



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240



ADDRESS ONLY THE DIRECTOR,
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

November 28, 1990

In Reply Refer To:
FWS/LS

Memorandum

To: Sam
From: Owen *DA*
Subject: Monkey Management

At the One-Minute Manager Meets the Monkey seminar that I attended on November 1, Kenneth Blanchard gave each of the participants the assignment to meet with his/her supervisor and staff to discuss what we learned. Since you had to leave my November 2 staff meeting before I was able to do so, in order to fulfill my assignment, I have compiled and am attaching my notes for your information.

The concept of focusing our attention on "monkeys" has powerful implications for how we do business. As defined by Blanchard, a "monkey" is "the next move on a problem." All monkeys must either be: 1) fed and cared for, or 2) shot. Live monkeys should be fed and cared for at the lowest level of the organization consistent with their well-being.

Although the focus of Blanchard's presentation was on dissuading supervisors from accepting monkeys that should be handled by their staff, a clear corollary of his thesis is that everyone -- employees, supervisors, and peers alike -- should: 1) give careful consideration to what constitutes the most appropriate "next move" before they attempt to transfer a monkey, and 2) do whatever they can to groom the monkey so that it takes the minimum care and feeding by someone else.

It is only human nature to pass off a problem as quickly as possible, and far too much time and effort is wasted passing monkeys around, rather than caring for them in the most efficient and least painful way. If the Service is really serious about TQM, however, an appropriate focus of the effort would be to consider the types of "next moves" that are passed around and the processes by which they are passed. In that regard, all important monkeys involve documents, and I would submit that the roles of CCU and IRM should receive greater attention from top management.

TQM does not purport to be a miracle, overnight cure. It merely demands continuous improvement, and that merely requires both commitment and a clear understanding of what the "next moves" are.

The One-Minute Manager Meets the Monkey
Seminar Notes on Presentation by Mr. Kenneth Blanchard
November 1, 1990

Under the normal pyramidal organizational structure, the bosses are "responsible" and the staff is "responsive." This structure is appropriate for such things as the establishment of vision, mission, values, direction, and key goals; but it directs energy toward the bosses, rather than the customers. The customers are at the bottom, beneath the pyramidal organization. (See Figure 1)

Jon Carlzon, who became president of Scandinavian Airlines when it was at the bottom of the industry and has taken it to the top, wrote a book entitled "Moments of Truth." When asked to choose, almost any employee will indicate a preference to be "magnificent" rather than "ordinary." Anytime a customer interacts with an organization, it is a "moment of truth." Every organization has both external and internal "customers."

Blanchard attributed the following definition to his wife: "A goal is a dream with a deadline." He said vision is not set by committee. People want leaders and they will even follow bad leadership. He talked about the prevalence of "boss watching," i.e., trying to "figure him out," and he pointed out that job performance is not correlated to performance.

He referenced the analogy drawn by Wayne Dyer of people as being divided into two classes -- ducks and eagles. Ducks blame everyone else (quack, quack, quack) while eagles soar. Ducks work for other ducks, and in the pyramidal organization, responsibility goes up while blame goes down.

At this point, Blanchard introduced the concept of the "monkey" as "the next move on a problem." He said there are only two things that can be done with monkeys. Either they must be shot or fed.

He said the manager's job is to help employees do their job, not to do their jobs. Every monkey has two requirements: 1) care and feeding, and 2) supervision of the care and feeding. Given the opportunity, monkeys climb up the organization.

Thus, for implementation purposes, the pyramid must be turned up-side down, in which case the staff becomes responsible and the boss becomes responsive. (See Figure 2)

Blanchard spoke of human dignity. He said employee-of-the-month awards are BS because they are political. Recognition of employees of the moment, "eagles" of the moment, is much more meaningful. The system should be set up to meet the needs of customers, and doing so will foster human dignity. Human dignity is about "empowerment."

He referenced assumptions about human nature -- that 85% of the people will do the right thing and 15% will take advantage -- and said not to manage for the 15%.

By turning the pyramid up-side down, the monkeys climb to the front-line workers. People who produce good results feel good about themselves. The opportunity to achieve is what human dignity is all about.

