

SINK  
FLOAT  
OR

**SWIM**

Sustainable High Performance Doesn't  
Happen by Chance—It Happens by Choice

Scott Peltin & Jogi Rippel

**Notice**

This book was written for information purposes only and is not intended to replace the advice that you may have obtained from your physician, psychotherapist, nutritionist, personal trainer, or any other properly educated and certified expert. All forms of exercise and nutritional supplementation pose some inherent risks, and therefore the writers, editors, and publishers advise readers to take full responsibility for their own safety.

**Permissions**

The writers have diligently attempted to get permission for all quoted and researched materials. We thank those who promptly replied and we apologize to anyone whom we may have missed or may not have been able to contact. If we misquoted, or in your opinion, misused any data in this book, we look forward to hearing from you so that we can provide the most accurate information possible.

**THIS BOOK IS A LIMITED PRERELEASE.**

**Bibliographical information from the German National Library**

The German National Library registers this publication in the German National Library.

Detailed bibliographic information can be retrieved at <http://dnb.d-nb>.

ISBN 978-3-86881-191-9

[www.redline-verlag.de](http://www.redline-verlag.de)

© 2009 by Redline Verlag, FinanzbuchVerlag GmbH, Munich.

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of the publisher.

Editor: Christine Buss

Cover Design: Janine Nemeč

Book Design: Marko Puclin, Becklyn

Typesetting: Achim Trumfheller, (Grafik-Schrubber)

Print: CPI – Ebner & Spiegel, Ulm.

Printed in Germany

**Prologue / 8**

**Chapter One**  
Comfortably Numb / 16

**Chapter Two**  
The Leadership  
Evolution / 26

**Chapter Three**  
Energy, Resilience,  
Brain Performance,  
and Capacity / 36

**Chapter Four**  
Sinking, Floating, or  
Swimming—What Will  
It Be? / 48

**Chapter Five**  
A Mind Is a Terrible  
Thing to Waste / 72

**Chapter Six**  
Create Your High  
Performance Mindset / 84

**Chapter Seven**  
Expand and Sustain Your  
Performance Mindset / 102

**Chapter Eight**  
What You Eat and Drink  
Fuels What You Do / 122

**Chapter Nine**  
Prepare Your High  
Performance Plate / 140

**Chapter Ten**  
The Sustainability  
Nutrition Plan / 156

**Chapter Eleven**  
I Think, Therefore  
I Move / 172

**Chapter Twelve**  
Movement for High  
Performance / 184

**Chapter Thirteen**  
Regenerate and  
Recharge / 206

**Chapter Fourteen**  
Sleep, Breathe,  
and Laugh! / 220

**Chapter Fifteen**  
Oscillate to the Top / 234

**Chapter Sixteen**  
If You Know It, Why Aren't  
You Doing It? / 248

**Chapter Seventeen**  
From Personal High  
Performance To Team High  
Performance / 264

**Chapter Eighteen**  
Will Your Organization Sink,  
Float, or Swim? / 276

**Chapter Nineteen**  
Now Is the Time to Act / 294

**Epilogue**  
The Tignum Story / 306

**Acknowledgments** / 315

**Notes and References** / 320

## Prologue

In November 2008, just after the US election, former President Bill Clinton was asked by CNN Talk Asia correspondent Anjali Rao: “If you had to give one piece of advice to offer President-elect Obama, what would it be?”

Clinton paused as he thought carefully, and then he replied that he would tell the new world leader to be sure that he gets enough rest and to invest in his own vitality, so that he can remain as energized, passionate, and focused in the presidency as he was throughout his campaign.

With all the advice that a former world leader could offer another world leader, you may find it surprising that he would choose the suggestion to get enough rest and to invest in his own vitality. Did he offer this advice because he was genuinely concerned about the new President’s health? No, that’s unlikely. He gave the advice because he knows that energy, passion, and focus are all about performance. They are critical ingredients to being a high performer.

It would be easy to take this as wellness advice, just as it may be easy to categorize this book as a wellness book. But that would be a mistake. This book isn’t about politics or about health and wellness. This book is about you, your habits, and your performance. This is a high performance leadership book designed to assist you in achieving your full potential.

We say this with a bias because in our company Tignum, our passion, our expertise, and our mission are all about teaching leaders the importance of having strategies to improve their energy, resilience, brain performance, and capacity so that they can become sustainable high performers.

**If you are not familiar with sustainable high performance habits, then you will want to keep reading. If you are familiar with some of these strategies, then you will discover a more integrated approach to build upon the habits you already have. In fact, by the time you reach the end of this book, you**

will not only understand the importance of sustainable high performance habits, you will have learned some practical strategies for easily implementing these habits into your daily life, both at work and away from work.

Every day, in organizations all over the world, men and women are going to work and using only a fraction of their full potential. They haven't consciously chosen to do this but they have unconsciously done so by their habits. This is costly to the businesses they work for, and it is also costly to their own sense of satisfaction. We have coined the term floater to describe these people, and we have made it our mission to empower the floaters to access their potential and become swimmers.

Of course, we started working with clients to increase their energy and resilience to fight this comfortably numb state long before this current recession hit the world. It was during the good times that we developed these strategies and techniques to help leaders become sustainable high performers. But it is now, in these challenging times, that this book is needed more than ever.

We realize that if you were simply floating before this current crisis hit, you may be dangerously close to sinking right now. But this doesn't mean that it's too late. Every day is a new opportunity for you to eliminate an old low performance habit (like working through lunch or not doing any movement) and replace it with a new high performance habit (like using mental imagery to prepare for a meeting or taking a strategic break to improve your energy and creativity). This book is not so much about how far you've let yourself slide as it is about how you can discover a new potential that you may have forgotten exists.

When we first discussed writing this book, we had reservations about being able to really capture the energy and zeal that is generated when we work with our clients. We understand that translating experiential learning into print isn't always easy or successful. When your passion is improving people's performance and helping them consistently bring their best to everything they do, there's nothing worse than possibly falling short in a book.

We also wondered if it was a smart business decision to share our methodology, given that any competitor could attempt to replicate what we do. Up until now, we have been the performance team behind some extremely productive and successful business teams. Our work has been discussed at length during internal strategy meetings but is relatively unknown to the outside world.

