

Take a Break for Optimum Performance

By: Pat Lynch, Ph.D., President

What is one thing you can do to help optimize your business results? Take the time to REST and RE-ENERGIZE! Though this advice may seem counterintuitive, especially in a “down” economy, it actually makes a lot of sense. Let’s use the analogy of training for a marathon to explain why.

Marathoners must rest their muscles regularly to avoid overuse injuries. They cannot optimize their performance by further taxing sore, overextended, or injured muscles. Injuries will throw them off track and perhaps even prevent them from participating in the event.

Similarly, employees need periodic breaks. Both the body and the brain are like a marathoner’s muscles: they need nourishment to continue to work properly, and they require regular rest to repair the damage caused by stressors to the system. Constant stress cannot be sustained physically or mentally; something has to give. Inevitably stress and burn-out manifest themselves in mediocre or poor performance: employees make bad decisions and mistakes, they become ill, they demonstrate a pattern of tardiness, or in extreme cases, they quit.

How can you build in the rest you and your employees need to re-energize yourselves and ensure optimum performance each day? Here are nine suggestions:

1. Insist that employees take breaks throughout the day.
2. Take regular breaks yourself; set a good example.
3. Leave the office entirely during lunchtime for a change in scenery.

4. Use your vacation time and ensure employees do the same.
5. Set clear work/non-work boundaries – for example:
 - limit Blackberry, cell phone/pager, PDA usage to regular work hours except in an emergency
 - set a reasonable response time for e-mail (immediately is NOT reasonable)
 - minimize or get rid of expectations that employees must stay late or take work home with them in order to get ahead
6. Create a motivating environment.
7. Learn how to frame situations so that you minimize stressors, and teach your employees that skill.
8. Remember that all of us always have the ability to choose how we view a given situation; use that choice wisely.
9. Identify and celebrate interim successes.

The return on investment in your physical and mental well-being is many times what you might expect. Why not take a break today and see for yourself? ➔

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