

The Power of Full Engagement

Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz

Reviewed by David Hanlon.

"Your first and foremost job as a leader is to take charge of your own energy, and then to help orchestrate the energy of those around you."

Peter Drucker

This book was given to me as one I might be interested in whilst running a training program in South Africa several years ago. As a

book about motivating and skilling corporate leader's it was definitely of interest. Little did that person know: *The Power of Full Engagement* would become one of the most influential books I have read in a decade. Jim Loehr, co-founder of LGE Performance Systems, is renowned for helping well-known professional athletes achieve the highest level of success in their fields. Interesting is his observations about the differences between professional athletes and business professionals. Athletes spend most of their "work" time practicing for a relatively short period of "performance"; business people have almost no practice time and their workdays consist primarily of "performance". Additionally, most athletes have an off-season where they aren't performing.

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In addressing this issue, Loehr and Schwartz focus on energy. Now many authors over the years have given us some insights into the importance of energy: none I believe as succinctly as the program developed by Loehr and his team at the Human Performance Institute.

The word Energy, derived from Greek, (*energōs* - active, working), appeared in Aristotle's, *Nicomachean Ethics* in the 4th century BC. Since that time, many authors have sung the virtues of managing energy. From a management perspective, Herb Shephard, Management Consultant and former Esso employee was one of the first to work on a "healthy balanced life" with four values: perspective (spiritual), autonomy (mental), connectiveness (social) and tone (physical). Stephen Covey, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, called them the four forms of renewal.

However, Loehr and Schwartz, drawing on Jim Loehr's strong background in sport psychology, build a tighter and more effective personal performance framework. In each area they point out the need to both stress ourselves in order to grow and follow those periods of stress with periods of recovery. The stress enables us to build "muscle" in each area. Not challenging ourselves will cause atrophy, much the way a muscle will decline in strength if not used - think of the condition of a person's arm when they have a cast removed. The recovery time allows for recharge and be ready for the next period of exertion.

The powerful analogy of comparing the four forms of energy with muscles that need BOTH stress (to gain strength) and REST (recovery) helps cement the importance of not

So successful has the program been that Allan Laffley, Chairman, President and CEO of Procter and Gamble, bought the company after putting a number of his top executives through it!!!

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Structure of the book

The book is written in two parts.

Part 1: The dynamics of full engagement

1. Fully engaged: energy not time
2. The disengaged life of Roger B.
3. The pulse of high performance: balancing stress and recovery
4. Physical energy: fuelling the fire
5. Emotional energy: transforming threat into challenge
6. Mental energy: appropriate focus and realistic optimism
7. Spiritual energy: he who has a why to live

Part 2: The training system

8. Defining purpose: the rules of engagement
9. Face the truth how are you managing your energy now?
10. Taking action: the power of positive rituals
11. The re-engaged life of Roger B.

Loehr and Schwartz weave the story of one of their clients throughout the book - Roger B., a recently promoted sales manager who is in a downward spiral and grudgingly comes to their program at his boss's insistence. A number of other success stories are told in briefer form as the book unfolds.

Why Energy?

Loehr, in studying professional tennis players to learn what separates the greatest players from the less successful players, discovered what separated the greatest players, such as Ivan Lendl, from the less successful players wasn't how they played tennis points. Rather, it was how they behaved between playing points.

The greatest players developed rituals to help calm and relax themselves in the short time between points.

When Loehr used Electrocardiogram (EKG) telemetry to monitor player heart rates, he discovered that: "In the sixteen to twenty seconds between points in a match, the heart rates of top competitors dropped as much as twenty beats per minute. By building highly efficient and focused recovery routines, these players had found a way to derive extraordinary energy renewal in a very short period of time."