A conversation with one of our clients, an executive board member of one of the largest manufacturing companies in the world, was what pushed us into our decision to write Sink, Float, or Swim. We were sitting in a hotel lobby in London, and he was describing how far his team had come since we had originally worked with them three years prior. He told us that the demands on his team had grown, the pace of the work had increased, and the expectations and need to succeed had exponentially grown but yet his team was full of the energy, vitality, resilience, and capacity needed to meet these challenges. He told us that it was working with Tignum that was the impetus for the positive change in his team's sustainability and performance.

As we finished our green tea (something you'll fully understand when you read this book), he shook our hands, gave us both a hug, looked us in the eye, and thanked us for what we do. Then he smiled and said, "You really ought to write a book. The need is so great and if you really want to impact people's lives, you need to reach farther than just the work you do."

So here we go ...

**Put all of your preconceived notions about high performance and leadership aside, and get ready to learn just how easy it is to become a swimmer.**

## **Section I**

# **Be a Thriver in a World of Survivors**

**Quality of Time – maximizing your energy, resilience, brain performance, and capacity to develop sustainable periods where you are fully engaged, passionate, and highly productive at work and away from work**

## Chapter One

### Comfortably Numb

A Recession in Human Potential / 17  
Your Future Performance / 19  
A Paradigm Shift / 20  
Actualize Your Potential / 22  
Make Your Choice / 23

## Chapter Three

### Energy, Resilience, Brain Performance, and Capacity

Energy Creates Limitless Possibilities / 37  
Without Resilience, Failure Is Inevitable / 38  
Brain Performance for Full Potential / 39  
Left- and Right-Brain Coordination / 41  
Creativity Will Rule / 42  
Capacity—Is Your Gas Tank Big Enough? / 43  
Discover Your Potential / 44  
All Time Is Not Created Equal / 47

## Chapter Two

### The Leadership Evolution

From Good Days to Great Every Day / 27  
The Sustainable Success High-Rise / 28  
The Missing Link in Leadership / 30  
Power Behind Tignum Strategies / 31  
Sustainable High Performance Leadership / 33

## Chapter Four

### Sinking, Floating, or Swimming—What Will It Be?

Sinking = Burnout / 50  
Floating = Comfortably Numb / 54  
Mindlessness = Status Quo / 56  
Wellness Programs ≠ High Performance / 59  
Swimming = Sustainable High Performance / 59  
Personal Performance = Company Profitability / 61  
Is More Energy Enough? / 62  
The Rise of “Extreme Jobs” / 63

## Chapter One

### Comfortably Numb

At the end of 2008, the CEOs of the Big Three US automakers testified before Congress asking for a \$37 billion dollar rescue loan. Congress grilled these CEOs with questions. They asked about their strategies to reinvigorate and innovate their companies. They asked how they were going to retool their plants. They asked how they were going to guarantee the lenders (the US taxpayers) that this considerable loan would ensure that their companies would survive and become profitable again. These were all fair and appropriate questions.

But the questions that they did NOT ask Rick Wagoner, CEO of General Motors, Alan Mulally, CEO of Ford, and Bob Nardelli, CEO of Chrysler, were even more critical to the success of their companies. They should have also asked these leaders important questions about their own individual performance, as well as the performance of their leadership teams:

What are your personal sustainable high performance strategies so we can be assured that you will be able to perform your best during these and future challenging times?

How will you keep your team energized and focused so that they can assist you in inspiring and leading your entire organization through these and future challenging times?

How will you change the culture within your company to support, inspire, live, and breathe high performance?

What are you doing right now to increase your energy and resilience, improve your brain performance, and grow your capacity for the future?

## A Recession in Human Potential

We are on the heels of one of the most up-and-down economic years in modern history. The US is in a recession, and the European Central Bank is predicting a similar fate throughout Europe. The German Bank Chief Economist Norbert Walter presented an equally pessimistic prognosis, saying that this could be the biggest crisis since the founding of the country.

But this isn't just a financial recession—it is also a recession in human potential. It isn't just a crisis of a shrinking economy—it is a crisis of shrinking energy, passion, and fortitude of our leadership. We haven't just shrunk the economy. We have shrunk the investment that companies and individual leaders are making, in terms of maximizing the performance of those who must solve the current challenges.

At present, executive burnout rates are higher than ever. Two years ago, 30 to 50% of the global workforce was reported as having experienced occupational stress or burnout. Today, burnout is on the rise across the globe, and in the US alone, it is estimated that occupational stress costs employers in excess of \$200 billion per year.

*Presenteeism* (at work, but not really present) is costing the US over \$150 billion annually. Companies are going broke trying to keep up with rising employee healthcare costs. Leaders are distracted from producing results because of low performance habits, fatigue, high stress, and poor health.

It would be easy to blame this recession in human potential on the current economic crisis but this would be incorrect. Over the past 20 years as technology has expanded at a neck-breaking pace, the demands placed on business leaders and executives have exceeded the human physiological capacity to handle it. Simply put, we were not built to handle the way we currently work.

To make matters worse, the current approach to dealing with the side effects of the enormous demands leaders face is also insufficient. There are some excellent medical and wellness programs out there (even though many of these will be the first thing to get cut in tough budget times), but these treat the symptoms of the problem not necessarily the cause. These programs are effective at catching diseases early, educating employees about unhealthy habits, and reducing health insurance payouts; and these things are very important. But we want you to think bigger because just being healthy doesn't ensure that you, or your team, will be high performers.

In the Financial Times, there was an insightful article by Donald Sull entitled, "Why the worst times can also be the best of times." It begins with: "The world has changed. After years of benign economic conditions, the four horsemen of financial apocalypse—credit crunch, recession, volatility, and uncertainty—are blazing a trail across the horizon." The article goes on to describe that this current turbulence creates notable opportunities. Executives, who are poised to capitalize on these opportunities, accelerate change, communicate clearly to an uncertain workforce, and motivate leadership will be the ones to profit greatly.

The problem is—who are these executives? Are they suffering from leadership fatigue or are they energized to thrive? Are they exhausted and overworked from tough budget cuts and shareholder pressures or are they focused, passionate, full of energy, and ready to re-innovate themselves and their companies?

