Alert: Superhero Syndrome and Overcoming/Avoiding Burnout

Well, what crazy times we are in! I bet you guys have been running your arses off over the past few weeks to make sure that all of your IT systems are available from any location and everyone is operational – whether that is for your own company or your customers. Take a deep breath and pat yourself on the back for a job well done for all your efforts so far and know that those users do appreciate all the effort you have put in (even if they don't say it out loud!).

So, lets' talk about Superhero Syndrome and the resulting burnout that can come with it if you don't stop in time. And please note, this does happen at other times, it is probably just more prevalent right now as we have had a huge task to undertake.

What is Superhero Syndrome?

This is where you are 'saving the world' – in our case, we aren't out fighting Megamind or Thanos, we are getting people working! You are upping the amount of work you do, taking on more and more tickets and projects, slogging away from the moment you wake up until the moment you fall asleep, sometimes at your desk, you might even pull an all-nighters a couple of times a month – and not the partying kind! Your teams are all looking up to you as you are getting the

recognition for working hard; the users you have helped will now only speak to you when they call in; line managers are happy as you are putting so much effort and not claiming overtime; everyone on the team comes to you as you are the 'guru' of everything; and you can regale everyone down the pub (albeit virtually at the moment) with stories of how you stopped impending disaster and complain at home that no-one else seems to be pulling their weight, just like you.

Does this sound like you? I can certainly think of a fair few people this applies to, even me at some points in time.

Now, let's look at how this is a problem:

Saying yes to everything, even if you want to say no
The problem for you:
We know the job needs doing, right? And of course, no-one else can do what you do, so you say "yes". Hold on, you have been working 14 hours day for the past 4 days, and you worked all weekend too, are you sure? In your head, you are yelling "no, I really need some time just to chill" but instead the word "yes" pops out of your mouth. This is completely unsustainable and will lead to burnout and then you are likely to end up being long-term sick, it will affect your personal life too, you will get to the point where you just want to hide away from the world

The problem for your Manager:
We know we have a load of work to do, within a specific timescale, and so we are going to turn to our staff who say "yes" to helping us. If you can't tell your Manager that you do not have the capacity to pick up the extra tasks they have just put their way, how are they going to know until you fail to meet the deadlines, or make a mistake?

What you have to do:
Chill, man!

Thinking no-one else can do what you can do

The problem for you:

The team could have just started asking you an opinion on how to fix something or find something in the environment, and you became the 'Subject Matter Expert'; instead of giving the guidance they need to become self-sufficient, you asked for the work to be handed over to you and you started to think that the whole team is lazy or stupid!

The problem for your Manager:

If you are off on holiday, or take any other form of absence, then the service slips. The rest of the team cannot pick it up because they do not know how to, and you have now made yourself to be a 'Single Point of Failure'. Other members of your team are going to start picking up on this, and then the relationship with those guys is going to go downhill too.

What you have to do:

Trust others.

Challenging yourself

The problem for you:

A little bit of competition is always good, however whilst this can be good in some ways, when you are just pushing yourself on the numbers, things like quality is reduced, potentially causing re-work, for you or for others, never mind potential complaints that may come in regarding how you are delivering.

The problem for your Manager:

Whilst every Line Manager loves to have someone on their team who is always trying to beat their personal best, particularly if the team has individual or team targets; but again, as soon as you are absent then performance across the team dips. Line Managers are looking for consistency in team performance.

What you have to do:

Set your own targets and development plans

How to Avoid Burnout:

1. **Say no**
   The world is not going to end if you say no. Explain your current workload and that you are already working at full, or ever more than, capacity.
   A good Manager would prefer you to say no, rather than you saying yes and then not delivering. They may also be able to offload some of your current work, or give advice on priorities

2. **Set expectations**
   Even when you are not at full capacity, always make sure you know when something is expected by and make sure that you are able to commit to that timescale, if you cannot meet the timescale, speak to your Manager and either re-prioritise your existing workload or tell your Manager when you can complete the task by.

3. **Trust others**
   Trust that others can be as capable as you, give them the guidance but do the work but do not do it for them. You need to realise that this could potentially be quite time-consuming if you have been doing everything for quite a while, so you may want to consider doing a couple of hours, or a half day training session. This will also be a bonus point on your end of year appraisal as you are helping to develop the team.

4. **Set a target**
   Knowing you can do better is great and having a structured plan for your own development is even better! Where you have been set a target, particularly if you believe it is easy to beat that target, then start to focus on the quality of the service delivered – you never know, when the service is great, users will soon start emailing you with great feedback (another bonus point for your end of year review).

5. **Set a development plan**

   If you are genuinely finding the work too easy, and you are not being challenged, then it is worth thinking about the next step in your career, in terms of getting a development plan together.

   Think about the training and development needs you need to take you to the next step. If you are not sure about how you want to proceed, speak to your Manager

   - **Define what success looks like to you?**

6. **Set yourself a goal for something that is not work related**

   Find something that you want to do outside of work and set yourself a goal of achieving that. Some that I have personally worked with is skydiving, wing-walking, and learning Mandarin.

How to Overcome Burnout:

1. **Stop!**

   Speak to your Manager, utilise the steps for saying no and setting expectations

2. **Forget about the things you can't control.**

   A lot of things are going to be irritating right now, and just tiny thing could be the straw that breaks the camel's back! So, irritations outside your control

   or influence need to go. Follow this simple process to figure out what to do about these:

   - Is it something you can control? If yes, do something about it.
   - Is it something you can influence? If yes, do something about it.
   - If you cannot control or influence it, then just forget about it and focus your actions on what you can control.

3. **Set some you time**

   Take a break! If that's a couple of days of or whether it is getting your work hours back under control.

4. **Find something that makes you smile**

   Find something that makes you smile – away from work. Whether that's family, forgotten friends, walking the dog, paddle-boarding on the canal, anything – just as long as it makes you smile!

5. **Chilled yet? How to keep Superhero Syndrome at bay**

   Once you have got out of the Superhero Syndrome, it is really important that you don't fall back into the same trap. Follow the steps above for avoiding burnout.

What if you don't have a good Manager to turn to?

Now, we all know that not everyone has a good manager, and if you just happen to find yourself amongst that camp, then pick up the phone and we will offer you the guidance and support you need.

Call 0121 667 2332 or email [The Geek Coach](#) today to find out how we can help!