

People Focus

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Editor's Message

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Those of us who are engaged in work are fortunate, regardless of whether you're an employee, a business owner or self-employed. We are all enthusiastic about work because it supports our lifestyle; some of us are even very passionate about the work we do. Often we work too hard, the stress builds up; we become less motivated and we lose sight of the important things in our lives.

In this issue of the **People Focus** newsletter, we share our thoughts about achieving peak performance at the workplace whilst taking care of ourselves to achieve the right amount of work-life balance.

If you think that this newsletter would be beneficial to your friends, colleagues or family members, please feel free to forward it to them. Thank you.

The **People Focus** newsletter delivers informative articles and resources to organisations to help improve workplace performance and to individuals to develop their personal effectiveness in their career and life goals.

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Inside This Issue

- 1 Editor's Message
- 1 Building Endurance For Maximum Performance
- 2 Top Ten Ways To Take Care Of Yourself At Work
- 3 How Well Do You Delegate?
- 4 Motivate Yourself

Building Endurance For Maximum Performance

A very important thing to remember is that whenever you expend energy, make sure to give yourself time for renewal

May, 36, a married mother of two, has always been a hard worker and it's paid off: In a six-year period, she has been promoted four times. Lately, however, she just doesn't feel the enthusiasm for her work that she used to. She's often tired, impatient and makes more mistakes. She also feels increasingly distant from her husband and children. On paper, her life is everything she's ever wanted. Then why isn't she enjoying it more?



One clue: Several months ago, May started putting in more hours at work. She started burning out as well as neglecting other areas of her life. She wasn't managing her physical and mental energies well.

A less obvious clue: May had lost sight of her passions. She worked, mothered and was a wife. But she no longer danced or painted, and she had lost her enthusiasm at work that had so fired her up in younger years. An essential part of her, her passionate nature, had, in effect, been sapped away.

Full Engagement

"The energy that pulses through us is physical, emotional, mental and spiritual," write Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz in ***The Power of Full Engagement***.

continued on Page 2

continued from Page 1

"All four dynamics are critical, none is sufficient by itself, and each profoundly influences the others. To perform at our best, we must skillfully manage each of these interconnected dimensions of energy. Subtract any one from the equation and our capacity to fully ignite our talent and skill is diminished, much the way an engine sputters when one of its cylinders misfires."

Loehr and Schwartz identified three key management principles that must be considered to manage energy and maximize our performance:

- The four separate but related sources of energy - physical, emotional, mental and spiritual - must all be addressed.
- Energy expenditure must be balanced with periods of renewal.
- To grow, we must push beyond our normal limits in the same systematic way that athletes do when they train.

If you want to excel at your job but you're eating poorly and not exercising, your physical energy and mental clarity will be compromised, causing your job performance to suffer. If you spend too many hours at work and never take any time off to unwind, ultimately you'll burn out and get sick. If you want to start your own business but are unwilling to stretch and take risks, it's not very likely you'll ever be a successful entrepreneur.

To begin the process of building your endurance for improved personal performance, it's best to identify the area of your life in which you are weakest. For one person, that may be the poor relationships he has with co-workers. For another, it may be afternoon tiredness fueled by too many sweet carbohydrates during the day. "Train" yourself in this area until you gain those skills, much like you would train a specific muscle you want to develop in your workouts. Set small goals for change and follow through with them.

For instance, someone who is a workaholic could commit to taking small blocks of time off to relax, eventually leading to a whole week, even two weeks off (gasp!). A shy office worker might make a point of saying "hi" to colleagues two or three times a week that were never spoken to before, leading to an invitation to lunch possibly.

A very important thing to remember is that whenever you expend energy, make sure to give yourself time for

renewal. Just as muscles are strengthened by subjecting them to stress and then giving them recovery time, it is also possible to strategically build the "muscle" of self-control or empathy or assertiveness or passionate living. The same concept can be applied not just to self-control, but to anything, such as being more organized, more accepting, more focused, a better parent, etc.

"Exercise [these qualities] past normal limits and then allow time for rest, and these muscles become progressively stronger," write Loehr and Schwartz.

Whether it's an area of your work or your personal life you want to improve, it's not about *how much* you do but how well you manage your energy.

May, the overworked mother, finally spoke to her boss about cutting down her overtime hours. She also arranged for her husband to watch the kids two nights a week so that she could attend a dance class and for a few hours on the weekend so that she could work for her favorite charity. As she began to reap the emotional, physical and spiritual benefits of these activities, she found that her work performance improved - even with less hours devoted to it. And her general outlook on life once again became positive and inspired. ■

Top Ten Ways To Take Care Of Yourself At Work

Self-care is not an "emergency response plan"

Self-care is not an "emergency response plan" to be activated when stress becomes overwhelming. When we consistently take care of ourselves and our energy, we are noticeably more effective and more productive - and usually in fewer hours. Put these tips into practice, and see what good business sense they make.

1. Create a nurturing work environment, with healthy air and lighting, supportive décor, ample water, high-protein snacks, etc.
2. Keep writer's hours, even if you're not a writer. Reserve blocks of focused time that are yours with no, repeat NO, interruptions.
3. Start each week and each day with planning. Doing so increases productivity and success, and eases anxiety and stress.
4. Banish clutter. Doing this can untether huge amounts of energy, not to mention make you more efficient.

continued on Page 3

continued from Page 2

5. Book time in the day to handle email and voicemail.



6. Take your lunch. However, resist the urge to eat while working. Take a walk, listen to classical music, write a poem, etc. Do what inspires you.