*What has made you successful today will not necessarily make you successful tomorrow. Think about what you have to do to remain successful in the future.*

Today                      2010                      2015                      2020                      2025

## Your Future Performance

The greatest “inconvenient truth” is not that global warming is out of control. The greatest inconvenient truth is that the majority of world leaders, corporate leaders, and executives have no plan to improve their own personal sustainable high performance.

In our work, every time we meet with a group of executives, we ask:

**How many people are going to retire in the next two years?**

Consistently, no one raises a hand.

**How about the next five years?**

Usually, no one raises a hand.

**How about the next 10 years?**

Maybe two people raise their hands.

**Is anyone concerned that you won't have the energy to perform at a high level for the next 10 years?**

Almost every hand in the room goes up.

Then, we ask:

**How many of you have a financial plan for your retirement?**

Almost every hand goes up.

Next, we ask:

**How many of you have planned for your own personal vitality and health so you can enjoy your retirement?**

Again, only a couple of people raise their hands. Team after team, company after company, group after group, and the response is the same.

And then, we ask the toughest question of all:

**How many of you feel that you could be better in five years than you are now—that you can have more energy, focus, passion, concentration, clarity, resilience, and capacity in five years?**

Not one hand in the room has ever gone up.

This is the saddest moment of all, since the truth is that these things are possible—and even more easily within reach than you can imagine!

Much of the way you perform in the next five minutes is due to the habits you have had for the last three months. Much of how you will perform five years from now will depend on the habits you will begin today. You are a product of your habits, and there is no reason that you can't become a sustainable high performer in all areas of your life within the next three months. It is simply a matter of awareness, choice, and habits.

Let us reiterate this compelling fact:

**The way you will perform five years from now will depend on the habits you begin today. You can change your habits today to feel better, have more energy, build greater resilience and capacity, and become a more effective leader five years from now.**

## A Paradigm Shift

This really is an exciting time to be alive and to be a leader. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, “The ultimate measure of a man [or woman] is not where he [or she] stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he [or she] stands at times of challenge and controversy.” The question is—what if you have the character and the conviction to handle the crisis, but you're just worn out? Your battery is low, your brain needs more oxygen, your cells are screaming for nutrients, and your doctor has you on medications for sleep problems, depression, hypertension, erectile dysfunction, and ulcers. You've become a side effect of the new

corporate world of endless meetings, 24/7 e-mail and text messages, unrealistic shareholder expectations, and the promotion competition to make it to the next level. You are your greatest asset, and your habits will determine if you will fall to mediocrity or rise to your potential. What if the greatest crisis you need to solve is your own energy crisis so you can impact your team, your company, your brand, and your family?

The truth is—you are not alone. We live in a time where there are a multitude of brilliant leadership, business strategy, and financial consultants. There are bookstores full of highly regarded books that provide insights into how to be a better leader, negotiator, or project manager. But what they all miss are the fundamental tools leaders will need to improve their own energy and sustainability.

At Tignum, we believe that you must start with a strong foundation of personal energy, resilience, brain performance, and capacity to become a sustainable high performing leader. This foundation must be in place in order to fully capitalize on all the other effective strategies in leadership and business. This is especially true in these unstable economic times, but it can not be overstated that this is always true.

### **Why do so many books and business schools miss this essential foundation?**

There are many reasons, which we will present later in this book, but the fact is that most people take their own personal energy, resilience, brain performance, and capacity for granted. They wait until a crisis happens before they open their eyes. Even then, they think they are infallible. This paradigm needs to shift. The future isn't about survival—the future is about achieving your potential. We could throw out a million clichés of living life to its fullest, being the best you ... blah, blah, blah ... but you would probably stop reading here.

If you're like the thousands of leaders we have worked with, you want to know that you have an impact. But making an impact in everything you do requires sustainable high performance habits.

The bottom line is:

Do you want to make a difference?

Do you want to enjoy life?

Do you want to leave a legacy?

Hopefully, you aren't too numb or too tired to answer these questions honestly. And, contrary to what you may believe or expect, sustainable high performance is not dependent on huge habit changes; it is built on simple, small changes. This book is about teaching leaders basic high performance strategies. The key, as you will discover in the following pages, is to do these simple things consistently well.

**Open Your Mind. Challenge that age-old myth that you cannot be better tomorrow. Plan for your own physical and mental performance and sustainability just as you do for your financial performance. Discover your untapped potential and make the changes in your habits today so that you can enjoy the benefits now, and especially in the future.**

## Actualize Your Potential

At Tignum, we think the greatest untapped potential of an organization is the performance of their leaders. Within these top players is an amazing ability to inspire, motivate, and ignite the passion and innovation of an entire organization. But in order for this potential to be expressed these leaders must have the energy, resilience, brain performance, and capacity to be their best. This is the foundation of every leader and the foundation of every successful business. If you don't first build a strong foundation for sustainable performance for yourself and your organization, you are risking a collapse.

Sadly, when organizations and leaders preach transformation, innovation, and change, but fail to invest in the sustainability and performance of the leadership and workforce, they are sending a deadly message. They are saying that human capital has minimal value—and they will lose the talent war, the innovation

race, and the Darwinian survival challenge. Only companies that spend the time, effort, and money to provide a high performance workplace (with sustainable high performance leaders and workers at the core) will win.

In a recent study by Accenture (a global management consulting, technology services and outsourcing company), intangible assets—such as reputation, intellectual capital, and other non-monetary items—accounted for about 70% of the value of the S&P 500. This statistic is up from 20% in 1980. The companies that not only survive the current challenges but thrive in the next decade will be those that master these intangibles.

Every real change, every great company must be built on a strong foundation of energized leaders, a culture of high performance, and a passion for sustainability for the business, the environment, the world, and most importantly, the people. If your people are your organization's greatest asset, then prove it. If you are a leader, then begin by leading yourself first.

## Make Your Choice

Play theorist Dr. Brian Sutton-Smith proclaims, “The opposite of play isn't work. It's depression.” Furthermore, the opposite of success is not failure—it is living a life where you are comfortably numb. You've seen it. People who get through the day, barely achieving the status quo, who are numb to how low their energy or productivity really is. Even worse, they are unaware of how much unrealized potential they are leaving behind. Then there are those who are energized, passionate, productive, and constantly working to be their best.

