Sleep Your Way to The Top

No - I'm not talking about exchanging sexual favors for advancement. I'm talking about how you can use your physical health and vitality to turbo charge your success.

Last night I presented a workshop that was three intense hours long. By the end of it, I was feeling both energized and very tired. It occurred to me, yet again (sometimes I tend to be there a slow learner), that I need to take much better care of myself physically if I am going to be able to be more than a "one hit wonder". In order to truly achieve the magnitude of success that you are capable of, you have to have stamina. You have to be able to find the things you do well and that produce results for you, and then do them over and over and over and over and…

Sleep and rest are two often overlooked tools in your toolbox of success. Most of us (I know this from personal experience) drive ourselves like pack mules in the pursuit of what we want. Here is the problem. Recent research into impaired driving shows that missing as little as one to two hours of sleep over a couple of nights can impair your judgment and reduce your performance as much or more than having your blood-alcohol level over the legal limit. The great (and not so great) thing about us is that humans are masters at adapting. We can get used to almost anything and keep functioning - or so we think.

What actually happens is our conscious mind starts to ignore things that are routine and only pay attention to the new and interesting stuff. Our body, however, still has to deal with the added stress of not getting the fuel it needs to perform at its best. Add to this that, when we are impaired, our judgment is also impaired so we can't even judge how impaired our judgment is. (Congratulations you got through that sentence without your head exploding!) In other words, we have no idea how badly we are underperforming. If we have put in a lot of effort, we think we are doing a great job, BUT OUR JUDGMENT IS IMPAIRED, so we can't really tell (but we don't know that).

I personally have "burned the candle at both ends" - it was what I was told was needed to be successful. When I look back on things, I was doing during those times I am amazed that I got anything done. I was tired and mentally fuzzy most of the time. I had to summon vast amounts of energy just to keep my mindset positive. It took me four to five times longer than usual to get even simple tasks are done. I made mistakes. I missed deadlines and appointments and probably blew my credibility with a number of people. All this on top of the toll it was taking on my health and my little family life. And through it all, I thought I was doing great! Until one day I woke up in a hotel - my head pounding, feeling disoriented and not knowing where I was (don't worry, I eventually figured it out). At that point I had an epiphany: it's much harder to make money or enjoy your success IF YOU'RE DEAD. (See, I told you I could be a slow learner).

So here is the action step for all your quick thinkers:

Get sleep. Adults need an average of 8 hrs. and 13 minutes of sleep to function at their best. Of course, you are going to say that everyone is different so here is how you tell what you need. Start adding half an hour a night every two or three nights until you are consistently getting up before the alarm and feeling rested. Also, it should take you at least 10 minutes to fall asleep once in bed. Anything less than this and you are still sleep-deprived. Notice how you feel during the day and pay attention to how you perform. If you have been chronically sleep-deprived. You will probably feel more tired at first. This is a good sign. It means your body feels safe enough to let you know what is really going on with it. Stay with the process. Your productivity may go down at first but then slowly "hockey stick" (exponential) growth.

This will take some discipline on your part but stick with it. Remember the Synergy. The more you look after yourself the more success you will have AND be able to enjoy.