7. Be mindful. Relinquish activities, behaviors or attitudes that result in frenzied schedules and meaningless pursuits.

8. Be on the lookout for every opportunity to delegate work. And be sure to hire highly competent, talented people to whom you could delegate.

9. Balance exertion with recovery. For every "sprint" at work - mentally or physically - schedule downtime in minutes, days or weeks.

10. Get enough sleep at night. Though most of us can function in a sleep-deprived state, we will never be at the top of our game without sufficient zzz's. ■

How Well Do You Delegate?

Effective delegation is a learnable time management skill.

Whether you work with others, or alone, you may still suffer from the "Lone Ranger Syndrome" - that managerial malaise that causes folks to work excessively long, hard hours because only THEY know how to do something right.

There is a cure! Effective delegation is a learnable time management skill that can dramatically increase your effectiveness at work. To find out how well you delegate, take this Self-Quiz.

Delegation Self Quiz

Answer TRUE or FALSE for each of the following statements:

1. In most cases, I can do tasks quicker and better myself

than if I delegate.

2. Before I delegate something, I take the time to visualize the end result and to communicate that to the "delegatee."

3. I work longer hours than others doing the same kind of work.

4. A written outline or sketch of what I want always accompanies my oral description of the tasks I delegate.

5. If I get back work that is not what I had in mind, I discuss it with the person to sort out where the misunderstanding occurred and how it could be different in the future.

6. I ask that work be redone as many times as it takes to make it perfect.

7. I include the date and time the work is due on my requests. I encourage those who cannot commit to the timeline to renegotiate. I reassign the task, if necessary.

8. Even though I work constantly, efficiently and effectively, I miss too many deadlines. There is simply too much for me to do.

9. I keep a log of work given out and its due date, with copies of instructions attached.

10. I check work in progress rather than wait until the due date so as to catch potential problems early.



11. I concern myself with results, not methods, allowing "delegatees" the leeway to use their own strategies to accomplish the task. Doing so encourages greater creativity, productivity and self-respect.

12. I find myself not getting enough of the "important stuff" done, spending more time on details than on planning or supervising.

13. When delegating, I always indicate what resources are available and what support I can give.

14. I always thank people for their efforts, even if it needs revision. Likewise, I give credit, as needed, for those who did the work.

continued on Page 4

continued from Page 3

15. I avoid delegating to the first person who comes to mind, instead taking time to carefully consider who would be the best for the task.

16. I carefully evaluate job candidates - employees, subcontractors, volunteers or interns - to make sure they are people to whom I could delegate.

17. Whenever possible, I delegate complete projects, not just individual tasks that would require my constant supervision.

18. I often find myself working while my subordinates are idle.

19. I delegate only the jobs I find distasteful, leaving the good ones for me.

20. I'm able to live with acceptable work that is not done the way I would have done it.

See scoring and interpretation below:

Give one point for each "True" for numbers 1, 3, 6, 8, 12, 18 and 19. Give one point for each "False" to the remaining statements. If you scored 7 or below, your delegation skills maximize your effectiveness and the morale of delegates. A score of 8-15 indicates you may be missing opportunities for strong leadership and greater job satisfaction. If you scored 16-20 points, your overall performance, and that of "delegates" is likely much lower than it could be. ■

Motivate Yourself

Everyone's motivation droops now and then, which can affect our productivity and outlook on life. Fortunately, no one motivates us quite as effectively as we motivate ourselves and we have the power to reverse these downward spirals.

Consider the following:

Recognise that you're feeling blue - before your outlook turns black. Then, find an activity that will recharge your energies. Asking for a new challenge may be in order. Or, take some time off for a rejuvenating break.

Shift your focus outward. Think about how your efforts help others and benefit your organisation. Make a conscious effort to make a positive impact on your customers and co-workers.

Savour your victories. Keep complimentary voice mail messages, letters and memos and review them when you're feeling down. When you finish a task or project, take the time to step back, enjoy and appreciate your feeling of accomplishment.

Evaluate your habits. Whether it's lack of sleep, procrastination or negative self-talk, work to rid you of the habits that are holding you down and replace them with a more productive, healthier attitude.

Associate with positive people. Identify go-getters in and outside your company and spend as much time with them as possible.

Clarify your direction. Drowning in uncertainty dampens the spark of motivation. Set and keep in front of you both short and long term goals. Make sure they are challenging and meaningful, while at the same time attainable and realistic.

Reach out. If your slump persists, it may be time to seek professional help to determine what the motivational block might be and how to break through it. ■

About Us



Lionel L Lim is the founder of Aurora Executive Solutions (AES), a Human Talent Management and Development Solutions firm. He is a US-certified EQ trainer, a career and life coach, a People's Association approved trainer, and a licensed facilitator of the Profiles occupational assessments. Lionel is also an experienced facilitator of the EQ Map, the Emotional Intelligence Style Inventory, DiSC tools and the INSIGHT Inventory.

Lionel is a graduate of the University of South Australia with a BA in Communication and Media Management. He also holds a Diploma in Training and a Certificate in Counselling Skills. Lionel has a varied experience in executive search, communication, leadership, training, coaching and mentoring, as well as the effective management of teams in both local and overseas assignments.

Lionel is a professional member of the Asian Association of Career Management Professionals, the Six Seconds Emotional Intelligence Network, the Career Planning and Adult Development Network, the National Resume Writers' Association and the International Association of Coaches.

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