As one CEO of a very successful company said. "Many years ago I took to heart Budha's words We become what we think. It led me to becoming a student of creative thinking, and since that time, I committed myself and my organisation to optimal thinking. This has led me to an awareness of the energy level of my organisation. Energy is a basic aspect of existence that is not well understood in relation to corporate performance "



The less successful players, on the other hand, didn't have rituals to help them recover between points. Their heart rates remained high between points, and they couldn't seem to calm their stress.

By contrast at work.....

The typical business mentality is to go to work and then work all day, surviving on bad food choices and then wondering why they end up with low energy, burnout and a build up of stress. To counter this, it is suggested that one should not work for more than 90 minutes without taking a break. The break may be anything that gets your mind off of work for 15 minutes. It could be a walk, listening to music, going to a coffee shop, getting a shoe-shine, etc. Studies have shown that this kind of routine will increase a person's overall productivity and keep them performing well for many, many years. A person doing this will also arrive home in the evening with energy to spare for their family and hobbies, further nurturing their emotional, mental, and spiritual capacities.

We are, they point out, generally under stressed in our sense of purpose (spiritually) and physically as nations and over stressed mentally and emotionally.

Spiritual	Under stressed
Mental	Over stressed
Emotional	Over stressed
Physical	Under stressed

And so in this book, Loehr and Schwartz, break down the old paradigms about time, stress and our system of rewards as illustrated below.

OLD PARADIGM	NEW PARADIGM
Manage time	Manage energy
Avoid stress	Seek stress
Life is a marathon	Life is a series of sprints
Downtime is wasted time	Downtime is productive time
Rewards fuel performance	Purpose fuels performance
Self-discipline rules	Rituals rule
The power of positive thinking	The power of full engagement

Rituals

There is a lot of talk and very good examples throughout the book of rituals which help build discipline. Rituals cement behavioural change far more effectively than simply telling what has to be done.

Looking another way a **ritual** is a set of actions, performed mainly for their symbolic value. In a sense, they are repetitive behaviours used systematically to change a belief, action or behaviour.



Our behaviour is:

- 5% conscious and self-regulated
- 95% unconscious habitual

A ritual works by tapping into unconscious part of our behaviour.

A success ritual links change to core values. Other critical success factors are:

- Invest high energy into the ritual
- Establish physiological link
- Be precise
- Focus on what you want
- Seek support

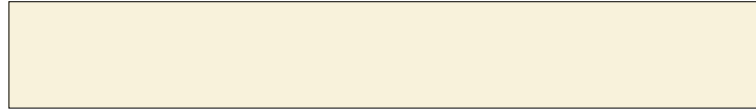
Example

As indicated, the book provides numerous examples of the framework for implementing a ritual process . Below is just one example, adapted from some of our work with an executive.

TARGET AREA	PATIENCE
PERFORMANCE BARRIER	Impatience Overly critical Work-life balance
DESIRED OUTCOME	More quality time and better moods with family
KEY ACTIONS	Establish a regular time to be home for days in the office 4.30pm (or half hour before normal leaving work time): Recovery break (focus on rituals below) Just before getting out of car – focus on who I want to be when I walk in the door
KEY RITUALS	What do I have to finish in order that I can leave work refreshed Mantra “Kindness matters” – for times of stress, at afternoon break and in the car on the way home I will take responsibility for my behaviour Position I will focus on my family needs and behaviours 100% rather than my own emotions

The “muscles”

A great summary diagram pulls together the Primary Capacities/Skills (Big Muscles) and the Supportive Habits/Skills (Small Muscles).



Summary

As Loehr and Schwartz state: "We hold ourselves accountable for the ways that we manage our time, and for that matter our money. We must learn to hold ourselves at least equally accountable for how we manage our energy: physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually."

It does work. Yes. I have used the ritual process repeatedly in changing behaviours of teams and individuals.

Availability

The Power of Full Engagement is available in good bookstores, in hard copy and in CD form. Currently it is only available in audible form in the US only (www.audible.com).

The reviewer

David Hanlon is a director of The Right Mind International Pty Ltd. He works in the area leadership training and organisational alignment.