Which would you rather be? Are you comfortably numb? Do you have the knowledge, strategies, and habits to be energized, passionate, productive, and sustainable?

Many leaders want to be the energy giver rather than the energy taker, but unfortunately, they are often in survival mode. They think that if they can just make it through this current crisis, they will recommit to some better sustainable high performance habits. However, this is unlikely because there will always another crisis to deal with.

**Seize the Opportunity. The current economy and business challenges require excellence more than ever. There has never been a time when sustainable high performance habits are needed more. The time to develop them is NOW!**

There have been economic and financial crises in the 70s, 80s, 90s, and early 2000; and now, in this century, we face the “biggest crisis since the Great Depression,” (which lasted from 1929 through the end of the 30s or early 40s for different countries).

The 1973 oil crisis, along with the US stock market crash that lasted from January 1973 to December 1974, affected all major stock markets across the globe. In the 1980s, developing countries across the world faced increasing economic and social difficulties as they suffered from multiple debt crises.

In the US, the savings and loan crisis of the 1980s and 1990s included the failure of 747 savings and loans associations. There was the 1987 stock market crash. And the slowdown in the finance industry and the real estate market may have been contributing causes of the US 1990-1991 economic recession.

In 1992, there was the collapse of the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) and in 1994, the collapse of the Mexican peso. In 1997, the Thai economy was in crisis with the devaluation of the Thai baht and the collapse of the country's real estate boom.

In this century, there have already been two recessions. There was one from 2001-2003 which affected largely western countries, the European Union in 2001-2002 and the US in 2002-2003, and the second one, which is happening currently. The stock markets in the US, Europe, and Asia have all been affected and show continued volatility.

But, the truth is that in every crisis, there are opportunities. Opportunities for evaluation, for change, for reinvention, for innovation. And there will be many more opportunities in the near future. The only way to survive, have fun while you are doing it, and truly thrive in the future is to become a sustainable high performer.

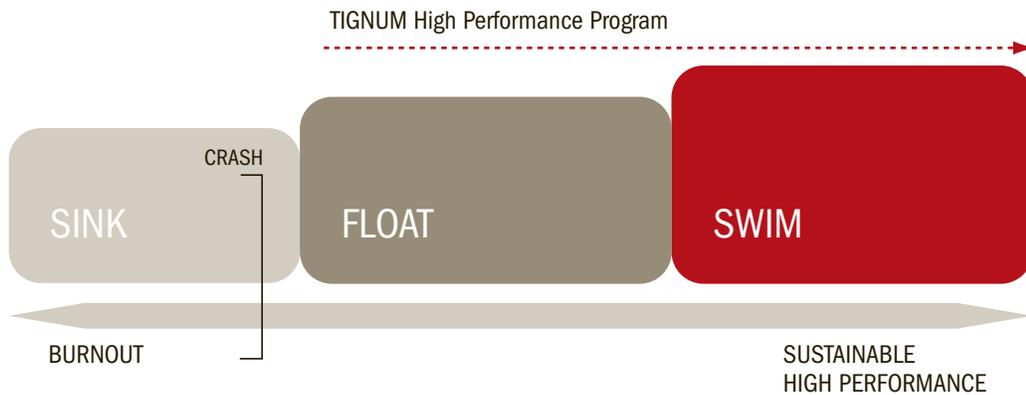
The critical question is—are you a sustainable high performer?

## Chapter Four

### Sinking, Floating, or Swimming— What Will It Be?

After working with thousands of executives, we have found that they fall into one of three categories. They are moving towards a serious crisis (sinking), they are comfortably numb and performing at a fraction of their potential (floating), or they are a sustainable high performer (swimming). We have included a list of characteristics in each category below for you to honestly assess where you are.

#### Are you a Sinker, a Floater, or a Swimmer?



#### A Sinker ...

- \_performs at low level of productivity
- \_doesn't read or recognize body signals (fatigue and sleep or digestion problems)
- \_suffers aches and pains for no apparent reason
- \_keeps working harder and harder but with less productivity

- \_struggles with business demands and feels pressured
- \_has sacrificed relationships for work
- \_is unaware of unproductive, low performance habits
- \_ignores personal sustainability until a crisis occurs
- \_always feels like s/he is one breath away from going under
- \_does not have a strategy for personal sustainable high performance
- \_does not see the value in planning for personal performance
- \_is unaware that Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery habits impact her / his energy, resilience, brain performance, and capacity

#### **A Floater ...**

- \_performs at a level of mediocrity or unremarkable productivity
- \_occasionally recognizes body signals (fatigue and sleep or digestion problems)
- \_may have occasional high performance productivity
- \_uses a lack of time as a common excuse for not investing more in personal sustainability
- \_perceives constant pressure, deadlines, and change processes as an endless battle
- \_prioritizes job sustainability over personal sustainability, sacrificing some relationships
- \_is aware of unproductive, low performance habits, but doesn't change them due to limited awareness of performance potential
- \_believes what brought personal success in the past will lead to personal success in the future
- \_feels like the status quo is as good as it gets
- \_does not plan for or invest in personal sustainable high performance
- \_sees sustainable high performance as a nice-to-have rather than a strategic-must
- \_may implement certain performance Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, or Recovery strategies but not in an integrated fashion

**A Swimmer ...**

consistently performs at a high level  
is consciously aware of internal and external signs of being low on gas  
has a high energy level and energizes others  
works smart rather than just hard  
welcomes pressure, deadlines, and change processes but also  
schedules time for recovery and regeneration  
has fulfilling relationships at work and away from work  
continually improves habits and works toward potential  
has great resilience even after setbacks  
feels like life is full of opportunities and is ready to act on them  
plans for and invests in personal sustainability and builds a personal  
vitality profit margin in case a crisis hits  
recognizes sustainable high performance as a strategic-must  
fully integrates and understands that Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and  
Recovery strategies are the foundation for all performance

While you are at work, do you find yourself sinking, floating, or swimming?

What percentage of the time do you spend in each place?

