



Mpowerment Matters

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Management Mpowerment Associates

Forward to a Colleague



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When I was a bit younger, and took my participation in sports more seriously than I do now, I was enthralled with the writings of sports psychologist, James E. Loehr. His books, *Athletic Excellence: Mental Toughness Training in Sports*; and *The New Toughness Training for Sports* were educational and motivational. Loehr described toughness as "the ability to consistently perform toward the upper range of your talent and skill regardless of competitive circumstances." To do this, one must maintain a high level of positive energy.

Twenty years later, Loehr, along with Tony Schwartz, has written *The Power of Full Engagement*. He has taken his sports theories to the business world and he has struck gold. Loehr posits that energy, not time, is the "fundamental currency" of high performance. He goes on to say that leaders are the stewards of organizational energy. They inspire or demoralize others within the organization by how well they mobilize, focus, invest and renew the collective energy of the individuals they lead. Skillful management of energy leads to full engagement.

If you find that you are not managing your energy well, that you are focused on keeping busy rather than working purposefully, you need to try a new way of thinking about what is important. Whether leading yourself or others, Management Mpowerment can help you focus your energy and put it to use for you doing what is meaningful. You have the time to focus energy positively and be one of those who truly makes a difference.

Beware of Busyness **Harnessing Willpower for Purposeful Action**

Only about 10 percent of managers work purposefully to complete important tasks, according to a 10-year study of managerial behavior across a variety of industries. The other 90 percent self-sabotage by busily engaging in non-purposeful activities, procrastinating, detaching from their work and needlessly spinning their wheels.

"Busy idleness" affects most people. While we have easy access to knowledge and timesaving resources, we continue to spend most of our time making the inevitable happen, instead of committing energy and focus to the few activities that can really make a difference.

Beyond routine, day-to-day tasks, most managers fail to seize opportunities to achieve something significant. This problem is nothing new. Stanford University Management Professors Jeffrey Pfeffer, PhD, and Robert Sutton, PhD, studied this dynamic for their book, *The Knowing-Doing Gap*. They asked: "Why do so much education and training, management consulting, and business research produce so little change in what managers and organizations actually do?...Why [does] knowledge of what needs to be done frequently fail to result in action or behavior consistent with that knowledge?"

Energy and Focus

People who exhibit purposeful action possess two critical traits: energy and focus. Energy is characterized by more than effort; it requires involvement in meaningful activities, fueled by both external and internal resources. Purposeful action is self-generated, engaged and self-driven.

If 90 percent of managers fail to act purposefully in their everyday work, what exactly are they doing? Heike Bruch's

and Sumantra Ghoshal's study, conducted over a 10-year period and published in *A Bias for Action*, identifies four profiles of managerial behavior, as charted in the following grid:

FOCUS:

High	The Detached	The Purposeful
Low	The Procrastinator	The Frenzied
	Low	High

ENERGY

The Frenzied: Forty percent of managers are distracted by the overwhelming tasks that face them each day. They are highly energetic, but unfocused; they are enthusiastic about their work and identify strongly with their jobs. But "the need for speed" prompts them to be unreflective. They can achieve more if they consciously concentrate their efforts on what really matters.

The Procrastinators: Thirty percent of managers procrastinate on doing their organizations' most important work. They lack both energy and focus, spending their time handling minor details in lieu of what could make a real difference to their organizations.

The Detached: Twenty percent of managers are disengaged or detached from their work. They can be focused, but have no energy. They seem aloof, tense and apathetic.

The Purposeful: Only 10 percent get the job done. They are highly focused, energetic, and come across as reflective and calm amid chaos.

The Purposeful Manager

Willpower is the force behind energy and focus, enabling managers to execute disciplined action. They are committed to achieving results and, no matter what, will not give up. For willpower to flourish, managers must commit to three action steps:

1. Develop a clear mental picture of their intention.
2. Make a conscious choice to commit to-and pursue-this intention.
3. Develop strategies for protecting this intention against distractions, boredom or frustration.

Leaders who make a serious attempt to foster managerial willpower must establish three critical working conditions:

1. Create space for autonomous action.
2. Build processes for providing professional, social and emotional support.
3. Develop a culture that celebrates the exercise of responsible willpower.

To Jump-Start Your Energy:

1. Define your goal by asking yourself:
 - a. Do I need a mentor who can help me see the big picture? Do I need to research data or strategies that will allow me to make a thoughtful, informed choice about my goals and objectives?
 - b. Is my goal well defined and concrete? Do I understand all of the components, including the potential obstacles?
 - c. Can I personally identify with my goal? Is it worthwhile, given my values and those of the organization?
2. Strengthen your confidence in your ability to achieve your goals by asking yourself:
 - a. What experience do I have in achieving comparable goals? Can I do it again?
 - b. Which of my role models can help me understand what it takes to achieve my goal?
 - c. Who can give me feedback to evaluate my capacities to achieve my goal? What must I learn to ensure success?
 - d. Can I experiment and rehearse critical tasks while pursuing my goals?

3. Overcome negativity and develop positive thoughts and feelings by asking yourself:

- a. Which emotions do I harbor-and what triggers them? Should I change my tasks or goals so that work is less stressful? Do I have healthy outlets-hobbies, sports, friends-for these feelings?

- b. What about my work creates enthusiasm, fun and excitement for me? What do I love doing? Apart from my work, from what personal well can I regularly draw balance or strength?

To Sharpen Your Focus:

In addition to energy, the second critical element of purposeful action is focus: energy channeled toward a specific outcome. Focused managers can concentrate in spite of the many distractions that interrupt their days.

You can sharpen your focus by taking the following steps:

1. Visualize your intention by asking yourself:

- a. What does my intention look like? What simple image can I keep in my mind when I need to remember my intention?

- b. How can I accomplish my intention? What specific steps will I need to take to reach it?

2. Make a personal commitment by asking yourself:

- a. Does this particular intention feel right? Do I really want it?

- b. Does my intention excite me? Is it something for which I can maintain my passion and commitment, even when obstacles arise?

- c. Does my intention jibe with my personal values and beliefs? Can I stand behind it

with head and heart?

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