.

Step 5: Celebrate and Repeat

We too often forget to stop, celebrate our achievements, and treat ourselves to something special. If you're working to become a questioner/listener with individuals on your team in order to stop taking monkeys from them, it's a success when they tell you that they've seen a change in your management style. When they share specific instances in which you have successfully helped them think through a problem and pick a solution, that's a victory. Celebrate!

Here's a resource page with links to many of the resources I talked about this summer. <http://www.thetrugroup.com/training-and-keynote-speaking/resources-time-management/>

As always, if this topic feels too big or if you're having trouble finding the time to address it effectively, contact me. Scott@thetrugroup.com

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