What about when you are away from work?

*“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.”*

*Aristotle*

**Sinking = Burnout**

There is one message that comes through loud and clear from every client with whom we have worked. The demands on them as leaders, managers, team members, husbands, wives, fathers, and mothers are enormous. We always ask the question: Is your workload greater today than five years ago? And, the answer is invariably an emphatic YES.

Our clients share that their biggest frustrations come from endless meetings, e-mail overload, and a general feeling of a lack of control over their day. On many days, it takes every ounce of energy they have to keep from sinking.

In addition, most executives have at least one story of someone on their team who is either ready to burn out or has done so already. These very sad stories, and you can feel the impact it has had on the entire team.

In the past 15 years, the rate of burnout has drastically increased. Even more alarming, it is happening to the best performers (not the worst), and at earlier and earlier ages. With the competitive war to get and retain the top talent, and with the growing demands placed on business leaders, A-players crashing and burning out can be very costly.

According to a study by the American Institute of Stress, the estimated costs due to missed work and stress-related illness could be as high as \$300 billion annually. In Canada, it is estimated that work-related mental health issues resulted in an annual \$3.5 billion productivity loss. In the European Union, it is reported that burnout affects 28% of employees, 38% in the United Kingdom, and possibly even more in the US.

*Findings from the Hudson Burnout Britain Report (2005):*

*More than half (52%) of Britain's employees claim to have experienced one or more symptoms of over-work or burnout in the last six months.*

*One in two employees (49%) and employers (46%) thought the situation had worsened in the last five years.*

*Employees (76%) and employers (78%) were most likely to believe that the increased pace of business life was a cause of burnout.*

*One in seven (14%) of the HR managers interviewed have lost one or more members of staff due to burnout.*

With the economy worsening, competition increasing, and the demands placed on executives rapidly growing, can a company really afford to have this many people sinking? Burnout doesn't just impact the bottom line—it impacts the company morale, the organizational culture, the productivity, and ultimately the shareholder value.

In the *Scientific American Mind*, Berlin science writer Ulrich Kraft describes the *burnout cycle* and why it has become so prevalent. He notes that part of the quicksand of burnout is that it doesn't happen overnight—it develops gradually over time. The cycle actually begins with a compulsion to prove oneself, an expectation that any high performer embraces. Then, as personal high expectations continue to grow, people take on more and more work to support their inner notion of *irreplaceability*. Finally, they take the plunge that often leads to their own sinking: they dismiss their own needs for critical elements like sleep, exercise, food, friends, or fun. This self-sacrifice is often perceived as the final proof of heroic performance.

Interestingly enough, Dr. John Sarno, from the NYU Langone Medical Center, also describes this *perfectionist* type of personality as the greatest at risk for low back, knee, and shoulder pain. In his book *The Mindbody Prescription: Healing the Body, Healing the Pain*, he also associates other common health conditions such as fibromyalgia, asthma, and arthritis to the psychosomatic onset of a condition called tension myositis syndrome (TMS). TMS causes a condition of oxygen deprivation in the tissues which he attributes to the pain, most notably back pain.

*At Tignum, we believe there is another way—a new way of working—utilizing effective High Performance Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery strategies to access your potential and sustain your performance. Our goal, and passion, is to help every person move towards becoming a sustainable high performer. We can assure you that sustainable high performers are not born this way. They are people who have committed themselves to doing simple things consistently well in order to actualize their potential.*

Burnout is the result of constant and persistent stress without adequate recovery to rebalance your autonomic nervous system (ANS). The ANS controls involuntary activities in your body such as heart and respiration rates, digestion, perspiration, urination, and sexual arousal.

There are numerous factors that contribute to burnout such as a lack of control of the work environment, unrealistic expectations, perfectionism, a bombardment of critical decisions (especially those that negatively impact the lives of others), and a non-supportive work culture. But burnout is not an absolute. Some people appear to be less resilient to burnout than others, and this resiliency can be developed.

**Physical signs of burnout:** lack of energy, inability to get up to come to work, lack of concentration, insomnia, aches and pains, physical exhaustion, forgetfulness

**Emotional signs of burnout:** frustration and general irritability, feeling isolated, emotionally drained, cynicism, despair, apathy, withdrawn, sense of helplessness, and hopelessness

Burnout is a serious medical condition and can lead to suicide. If you believe you are suffering from burnout, you need to seek medical attention and the care of a qualified psychological and medical team.

*“The last act of the stress cycle, burnout is a fitting epidemic for the overwork age. Its total colonization of the mind, body, and spirit mirrors the complete takeover of life by the job.”*  
*Joe Robinson, American Consultant and Author of Work to Live: The Guide to Getting a Life*

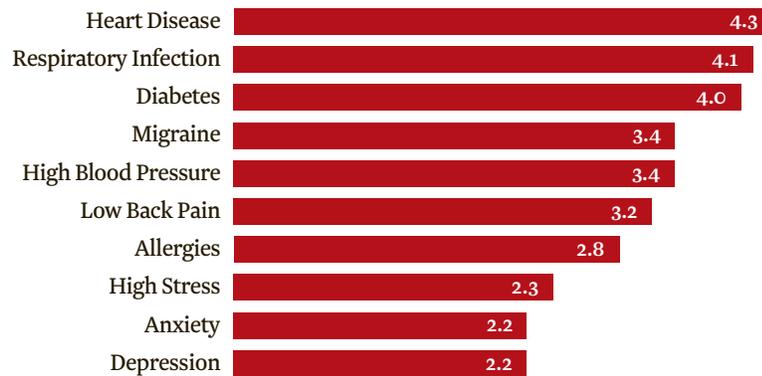
## Floating = Comfortably Numb

Yet, this tells only one part of the story. There are rising catastrophic burnout rates, but in addition to this alarming trend, there are also a large percentage of executives that are simply trying to stay afloat. This means they come to work every day, they do their best to achieve the status quo, and then they go home exhausted hoping that tomorrow will be a better day. They are treading water in the middle of a vast ocean of expectations, increasing business challenges, reduced resources, and greater short-term demands, without any glimpse of a rescue boat or the shore.