After a break, Blanchard picked up again by saying that it is easier to ask for forgiveness than to ask permission. He said "never argue with someone chastising you for violating a stupid rule. Don't wait for those above you to get straightened out because you'll wait a long time." The important measure of management is not what happens while you're there, but when you leave.

With respect to turning the pyramid up-side down, he mentioned following Chuck Colson on a program and thinking that Colson's message about Christ epitomized the ultimate in responsiveness on the part of leadership to the needs of the organization. Again, however, he reiterated that setting the organizational vision is not a participatory activity.

Blanchard then turned to a discussion of the "management (monkey) molecule, with "me" in the middle. Above me is the boss; below me is my staff, and to either side are my internal and external peers. (See Figure 3)

He spoke of two kinds of power: 1) position power, which stems from the ability to reward or punish, and 2) personal power, which comes from respect based upon performance.

Refusing to take a monkey from the boss is insubordination. Failing to act on a monkey from staff is procrastination. From an internal peer, it is "noncooperation," and from an external peer, it is "nonresponsiveness."

He said that monkeys come from all directions, but that one should only accept those he or she is best qualified to handle.

He did not elaborate on how to ensure that monkeys are appropriately assigned. The assumption seemed to be that those who attended are in a position to delegate them to staff. All important monkeys have documents associated with them, however, and I believe the Service should direct a TQM effort toward the processes by which documents are handled. That would be the best, most hopeful means of pursuing (TQM) continuous improvement, and the roles of CCU and IRM should be the focal point.

Blanchard said the role of the supervisor is to "get employees ready for delegation." He said TQM is not a program; it is a way of life. It is entirely consistent with the monkey principle, since both are based upon empowerment.

He said money is not a motivator unless it is based upon performance. Reward for performance is the only thing that matters. (How true that rings with respect to our "performance" appraisal system.) Winners don't need much direction, just to know the goal. If you can't hire winners, hire potential winners and train them to be winners.

Blanchard said there are 3 components to performance: 1) planning (setting of goals), 2) day-to-day coaching, and 3) evaluation. He said the day-to-day coaching component is almost never done.

At this point he threw in an anecdote about Einstein. Although I can't recall exactly how it fit into the presentation, it did make a very good point. Einstein was asked what his phone number was, and he indicated that if someone would give him a phone book, he would tell them. The point, of course, is that we waste far too much time trying to know and remember everything, when in fact what we should be doing is organizing our work to focus on what is truly important, and so that everything we need is accessible when and where we need it. (Please pardon my persistence, but the TQM and automation implications are obvious.)

Blanchard said a major goal of coaching is to "catch people doing things right (not wrong) and reward them for it."

Performance planning is pyramidal, and evaluation should reflect the plan. People resist goals because of fear of chastisement for failure. If supervisors empower employees to achieve, they welcome tough goals.

He said to coach, but don't take other people's monkeys. To emphasize the point, he cited the Steve Cartman triangle, which I think may come from the book "I'm OK, You're OK." In this paradigm, the "victim" (person with the monkey) is at the bottom tip of the triangle. On the left corner is the "persecutor" and on the right is the "rescuer." The persecuting manager chastises (rather than coaches) the employee for not handling the monkey, while the rescuer takes the monkey and handles it him/herself. Both the persecutor and the rescuer are delivering equally strong messages to the employee that "you're not OK." (See Figure 4)

Blanchard said, "Rescuing is inappropriate acceptance of monkeys from those who can handle them themselves. And it destroys dignity."

He cited the four rules of monkey management:

- 1) to "name" the monkey (to identify the next move);
- 2) to assign ownership;
- 3) to take out an "insurance policy"; and
- 4) to schedule a check-up appointment.

The first two rules pertain to goal setting and performance planning, and the second two pertain to coaching. There are two forms of insurance: a) to instruct the employee to make a recommendation and then act, and b) to ask the employee to act and then advise the manager.

I disagree with the next point that he made, but for the record and for the purpose of stimulating productive thought, I will attempt to quote him roughly verbatim: "If you get a memo, have your secretary call [the author] for them to come and read it to

you. Memos should only be [used] to reiterate what has already been decided."

