

# Energetic Leadership

*Build capacity for sustained success.*



by Kevin Cashman

SINCE ENERGY IS A DEFINING characteristic of leadership, how can you generate more energy for leading people in teams and organizations?

One answer is to amp up your “relational energy” by being around other people who have high energy. For example, when asked to comment on their experience in the grueling CEO Ironman Challenge, participating executives often talk of the *relational energy* they gain from their race mates, rather than the *physical energy* drain of the test.

Today, you can’t just be leaders by rank, title, or position—you must be a true leader developed from the inside-out. Your ability to generate and spread energy may be the most telling sign of your leadership. Managers tend to such resources as time, money, and technology. In contrast to these resources, energy is near-limitless—not so constrained by budgets and boundaries and capable of catalyzing great progress.

Energy is the subtext implied in “leading by example.” To lead from a center of values and interests, you must have a spark of passion for or devotion to those ideals. People don’t want to follow flat, motionless direction; what compels them is bold, on-the-move inspiration.

Switching from a time-management to an energetic leadership style requires a whole-person effort in physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual domains.

Energy can emanate from people so powerfully that it reverberates through the culture for years. Consider the ROE (return on energy) of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. Their vigor inspired people to act differently.

## Purpose Drives Energy

To be powerful, energy needs to be rooted in shared meaning. Many people are active or busy, but their energy is misplaced in areas of secondary interest. To lead with purpose, you must take pause, listening to the body, mind and spirit and appreciating the good things in your life. Sometimes simply

reflecting and then writing down your core values and sharing those values with others can focus your energy. The values you discover are likely to be values that are closely held by others.

Purpose effectively focuses and usefully expands energy. As evident in the lives of passionate leaders, a sense of purpose generates great energy. Aligning your energies with your purpose in serving others creates more value in all you do and benefits those you lead.

## Healthy Habits

What’s the secret to being more energetic? Ironically, it’s rest. Sound sleep, meditation, and deep breathing are habits that improve the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life. Nature and its cycles of rest and activity provide a reference point. The interplay of day and night and the seasonal cycles constantly balance a rest phase with an active phase.

You get to choose the quantity and quality of your activity and rest. Choose poorly, and your life is out of whack. Choose wisely, and you gain vitality.

Energy management is largely a matter of elevating the quality while reducing the quantity of your daily activities. Exercising, eating healthy, quitting smoking, and reducing alcohol and caffeine intake are healthy habits. To improve your emotional health, you can practice putting yourself in the shoes of others and better appreciate and express appreciation to others. To care for your mind, you



can access learning resources—from books to conversations to puzzles and other forms of problem-solving. Spiritually, you can reflect more and find trusted resources and communities to search out questions of the soul.

To boost your energy, you don’t need to experience a dramatic transformation—just focus on just one or two well-selected activities and practice them consistently. To gain and maintain high daily energy, you need to cultivate the proper daily habits and state of being. As many CEOs have discovered, deeply-engrained, focused energy is the lifeblood of high-impact leadership. It fosters happiness and optimism, deeper and more proactive thinking, and ultimately brings about more accomplishment with less investment. LE

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**ACTION:** Practice energetic leadership.