

Maximizing Sales Opportunities

Time is a precious commodity, but if spent on replenishing your emotional and mental energy, it will yield a return on investment

BY CHRIS OBST

COULD EFFECTIVE ENERGY MANAGEMENT be the catalyst that elevates good salespeople to the ranks of the high performers?

Let's face it, sales is a tough game. Like us, clients and prospects are busy, often overwhelmed and always pressed for time. Despite these fast-paced, 24/7 times, personal interaction is still the key to maximizing sales, but it's getting more difficult every day to get in front of your clients or prospects.

Getting out of your office, making your way through traffic, finding parking, add a decent 60-minute sales call and you've chewed through half a day. So how do you make the most of this precious one-on-one face time when you do get it? What system or skill set will you lean on to ensure your success?

Effective time management? The time management movement that we've seen over the past 25 years has pretty much peaked. We've learned how to cram as much into a 24-hour period as possible. Time management will get you to the sales meeting on time, but how effective will you be when you're there?

Skilful management of selling systems and techniques? There are countless sales models and techniques that can be employed, and matching the right technique with the right situation certainly will increase your chances of success. But the best techniques in the world in the hands of a salesperson who is not personally prepared for a call is like a Formula One car on the track with no driver.

By being personally prepared, I'm talking about the skilful management of your own energy, your ability to be fully engaged in the sales call.



Add an extra glass of water for every caffeinated beverage you consume.

In his bestseller, *The Power of Full Engagement*, Dr. Jim Loehr of The Human Performance Institute describes full engagement as being physically energized, emotionally connected and mentally focused on the task at hand.

Consider your preparation for sales calls. Are you physically energized, emotionally positive and mentally focused on what you are there to accomplish?

At the Human Performance Institute, we coach sales executives to train and prepare like corporate athletes. That's right: prepare like an elite athlete who is training for competition.

So how do you prepare to be physically energized? By focusing on all those little basics that we tend to neglect over time.

These practical steps will ensure your

physical energy is the best that it can be for your next sales call:

- Get a good night's sleep;
- Eat breakfast;
- Stay hydrated;
- Exercise.

Starting to see a pattern here?

What does physical energy have to do with closing sales? Plenty. Your physical energy has a direct impact on your emotional and mental energy. Think about the last time you were really hungry at work, when you didn't have time for breakfast and had to work through lunch. What happens to your mood (think patience and irritability) and your outlook when you are in that state?

Time is certainly a precious commodity, but if spent on replenishing your emotional and mental energy it will yield a return on investment. High emotional energy levels will make you more hopeful and optimistic; improved mental energy will enable you to develop a clear vision of what you need to accomplish.

Here are some ways to improve your emotional and mental energy:

Sleep: Sleep is a key component of optimal energy management and on-the-job performance. If you aren't getting enough sleep you'll likely feel your physical energy level drop, but you may not be as aware of the impact on your mental and emotional energy levels. Even if you don't notice, those around you will because it affects your patience, irritability, confidence, concentration and creativity. These small changes will help you sleep more restfully:

- During the day, high performers eat light, eat right and eat often, exercise and keep

moving throughout the day, take breaks, drink water at regular intervals and keep the vices (coffee, crantinis, caramel fudge sun-daes) to a minimum.

- Set up a bedtime routine, create physical space and time between work and sleep, journal for 10 minutes to get the ideas out, stick to consistent times for going to bed and waking up and enjoy the benefits of having lived well during the day.

Eat breakfast: When you sleep, your body continues to burn calories. You need to eat within an hour of waking up to kick-start your metabolism and energy systems.

Ideal breakfast choices for energy management include: eggs, toast and fruit; smoothies made with yogurt and fresh or frozen fruit; yogurt, berries and granola; whole grain toast, with peanut butter and banana; high-fibre cereal with milk and strawberries.

The best start to the day is a low-fat combination of protein and carbohydrates. This combination stabilizes your blood sugar and sets you up for sustained energy.