I do agree that most of us, including especially myself, are overly verbose in our writing and need always to strive for improvement in that regard. I also agree with his assertion that most people can explain more quickly in person the essential aspects of a monkey. There are many problems with face-to-face communications, however. They apply equally to telephone conversations, and include at least the following:

- o At at least two people must have time at exactly the same time for it to take place.

This problem is reflected in scheduling problems, other work delayed, and "telephone tag." "Voice mail" (telephone answering machines) can help to alleviate part of the problem, but why is it that some people resent "talking to machines"? Could it be symptomatic of some of the problems with oral communication itself? That the initiator cannot take the time of someone else exactly when they wish to do so? That they cannot get clear answers to their questions in time frame satisfactory to them? And that they have not thought the problem through clearly enough to enunciate and record in a few moments exactly what they mean to say?

- o At least one of the participants is likely to spend more time waiting for the other to be ready than it would take to write a note.

This may not be perceived as a "problem" by the boss, but it definitely is a problem in terms of the performance output of the organization. It also sends the message to staff that their time is not important. True empowerment would suggest that meetings be held only when: a) the boss feels necessary to give guidance on changes in overall direction and goals, or b) employees feel the need for additional empowerment to handle their monkeys.

- o Oral is less precise than written communication; that is, the speaker is unable to give as careful attention to his words as is the writer.
- o Oral communication is more prone to misinterpretation by the recipient as well.
- o The spoken word is subject to degradation through the "password effect" as it is conveyed from one person to another.
- o Oral communication does not promote accountability, except in a negative way.

If someone fails to handle a monkey passed on orally in the presence of others, he or she can be embarrassed for not having done so, but there is nothing in the interchange that assists and empowers the individual in the way that having a clearly documented (written) monkey does.

- o If oral communication results in the creation of any worthy (as opposed to worthless) monkeys, they will need to be rendered on paper at some point anyway.

Why not just put them in writing (on a networked computer) to begin with? If the author does not want to take the time to do so, it is a pretty good indication it is not worth doing at all.

- o Oral communication in any particular instance, cannot possibly adhere to the basic principle of TQM -- to make continuous improvement.

Spoken words are lost into the air. Only written words, in an electronic format, are subject to continuous improvement without needless delay and effort. By definition, passing monkeys orally imposes a needless monkey upon the recipient to reconstruct and regurgitate the monkey in his or her own words. That is one example of how monkeys inappropriately climb up the organization. Are bosses to be clerics for their employees?

On the other hand, are employees to be the interpreters of exactly what the boss meant when he or she set a goal? Isn't that the boss' job -- to provide clear direction? It almost goes without saying that overreliance on oral communication is at the root of many, if not most frustrations in a bureaucracy.

At the very least, user-friendly electronic messaging on a networked computer beats the pants off face-to-face and telephone-tag communications for conveying routine information. Furthermore, it is questionable whether any significant amount of an organization's management time should be spent in meetings the agenda of which has not been well developed in a word processing document in advance.

It doesn't take long or much effort to shoot (delete) an E-mail monkey that doesn't deserve to live, but if it does deserve care and feeding, the next move (forwarding the message, supplementing it with additional coaching instructions, etc.) is a snap -- if only all the necessary people are party to the system! And that is what TQM, common sense, and monkey management are all about -- empowering people to do their work!

Nearing the end of his presentation, Blanchard said that "3 to 5 goals are the maximum that any good leader can handle," and "if [a person's goals] fill more than two sides of a 3 X 5 inch card, they are too many." He also cited the "80/20 rule": 80% of performance comes from 20% of the goals.

He suggested that one good measure of performance is, every week, to have the secretaries call 5 secretaries in other offices and ask how we could serve them better.

He spoke of "barrel filling" and "barrel drawing" and the need for situational leadership, with some employees needing a lot of direction and support until they are ready for delegation. He said that much Federal management jumps from "directing" to "delegating" and back again, when things go wrong, without ever going through the necessary, intermediate steps of "coaching" and

"supporting" to get employees ready for delegation. Empowerment takes place at the delegation stage, and that's when the barrel filling done during the previous stages shifts entirely to barrel drawing (thereby making the manager's job a snap). (See Figure 5)

In wrapping up, Blanchard reiterated that the supervisor's job is to coach employees on the care and feeding of monkeys, to prepare them for delegation.

