



Managing Your Time and Energy

Case Study

Steve Wanner is a highly respected 37-year-old partner at Ernst & Young, married with four young children. A year ago, he was working 12- to 14-hour days, felt perpetually exhausted and found it difficult to fully engage with his family in the evenings, which left him feeling guilty and dissatisfied. He slept poorly, made no time to exercise, and seldom ate healthy meals, instead grabbing a bite to eat on the run or while working at his desk.

Wanner's experience is not uncommon. Most of us respond to rising demands in the workplace by putting in longer hours, which inevitably take a toll on us physically, mentally and emotionally. This leads to declining levels of engagement, increasing levels of distraction, high turnover rates and soaring medical costs among employees. With remarkable consistency, these executives tell us they're pushing themselves harder than ever to keep up and increasingly feel they are at a breaking point.

The core problem with working longer hours is that time is a finite resource. Energy is a different story. Defined in physics as the capacity to work, energy comes from four main wellsprings in human beings: the body, emotions, mind and spirit. In each, energy can be systematically expanded and regularly renewed by establishing specific rituals—behaviors that are intentionally practiced and precisely scheduled, with the goal of making them unconscious and automatic as quickly as possible.

To effectively reenergize their workforces, organizations need to shift their emphasis from getting more out of people to investing more in them, so they are motivated—and able—to bring more of themselves to work every day. To recharge themselves, individuals need to recognize the costs of energy-depleting behaviors and then take responsibility for changing them, regardless of the circumstances they're facing.

The rituals and behaviors Wanner established to better manage his energy transformed his life. He set an earlier bedtime and gave up drinking, which had disrupted his sleep. As a consequence, when he woke up he felt more rested and more motivated to exercise, which he now does almost every morning. In less than two months he lost 15 pounds. After working out he now sits down with his family for breakfast. Wanner still puts in long hours on the job, but he renews himself regularly along the way. He leaves his desk for lunch and usually takes a morning and an afternoon walk outside. When he



arrives at home in the evening, he's more relaxed and better able to connect with his wife and children.

-taken in part from "Manage Your Energy not Your Time", Tony Schwartz and Cathy McCarthy, Harvard Business Review, Oct 2007

Reflection

Instead of thinking just about how you're using your time, **think about how you're using your time, energy and attention.** Listed below are points to ponder. Take five minutes to jot down some points under each heading. Then create at least one action step you can take that will have an impact on your energy and focus.

1. **On gaining time:** What are you doing that you could either stop doing or do more efficiently so that there's less time seepage?
2. **On using time:** What would you do with any additional time that you gain? Is the juice worth the squeeze (cost worth the benefit)?
3. **On gaining energy:** What could you do to increase your available physical, emotional, social, mental and physical energy?
4. **On losing energy:** What are the sources of energy drain in your life? Is there something you can do to address those sources? It'll probably take more energy to deal with the cause than the symptom, but continually applying Band-Aids has a cost too.
5. **On gaining attention:** What really engages you? What are you naturally drawn to do? What are you passionate about? What energizes you? How can you use this information to be more present in the tasks you are focusing on?
6. **On losing attention (being distracted):** What's distracting you or causing you to continually shift focus? Is there a way to alter your environment so you're less prone to be distracted by these things?