Keep moving: Movement is one of the most powerful stimulators of energy production available to the body. Get out of your chair. Walk down the hall. Raise your arms above your head. These simple movements create a cascade of physiological and chemical changes that will really boost your energy.

Targets you can achieve: Every 30 to 40 minutes, stretch your muscles or do some small movements like opening and closing your hands; every 90 to 120 minutes, incorporate larger movement: walk up and down a flight of stairs or find something you can do in your office to activate your major muscles. Remember: the busier you are, the more stress you feel, and the more important it is to move through it.

Coffee consumption: There are many reasons to appreciate coffee, but energy management isn't one of them. Managing your energy is about understanding and responding to your body's real needs and rhythms.

Coffee is counterfeit energy. Here's how it works: sluggish body and mind + jolt of caffeine = temporary fix, followed by the revenge of the slug. What goes up, must come down. It's a law. Whereas: sluggish body and mind + effective energy management = serious and sustainable performance improvements. Effective energy management works with

good nutrition, hydration, exercise and sleep. If you consistently give your body what it really needs, your body will respond with steady energy rhythms, empowering you to naturally perform at your peak.

We all have days when the elevator needs a little shove to get to the top floor. On those days, coffee could be your quick fix solution to boost energy, but don't drink coffee to avoid fixing problems that need your attention. Ongoing use of coffee as a pick-me-up can have negative effects on your energy. Your body uses up water to flush out the caffeine, potentially leaving you dehydrated and low on energy. Coffee can curb your appetite and your thirst, blocking your body's messages to eat and hydrate. And continuous jolts

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can fry your nerves, making it harder to replenish your energy with sleep.

Are you dosing in the morning because you haven't slept, or because you skipped breakfast? Do you need another shot in the afternoon because you haven't had a glass of water or moved from your desk in six hours? So my big question is: Why are you reaching for your skinny tall latte? If you drink coffee, I hope you do it because you like the taste, because you can enjoy it with friends and colleagues or because it reminds you of a perfect morning in France – just don't kid yourself. Coffee is not an effective energy management tool.

Pass the snacks: A mid-morning snack, and an afternoon snack, can keep you energized throughout your day. Aim to eat every three to four hours. Regular snacking on healthy foods keeps your blood sugar stable and improves your metabolism, energy level, brain function and mood.

The Human Performance Institute recommends choosing snacks based on your body's glucose/insulin response. For energy-sus-

taining snacks you want low glycemic foods – foods that take as much as two hours for the body to fully process. Foods that shoot through your body at lightning speed (like corn chips) wreak havoc with your blood sugar and metabolism and can make your midday energy dip even worse.

Complex carbohydrates and proteins work together to keep your metabolism firing and stabilize your blood sugar; that means no energy dips. Choose one of these killer combos: hummus and pita; strawberries and yogurt; peanut butter and banana; or apples and cheese. Remember, the goal of snacking is to bridge your energy level between meals, not to make you feel full. So keep the portions down and the impact up.

Drink water: Staying hydrated has a massive impact on performance. Professional athletes hydrate before, during and after a game to keep their bodies and minds at peak levels. Business people need to do the same. Our physical, mental and emotional energy levels improve when we are adequately hydrated.

Research shows that as we age, we become less sensitive to the signs of dehydration, such as dry mouth and reduced concentration. From age 20 onwards, our early warning system starts to break down and we actually go longer and longer without noticing thirst.

Stay ahead of the thirst. If you wait until you feel thirsty, you are letting your body go through the first stages of dehydration. This will adversely affect your energy and your performance. Aim to drink at least eight ounces of water every hour of the day. And don't forget to add an extra glass for every caffeinated or alcoholic beverage you consume. Why water? It keeps our blood flowing. It regulates our PH. It supports our nervous system, brain functioning and skin elasticity. Don't hesitate. Hydrate! **BCB**



As principal of Core Dynamics Group, Chris Obst has fulfilled the role of management consultant and coach to a range of businesses since 1999. As a member of the Human Performance Institute, energy management is one of his special areas of interest and one that he shared with Microsoft's high performers in Paris last year.
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