Although there are statistics that attempt to estimate the productivity loss due to burnout, there aren't any measurements of the cost of mediocrity from a large part of your workforce just trying to stay afloat. These are the comfortably numb leaders who have lost sight of what high performance looks like, feels like, and smells like. Even worse, they don't realize that life can be better. They suffer compassion fatigue which destroys the energy, productivity, and culture of high performance teams.

In an October 2004 article in the Harvard Business Review, Paul Hemp defined presenteeism as the problem of being on the job but, because of illness or other medical conditions, not fully functioning. The productivity loss due to presenteeism in the US alone is estimated to be \$150 billion which is far more costly than absenteeism. Unlike absenteeism, the problem with presenteeism is that it isn't always apparent. People are at their desk, appear to be fine, but inside they may be struggling with common ailments like allergies, headaches, arthritis, back pain, depression, or some other performance-hindering condition. Side effects of the medications they are taking may also challenge and adversely affect their performance.

## Average number of unproductive hours in a typical 8-hour day



8

*Adapted from a study done by Cornell University Institute for Health and Productivity Studies (IHPS)*

Although the study of presenteeism is still young, it is our opinion that these statistics are an underestimation of the true cost of pain and illness. For example, researchers from Tufts New England Medical Center in Boston reported that the incidence of chronic lower back pain was 21.3% and depression only 13.9% in the Lockheed Martin study. In our medical evaluations, we have found that closer to 50% of executives suffer from consistent lower back pain, and the depression rates (especially those who don't take medications) are also far higher. Even more frightening, there is an unknown percentage of executives who self-medicate, which surely impacts their productivity and performance.

Another confounding factor to actually being able to measure the true impact of presenteeism is the veil of secrecy that surrounds illness (especially mental illness). We have had clients confide that they have suffered medical maladies (even heart attacks) and never shared this information with their bosses or with their company physicians.

Even further complicating the true cost of presenteeism is the fact that most executives don't get regular medical examinations, and they are often unaware of underlying potential medical problems. In almost four years of testing executives for our programs, we have found that 40% of our clients have hypertension and 38% have abnormal blood results, and they had no prior knowledge of these conditions. This has been a huge wake-up call for Tignum and for our clients.

Do you know your blood pressure? Do you know your cholesterol level? Do you have allergies? Do you regularly suffer from knee, back, or shoulder pain? What medications do you take? What are the side effects of these medications? When was your last medical examination? What do you do every day to prevent illness, injury, or chronic pain? What do you do every day to strengthen your immune system? Are your current habits leading you towards being one of these statistics?

### Mindlessness = Status Quo

In today's world of business with downsizing, buyouts, constant reorganization, and rapid change platforms, the emotional demands placed on managers and leaders are growing exponentially. When examining current leadership habits, Richard E. Boyatzis and Annie McKee, in their book *Resonant Leadership: Renewing Yourself and Connecting with Others Through Mindfulness, Hope, and Compassion*, also found that if leaders were focused only on results, they often slipped into "a state of mindlessness." This mindlessness takes a toll on leaders both physically and emotionally. It creates floaters of the best leaders in the short-term and makes personal sustainability impossible in the long-term. Eventually, this can lead to leaders who can no longer motivate themselves or their teams to be creative and productive, which can severely wound the spirit of the company. In a competitive world, this is how companies lose their competitive edge.

Whether or not these leaders actually suffer heart attacks, their companies will eventually suffer shareholder-value strokes; and the profitability of the companies will be paralyzed. The reality is that business can be tough and even cruel sometimes, and often only the strong survive. In a tough economy, the smart money is on the leaders who realize that the corporate culture must be in place to improve the energy, resilience, capacity, and sustainability of every person in their company.

It's interesting to note that many Fortune 100 companies have a policy that the executive leadership team can never travel together in the same airplane. This way, in the case of a catastrophic crash, the company will not lose all of its leaders or its continuity. This policy implies that there is a high value placed upon these key leaders, their contributions to the company, and the importance of them being able to come to work.

If companies go to such lengths as to require that their top leaders not travel together, why don't they insist on a company culture built on sustainable high performance? We asked one of the leading international business gurus and bestselling authors, C.K. Prahalad, about some of these important issues.

**Why do you think so many leaders see their personal sustainability (energy and resilience) as a nice-to-have rather than a strategic-must?**

Prahalad: Most of these executives and CEOs start in these companies when they are young. When you're young you feel invincible—even if you're not. However, just because you can cope doesn't mean you are at your best. You don't know how good you could be, and people won't tell you when you're not at your peak. In addition, there are companies that invest in the health of their leaders and workforce, but good health does not translate directly to high performance. The mindset is the key.

**It seems that in tough budget times, employee development and high performance programs are often the first to get cut. What are your thoughts on this approach?**

Prahalad: It's unfortunate and a knee-jerk reaction. It's a mistake and demonstrates very short-term thinking. I encourage leaders not to take this approach—not to cut this type of vital leadership development. When they make these kinds of cuts, they will surely pay for it later.

**Why are you committed to your own personal sustainable high performance?**

Prahalad: The reason I am so committed to my sustainable high performance is that my work requires much international travel, and there is always the expectation that I am ready to go when I land and that I'll be highly focused. When I work with a company, I must be alert for long periods of time. I have multiple roles as an academic, a writer, and a consultant. My job requires that I'm mentally alert and physically fit.

Clearly, C. K. Prahalad is a swimmer.

Companies often fail to build a culture of high performance because of their lack of awareness. When you are comfortably numb, you don't always know how bad you may be or how good you could be. You've probably seen glimpses of your potential, but you've never gotten to swim in it so you could really enjoy the benefits. You may not associate Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery habits with your business performance. Instead, you may associate these strategies with wellness, health, or physical appearance, and then wait for a performance or health crisis before you do anything about your personal habits.

## Wellness Programs ≠ High Performance

This lack of awareness also contributes to the wellness program trap. Too often, CEOs assume that if they have a company wellness program, everyone must be well. This false assumption usually goes hand in hand with the assumption that if the leaders and the workforce are well, they must be functioning at full capacity.