Finally, he concluded by pointing out that only 10% of the seminar participants ever follow up on what they've learned, although he appreciated the other 90% helping to pay the cost. There are seminar "goers" and there are "doers." He gave the doers the assignment of meeting with their bosses, peers, and employees, by Friday, November 9, to tell them what we learned.

I met with my staff and did so on the afternoon of November 2. This completes my assignment with respect to my boss, and I defer to his judgment on the handling of the monkey of whether to share these thoughts with any of our peers.

Figure 1



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Boss
Responsible

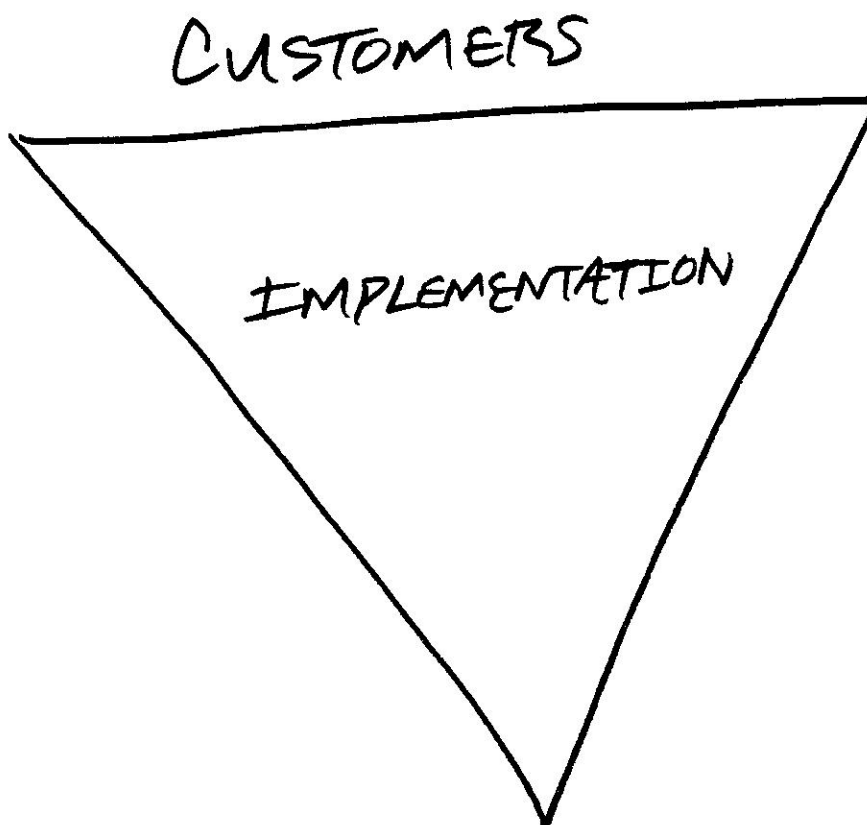
Staff
Responsive





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Boss
Responsive

Staff
Responsible



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Figure 3

Monkey Molecule

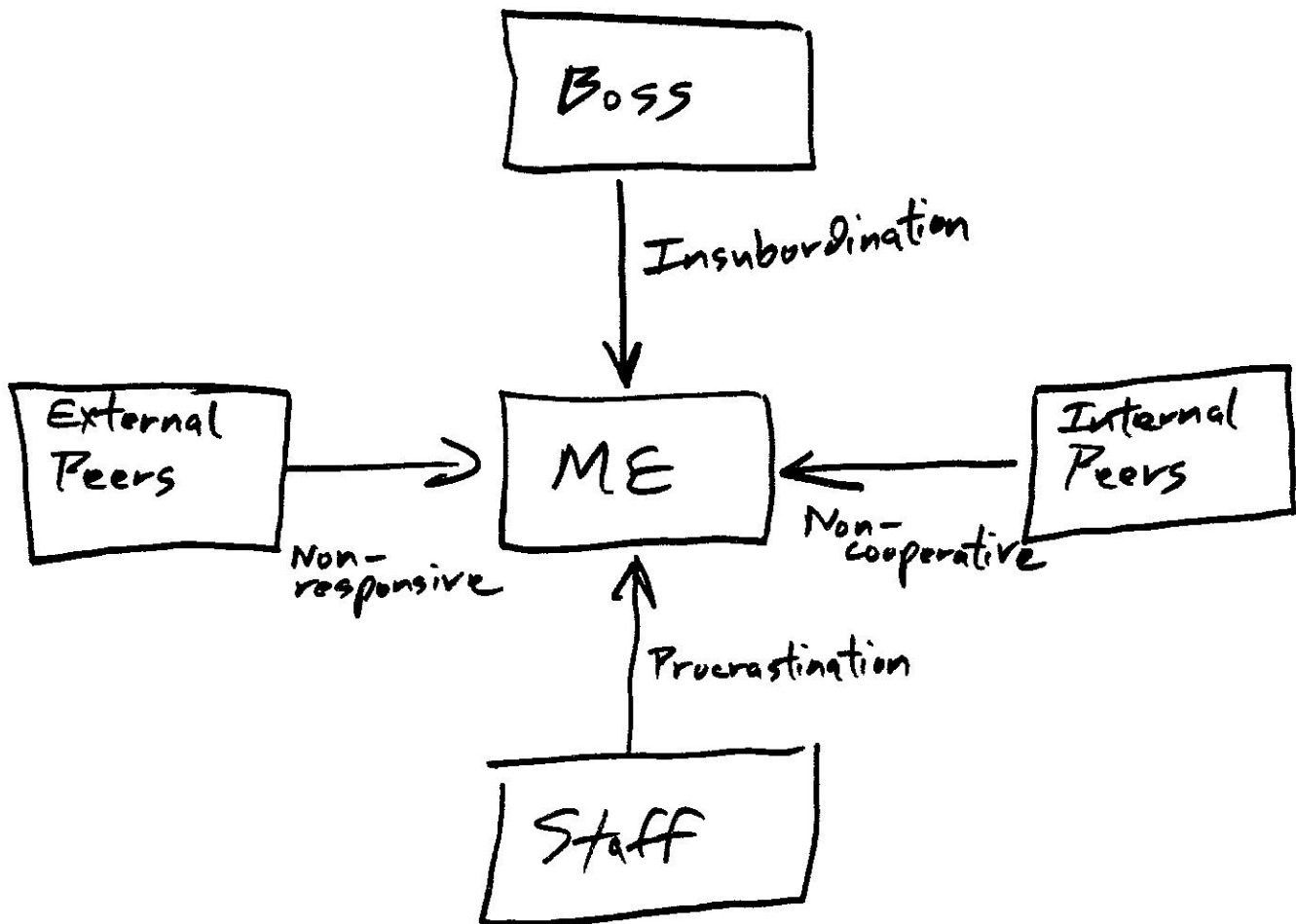


Figure 4

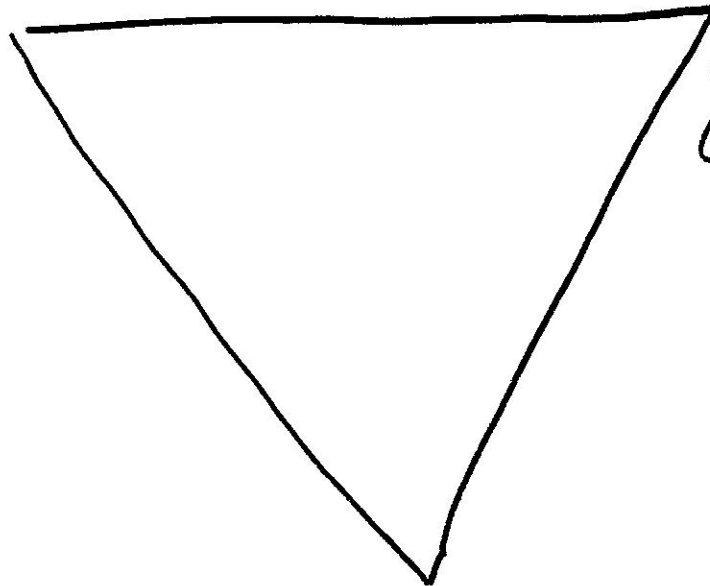


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Cartman (Sp?)
Triange

Persecutor
(You're not OK)



