



Tapping the True Sources of Energy

Weariness erodes performance and makes small problems look big. Here's how to boost your vitality and enthusiasm.

IF YOU LACK sufficient emotional energy, everything is too difficult. To mail a follow-up letter to your clients, you will wait to post it when you leave the office, instead of taking five minutes to walk to the box, so it will be out at 2:00 p.m. instead of tomorrow morning.

When you are out of shape (lacking emotional energy), your prospecting and client-building problems, no matter how small, will soon become major problems. Eventually they will force you to underachieve and plateau.

You don't have to go home from work every day feeling tired and exhausted. You can learn how to use performance psychology to create vitality and enthusiasm in your days, your evenings and your weekends.

At our seminars, we often tell a story that is popular among those who teach creativity. It describes a professor who visits a Japanese Zen master. The wise teacher immediately sees that the professor is rather set in his ways and needs to be taught a vital lesson. The master picks up a pot of tea and begins filling the man's out-held cup. He fills the cup to overflowing, tranquilly watching the tea spill out of the saucer onto the table and floor. "Master!" shouts the student in dismay. "Can't you see?"

My cup is already full. There is no room for more tea."

This lesson serves as excellent advice for reevaluating your own cup of ideas about work and performance. As long as you continue to do things the same way, you will continue to experience the same results. Almost everyone has discovered how difficult it is to abandon "I've always done it this way" thinking, in order to risk trying something new. But if you are underachieving or stuck, then you have to change.

MYTH-BUSTING

Let's discuss some popular myths about creating energy, drive, motivation and enthusiasm.

- **Myth 1: Energy can only be restored by sleep.**

Wrong! There are numerous ways to restore energy during the day and night, and sleep is just one of them. Exercising, playing, laughing, having fun, being creative, relaxing, meditating, and switching to other activities also renew your drive to excel and increase your self-confidence. And you can do these energy-restoring activities throughout the day rather than waiting for bedtime to restore your energy.

For example, Albert Schweitzer and Thomas Edison — both notorious for having unusual sleep patterns — would play the organ and piano as a form of relaxation and stimulation. Schweitzer said playing Bach for an hour provided more rest and energy than eight hours of sleep.

Sometimes sleep can actually drain more energy than it restores. If you fall asleep while you are experiencing anxiety, muscular tension, and exhaustion, stress toxins can remain in your body rather than being expelled through exercise and

relaxing activities. It is a fallacy to assume that all financial advisors will experience a peak in their energy or self-confidence level upon waking-up. Some feel most energetic and confident at other times during the day, such as mid-morning or even after work.

The point is there are many techniques available to you for refueling your prospecting and client building energy reserves throughout the day.

- **Myth 2: We all need seven to eight hours of sleep per night.**

Wrong again. Most people sleep themselves stupid! Top producers average six hours sleep. Many of our most successful people do well on much less sleep or on unusual sleep patterns. Thomas Edison's short naps allowed him to work vigorously, around the clock. Assistants who worked with him reported that he could go to sleep almost instantly, and upon waking 20 to 30 minutes later, would return to his work as if he'd never stopped.

I've worked with a number of top producers who break their sleep time into two three-hour intervals. Others only need three hours to restore their confidence and energy. The key is rest, not sleep. After eliminating caffeine from one's day, many financial advisors discover that they automatically begin to sleep two to three fewer hours per night. Three fewer hours a night comes to 32.5 additional working days of life each year. You can use that time to learn another language, become a concert pianist, complete your master's or become an effective parent.

Factors such as illness, sadness, discouragement, stress and failure can and will increase the amount of sleep your body needs. If you want to cut down on your sleep and simultaneously increase your energy and confidence, you must first eliminate the self-sabotaging things that you are doing to your body. That means you have to eliminate alcohol, caffeine and nicotine. Do not lie to yourself; all of these chemicals inhibit the ability for your body to rest and destroy your emotional and physical energy. In our Maximum Performance training program we introduce participants to the Performance Journal, a fast and effective way to eliminate self-destructive emotions.

- **Myth 3: Loss of energy is part of the aging process.**

Wrong again. Energy does not have to deteriorate as we age. Instead, our individual energy plateaus appear to be linked much more closely to our health and to our zest for life. Other fundamental factors include: eating and exercising patterns; being interested and involved in different projects; having a purpose in life; being curious about learning new things; having a passionate involvement in life; spending time in playful, fun activities; and daring to dream dreams that really matter to us. Two friends of mine began skiing at 40, learned to surf at 50, and at 65 began taking piano lessons. Another friend, on his 50th birthday, dove into the Pacific Ocean at Avalon Bay on Catalina Island and swam to Long Beach (26 miles). On his 60th birthday he rode his bike from Vancouver, B.C., to San Francisco in seven days (over 100 miles per day).

- **Myth 4: The main source of energy is physical health.**

Wrong again. Although feeling healthy certainly contributes to your level of energy and self-confidence, you also need to be interested and engaged in life in order to want to be active in the first place. And two of the key elements that cause people to vigorously embrace life are having a strong purpose for living and having a commitment to reaching a certain goal.

Energy comes from two important sources:

1. A sense of purpose that goes beyond the details of "the job." There must be a sense that what you do is somehow congruent with your philosophy of life. You must feel that you and your work are valuable.

2. A sense of the "top line." This is opposed to the "bottom line," which we usually say is the ultimate criterion of the worth of our work. Great achievers have an abiding sense of what the top line is (a concern for people and quality of life), and it is one of the most energizing aspects of their lives. High-energy people often are those who have learned something many people never learn: how to stop sabotaging themselves. Too many talented high achievers do all sorts of things to hide from their greatest possibilities and deny any sort of top-line activity, a behavior that is called the "fear of success."

It's important to feel that you are important and what you do is important. Another fundamental source of vitality is feeling passionately about something. It may be a cause, a person, a creative hobby, or your life's work. Many people get an entirely new lease on life by becoming enthralled with something new. Yes, passion will rejuvenate you in a deeper, more long-lasting way than simply getting enough sleep and feeling healthy. In fact, feeling passion for something in your life is so vital to high energy that I am devoting my next column to it.

SUMMARY

You have an abundant amount of energy available to you throughout each day. The key is to learn ways to constantly re-fuel and add energy as other behaviors use up energy.

Sleep is not the only way to restore your energy, nor does everyone require eight hours of continuous sleep. Time spent exercising, having fun, doing something artistic and writing in your Performance Journal will also restore energy and increase self-confidence.

As you age, your energy need not burn out. Having a purpose in life and feeling passionately about something will fill you with enthusiasm and increase your emotional confidence and physical energy.

A balance of work and play is needed in life. Learning how to turn prospecting and client-building activities into games will boost confidence and energy.

The need to feel that your work is contributing to others is a key to high energy.

Balancing the "top line" (concerns for others and with the quality of life) with the "bottom line" (concerns with things, productivity and profits) is essential for long-term quality energy and vitality.

Work, do good work and have some fun tomorrow! ▣

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