Unfortunately, these assumptions cloud the real picture of performance:

- \_ Annual checkups identify illness—they don't prevent them.
- \_ Corporate fitness centers are most used by those who are already fit.
- \_ Presenteeism makes it look like everyone is well, but this is often not the case.
- \_ Everyone is not an athlete and “exercise” is not for everyone.
- \_ Wellness programs are designed to help people stay afloat, to prevent them from sinking, but not necessarily to help them become sustainable high performers.

Wellness and health are definitely components of sustainable high performance, but alone, they do not lead to high performance.

## Swimming = Sustainable High Performance

Sustainable high performance is a condition that occurs when a person is stretched beyond her/his comfort zone but not beyond her/his skill level. It is a condition of high energy and passion, low anxiety, and maximum productivity. It is not a one-time experience but rather a normal state where mediocrity is unacceptable but perfection is not the objective. It is a condition that yields high motivation, strong self-esteem, excitement to handle challenges, and abundant physical energy. Sustainable high performance is an outcome of excellent habits. It is a process and not a destination.

Three years ago, one of our clients, Sandy Ogg, the Chief HR Officer of Unilever, recognized that he and his team were struggling. He described that they were facing insurmountable challenges and they were doing everything they could to just stay afloat. This wasn't a knock on himself or his team. Rather, it was a by-product of the enormous demands they were facing along with their current habits.

At one of our meetings, Ogg stood up in front of his entire team and shared his desire to become a swimmer. He told the group he knew it would require some personal changes, but that he wanted to be a good example to everyone and to improve his own sustainable performance. Since then, like all of us, he hasn't been perfect, but he has purposefully adopted a variety of sustainable high performance habits.

He awakens every morning with a commitment to his own personal energy, resilience, brain performance, and capacity. His morning starts with some movement and a high performance breakfast. Next, he looks at his daily agenda, and spends a few minutes setting his intentions and mentally preparing for his day. He envisions his day as a series of performances, all of which will require his full attention, energy, focus, and passion.

Once at work, Ogg prepares his brain for optimal performance (with the proper thoughts, movement, and nutrition) before each meeting. He takes a few minutes before to set his intentions and a few minutes after each meeting to debrief. He understands that in each and every interaction he has, there is the potential to impassion and energize company leaders or leave them flat, uninspired, and feeling insignificant.

Do all of these strategies take a lot of time and energy?

Not really—because it's a routine, a set of daily habits. Ogg understands that his hectic schedule, relentless travel demands, and challenging workload can, at any moment, drag him back into being a floater. But he keeps focused, by having good sustainable high performance habits, because he has made the choice to be a swimmer.

Is he perfect with these habits every day? No way. But he is committed. And part of being a swimmer is realizing that every day is a work in progress. Every action you take will either help you swim or make you sink.

## Personal Performance = Company Profitability

In a 2007 Fast Company article, Yuval Rosenburg looked at an evolving trend of investment groups to examine not just short-term returns but also sustainability. One such group, HIP Investor, Inc., has defined the practice as Human Impact + Profit (HIP)<sup>™</sup>. HIP is a quantitative measurement of how a company treats the environment, its employees, its customers, and the community. HIP Investor founder and CEO R. Paul Herman shared with us: “We want to measure how a company’s management approach drives human impact and how that human impact drives higher profit. To do this, we look at the impacts (health, wealth, earth, equality, and trust) of both customers and employees, the impact on the environment, and the impact on social equality. Clearly, we can see that the culture the leader sets pervades the entire organization. We suspected that a company could do the right thing in the short-term (for their employees, customers, and the environment) and still be very successful in the long-term, and the HIP Index’s metrics and financial outperformance prove that concept in real life. We were right.”

This type of approach is in its early stage, but HIP is revolutionary, certainly pushing the envelope in linking the health and well-being of a company and its leadership approach directly to the long-term profitability of the enterprise.

This focus on the health of company leadership is also reflected in The Huffington Post headline, “Apple Shares Fall on Steve Jobs Health News.” In this article, Jessica Mintz wrote: “Apple’s stock has surged and tumbled over the last year in step with rumors or news about the CEO’s condition. While the top executive’s health is an issue for investors of any company, at Apple the concern reaches fever pitch because Jobs has a hand in everything from ideas for new products to the way they’re marketed.”

While Steve Jobs is certainly not just any CEO, and the ethics of speculators having access to personal medical information is questionable, the point is that the health and well-being of the CEO and top leadership always matters. In fact, we believe that when companies invest in the sustainable high performance of their leaders, it should be heralded as good for the company, good for the employees, and good for the investors.

### Is More Energy Enough?

One of our favorite video clips is of a well-known CEO energizing his company's leaders. It shows him bouncing, skipping, screaming, and cheering as he energizes the crowd. They are clapping, cheering, and egging him on. You can see that they love their leader and the energy he is inciting in them. The video clearly shows his passion and his intention for honoring the company and his workforce.

Afterwards, the fatigued CEO leans on the podium as he catches his breath, the effort and the excitement of delivering such an energetic entrance evident. At this point, we always ask the question: Is this high energy? Of course it is. Then we follow it up with:

Is it sustainable?

We are inspired by this CEO's passion for his company, his effort to energize himself and his employees. In the video clip, he emphatically states four words: "I love this company!" However, even with his tremendous love for his company, will this CEO have the energy and resilience to sustain his personal performance?

When we address sinking, floating, or swimming, we are talking about men and women who love their companies, love their jobs, love their teams, love their spouses, and love their children. But, the reality is that when they sink, everyone suffers.