Rescuer
(Takes Monkey)
(You're Not OK)

VICTIM
(Person w/Monkey)

Human Dignity



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Situational Leadership

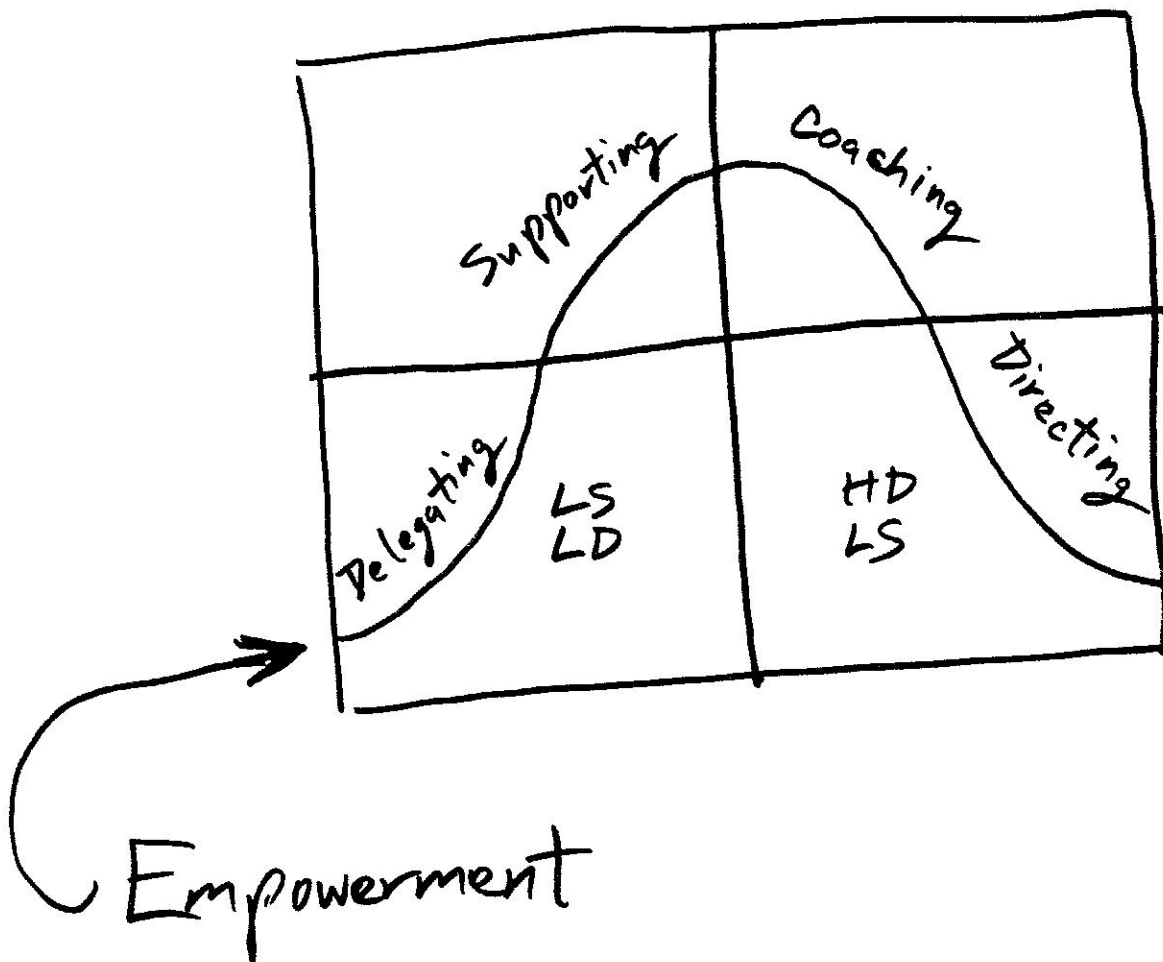


Figure 6



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TQM —

Make Continuous Improvement

Kill Needless Monkeys