

# Practical Strategies Online!

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The email and Web newsletter  
on organization and management issues

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In this issue:

Dept. of Work-life Balance

Dept. of New Hire Success

### Dept of Work-life Balance: Seven Steps For Living At Web 2.0 Speed

"If you want to keep speeding up, you also need to learn how to slow down."  
Stewart Brand

Our work lives seem to be moving at warp speed these days. The very technology that was supposed to make things easier has actually speeded things up for us:

- < E-mails must be answered immediately--if not sooner.
- < Everyone always expects us to answer our cell phones and voicemail ASAP--no matter where we happen to be at the time.
- < Everything is due now.

But it ain't easy keeping up with it all. So, how do we slow ourselves down a bit when it seems like time itself has speeded up?

To quote the old tune, "As Time Goes By," the answer is: "the fundamental truths apply." To be honest, there are no new secrets for slowing yourself down and coping more effectively. We need to do the same basic things that we did (or should have done) ten or twenty years ago to

take care of ourselves. Only now, these things are more important than ever to our well being.

But just because these are not "hot" new ideas, I hope you won't ignore them. If you simply take one or two of these tips and put them into practice, I can guarantee that your life will be better for it. You don't need to do all of these; just choose those that work for you.

**1. Set your priorities** -- To use your time wisely, you have to decide what really matters to you. If your only real priority is making your company profitable, then living at Web 2.0 speed most of the time may be somewhat necessary for a finite period. But even so, you still have to learn to slow down just so you can keep up the pace as Stewart Brand so aptly said.

However, if your priorities also include a social/family life, peace of mind and a healthy body, etc., then you've got to make these things important. So, make a list of your priorities and acknowledge that these things matter to you.

**2. Schedule what really matters to you**--The next step is to actually put your priorities on your schedule. Write in special time with your family or regular time at the gym and make it inviolable. If you consider that it's possible to reschedule those things, then invariably emergencies will arise that will force you to do so. Instead, consider this "sacred time" for you and yours.

**3. Intentionally slow things down**--For example, you might buy a large jigsaw puzzle and take your time putting it together. Or you might like to read out loud to your spouse or kids. Make one night a week "media free." Anything that slows down the tempo will work.

**4. Take a "technology fast"**-- Writer Douglas Rushkoff suggests that we take one day on a weekend where you don't check your e-mail or answer your phone, cell phone or pager. You might even consider giving your car a rest given that most people commute up to three hours per day. Let everyone know that you're "off the clock" and then hold to it.

**5. Create transition time** -- Take some time to decompress every day, whether it's sitting quietly, meditating or taking a 10-minute walk outside the office in the middle of the day. You might also listen to some music you like, or books on CDs or NPR (National Public Radio) in the car on the way home instead of worrying about the next day.

One CEO I read about just walks around her office and asks people what they're working on. This allows her to shift her focus and discover some new things in the process.

**6. Set clear boundaries** – It is important that you set clear boundaries with other people in terms of the way that you use the new technology. For example, you might say on your voicemail that you will respond within four hours or tell people the day or days when you won't respond to voicemails the same day. You might add an auto-reply to your email system that informs people that you usually reply to emails in so many hours.

Doing these things will give people realistic expectations about when you will get back to them. And these messages will disabuse them of the notion that you will always reply to them immediately.

**7. Be realistic about your priorities** -- Only so many things can get done in a day. Be realistic about what you can actually do and what you can't. Then you won't push yourself to do the impossible on a daily basis.

A time-honored tool to help you with this is Alan Lakein's classic exercise of prioritizing your daily activities with A's, B's and C's according to their importance and then focusing on the important ones. It can be found in his book, How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life, which was a best-seller before even personal computers existed.

The bottom line is that our bodies, minds and spirits need time to regenerate themselves. These methods work. Try one.

## Dept. of New Hire Success

In a study of over 300 companies, Leadership IQ, a training and research company, reports that almost half of newly-hired employees will fail within 18 months. The study of over 20,000 hires found that 46% failed in the first 1.5 years and only 19% had unequivocal success.

The biggest reason for the failures were the lack of interpersonal skills.

- 26% couldn't accept feedback
- 23% were unable to understand and manage emotions
- 17% lacked the motivation to excel
- 15% had the wrong temperament for the job
- 11% lacked the necessary technical skills

The study also notes that 82% of the hiring managers noticed cues that raised concerns about whether the employee would work out. But they ignored them because they were too focused on other issues, pressed for time or lacked the confidence to trust what they saw.

Leadership IQ's recommendations: focus more on coachability, emotional intelligence, motivation and temperament.

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