*“Your first and foremost job as a leader is to raise your own energy level and then to help raise and orchestrate the energies of those around you.”*

*Peter Drucker, Austrian Management Consultant and Social Ecologist*

## The Rise of “Extreme Jobs”

Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Carolyn Buck Luce published a compelling article in the Harvard Business Review on the dangerous allure of extreme jobs. Their research in this area is based upon two surveys: one focusing on “high earners in various professions across the US” and the other targeting “high-earning managers in large multinational corporations.” In addition to the surveys, they gathered information from 14 focus groups and 35 one-on-one interviews. Hewlett and Luce defined extreme jobs utilizing the following criteria:

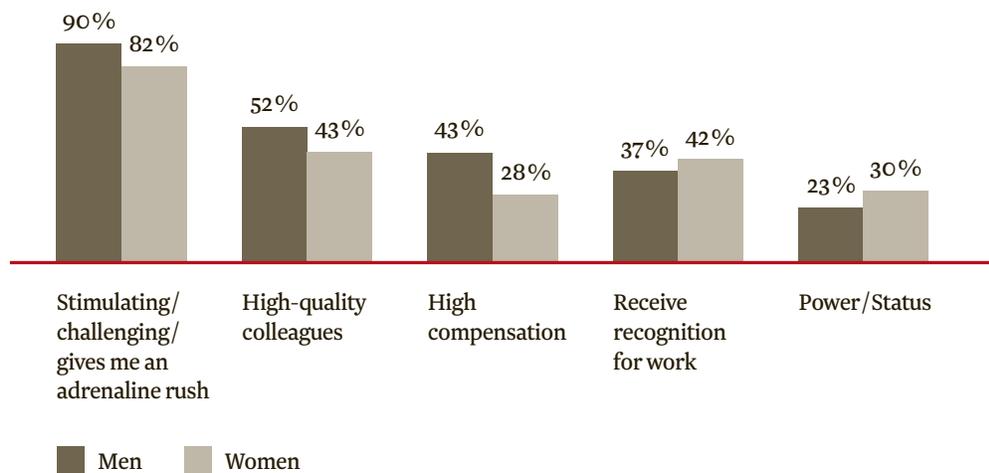
“For the purposes of data analysis, we’ve said that survey respondents have such jobs if they work 60 hours or more per week, are high earners, and hold positions with at least five of these characteristics:

- \_unpredictable flow of work
- \_fast-paced work under tight deadlines
- \_inordinate scope of responsibility that amounts to more than one job
- \_work-related events outside regular work hours
- \_availability to clients 24/7
- \_responsibility for profit and loss
- \_responsibility for mentoring and recruiting
- \_large amount of travel
- \_large number of direct reports
- \_physical presence at workplace at least ten hours a day”

Using this definition, they identified that 21% of those surveyed in US companies and 45% of those working in global companies had extreme jobs. When asked why they did these extreme jobs, 90% of male and 82% of the female respondents stated that their jobs were stimulating and challenging, and their work gave them an adrenaline rush. The graph below highlights some of the other reasons people gave.

### Why Do You Do it?

Holders of extreme jobs indicated what motivates them to work long, stressful hours. They answered the question “What are the main reasons you love your job?” Multiple responses were allowed.



Hewlett and Luce also noted that “extreme jobs are no longer a rarity.” This study was completed in 2006, and with our current economic demands, it is important to acknowledge that today, extreme jobs are more prevalent than ever before.

The truth is that just as there has been a rise in extreme sports, there will always be an allure for certain individuals to do extreme jobs. There will also be certain work cultures that recruit for, and brag about, their extreme work environments. Is this okay or is this wrong? This is not for us to judge because it is a personal choice that people make, and we respect that.

The better question—as Hewlett and Luce asked—is it sustainable?

Whether you choose an extreme or regular job (which, today, is looking more and more extreme), we recognize that you are always seeking to reach your potential, to become a sustainable high performer.

If you sink, it is a tragedy, impacting a wide spectrum of life. It is a business tragedy that will impact your co-workers, your team, and your company. And, it is also a personal tragedy since it impacts your spouse, your children, and your personal community.

*“The first time I saw a presentation about Tignum, I was intrigued. For the six months leading up to that day, I had been struggling with burnout. Just two months before, I had gone to my doctor because I was exhausted, couldn’t focus, couldn’t sleep, and couldn’t even remember my assistant’s name. My doctor diagnosed me with acute burnout, put me on sleeping pills, and told me to stop doing all exercise and work for three weeks. This forced check-out was then extended an additional two weeks. When I started working with Tignum, I had been back to work on a part-time basis for just three weeks. It was hard to say that I was back to work, though, because it wasn’t really me, and I wasn’t really productive.*

*I was most interested in Tignum’s total integration approach. It was so different from what my doctor had prescribed. When I showed up for my pre-Tignum program evaluation, my hands were shaking and I was so nervous, not because I was afraid, but because my system was so out of balance.*

*As I proceeded with the different tests, the Tignum staff asked me specific questions about my burnout: Had my doctor talked to me about my mindset and how to manage my thoughts? Had he suggested any nutritional strategies to rebalance my autonomic nervous system? Had he recommended some regenerating movements such as yoga, tai chi, qigong, or stretching? Finally, they asked me if the doctor had given me any relaxation, breathing, or sleep techniques.*

*For a split second my shaking stopped as I grinned and emphatically said, “No, he recommended none of these.” I don’t have to tell you that, in that moment, I realized that the Tignum approach was unique. For the first time, I really felt like there was hope. Hope that I would get well and even more importantly, hope that I could regain my old high performance ways.*

*I won't tell you it has been easy, but I will tell you that once I consistently implemented Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery strategies, I started to feel better. It took me a year, but my hope has turned into positive results. I can tell you that I'm back to a top leadership role, and every day I do something for my own sustainable high performance. I've learned my lesson of not making my own energy and resilience a priority and finally, I am excited about my future."*

*Tignum Client*

At Tignum, we unequivocally believe that every solution must be a total integration of Mindset, Nutrition, Movement, and Recovery strategies. The brain requires high performance nutrition, hydration, and energy to function optimally. It also needs oxygen and neurological stimulation that can only come from consistent movement. In addition, the brain needs rest and regeneration to solidify memory and replenish vital brain chemicals. Finally, when your mindset is optimistic, solution-oriented, confident, focused, creative, and passionate, anything is possible. The mind and body are intractably linked, and one needs the other to achieve sustainable high performance.

It is important to note that the Tignum system is not a medical or health program—our system is based upon a high performance approach. It is the total integration of Performance Mindset, Performance Nutrition, Performance Movement, and Performance Recovery strategies done habitually to improve energy, resilience, brain performance, and capacity to achieve sustainable high performance. This is the Tignum approach, and our clients have proven that it works.

**Do you have strategies that give you energy, resilience, capacity, and high performance when you need it?**

**Will your current habits get you where you need to be tomorrow?**