

UMBS Leadership Pulse for 03/24/2004 Leadership Results All Industries

Question By Group

Please share your insights about the February findings. (See Summary Above)

Biotechnology

The level of ambiguity is higher than normal at this time. The executives have reached a point of not wanting to push in a direction that may eventually be counter productive. The end result is a higher level of frustration, however a lower level of energy. In some ways reflective of a resignation that it serves no good purpose to continue spinning their wheels.

Energy can be a direct result of morale, which I believe is at an all time low in corporate America. We are all doing much more with less resources and the news isn't getting any better. When things are good economically and the work load is still high, you have reason to push forward and can find motivation in the fact that you see a bright future. All we have seen is layoff after layoff and economic news that has yet to hold promise for us.

There is a need to produce at an increasingly higher level without the appropriate increase in resources. This is primarily due to world tensions that limit commitment from within companies to expand.

The term "energy level" may be too vague or ambiguous to accurately define the daily tug of war between energy and priorities, vision and interest groups. If leaders feel that their energy level is lower than optimal for a day or two, OK, that's why we call it work. If it's a protracted, measurable phenomenon, perhaps they haven't focused their energy and resources on the right targets; or perhaps they don't have enough resources to hit the targets they are assigned; or perhaps their organization needs to find someone else to do the job (i.e. lead, not manage) who is invested and motivated.

I would guess the reported energy levels have to do with the unstable economy. When business is booming, energy levels tend to be high, and we feel very productive when faced with challenging assignments. Conversely, with the uncertainty of the economy, business growth has slowed and a lot of executives are faced with difficult situations and with doing more with less. This can be very draining. It would be very interesting to re-introduce this survey when the economy stabilizes and business begins to experience growth.

Pressure on everyone is high right now. There is uncertainty internationally, but more importantly nationally--security, the economy, culture conflicts, etc. There is uncertainty in the workplace, particularly fueled by the need to do more with less. As a result, the support that comes from a sense of community is reduced, and significantly this is becoming more pronounced. Associated with these business pressures are the pressures around family and relationships, which appear to be under great strain--divorce, family problems, etc. The buffers that used to be there are not as present. Additionally, the speed and complexity of our world are increasing, requiring faster responses with greater likelihood of failure. If you look at the number of people who are "ending well," whether that be their tenure as CEO, senior exec, or manager, you find a tendency that is moving downward. A fairly recent HBR article points to this as does other related research. Keeping positive in this atmosphere is becoming increasingly challenging.

The current media and economic environment makes the opportunity for reward for working harder than everyone else and taking personal financial risks more difficult

Communications

I really don't feel the executives are in tune with the "worker bees". Also, there are those workers who are not completely honest with the executives for different reasons, some of which include fear for their job and not wanting to appear to be "weak".

I believe individuals in organizations are feeling 'battered' by all the downsizing, budget cuts and tight economic times. It's difficult to effectively manage and motivate employees with these difficult conditions.

My belief would be that frustration is driving the feelings of most. Personally I find that I am least productive when I am frustrated because I am having to put so much energy in getting nowhere.

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People are feeling that executive management is not listening to them. People are afraid partially due to the unstable nature of the business and the economy.

The economy

Macroeconomic climate still hasn't shown sustainable recovery, unemployment concerns weigh on everyone

Friction between organizations and the political nature of work can lead to less than optimal organizational situations for each individual.

Good Survey - what are the results?

Unemployment rates and Bush administration politics have sapped the will of management.

two words: "burned out"

frustration and exhaustion

The preventative aspect of energy monitoring appeals to me. I have worked in several advertising agencies that supported very negative behavior and then tried to fix it with single day team building efforts. More frequent energy check-ins both employer/employee is a better approach, not allowing problems to grow.

Assume that means they don't have enough energy to be as productive as they wish they were? Not my case. But I have little or no pressure in my life now at a healthy 62 with no kid or grandkid or family issues.

Results seem consistent with what we are seeing as a company.

This result is consistent with what my colleagues in other businesses are saying. Causes are many, but the most frequent cited is the current political administration, which has created such chaos at so many levels. It's hard to feel energetic and productive when you see so many elements of our society being shredded.

Perhaps the respondents didn't understand the rating. I feel very productive when my energy level is high, but also realize that I cannot maintain this level constantly or I will burn out.

Because I honestly believe that, despite what the Bush administration purports about the economy "getting better", business leaders are not really seeing true improvements in business, they are working harder because Sr. management is trying to squeeze more out of existing employees (rather than hire more people), and these leaders are 'caught between upper management wanting more productivity and good financial results and what can realistically/humanly be done.

We are all having to do a whole lot of multi-tasking. We are asked to do things now, due to hiring freezes, that we did not have to do in the past. This is an energy sucker for two reasons: 1) typically they are tasks that do not stimulate us or challenge us, but are necessary duties or tasks we shed some time ago -- and 2) less time to think, plan, assimilate -- we are much more in action mode i.e. being reactive more than proactive.

I believe it is due to the increased pressures from customers wanting product in a very short period of time with cost reductions as well. We have experienced this phenomenon recently with our largest customers. Forecasting has been thrown out the door and JIT manufacturing is now under great pressures to perform and deliver.

Construction

The answer is both easy and obvious: Enhanced productivity is taking its toll - We are working longer, harder hours; we are now more tired on an ongoing basis.

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Your comment related to the possibility that the pressure of recession and tough competition may be taking its' toll was very interesting.

Very Interesting - I thought I was alone in feeling this way.

Consulting

Winter weather, uncertainty in funding and growth wears people down

Cognitive dissonance between political advertisements and reality

Personally, I've been fighting to keep this business going for three bad years, and I'm burned out, out of energy, wiped out. But the business is going better.

The number of business pressures and their magnitude have significantly increased as a result of global competition, falling dollar, and a lack of true economic growth at home. Cost cutting measures are now going for meat and bone, with expectations of long-term business decline.

It may have to do with the season. Late winter blahs.

I think a lot our customers are sending production to either other parts for the country or out of the country. I don't see a lot of activity in West Michigan for growth. As a result, I think the discouragement is the main force for the lower energy levels.

I think all business leaders are worried about the state of affairs in the world. We don't feel confident in our political leaders and we do not feel safe in our country or the world. The government has taken a position that we are the greatest country and that no one else's views should be respected and because of that the people who think we should try to work things out globally are feeling completely alienated from the government. This translates into stress in their jobs and businesses.

Business was expected to turn up first quarter this year - instead, it has been slower than expected and our clients are telling us that their businesses are not picking up. It is to some extent a forced slowdown. The economy seems to be wondering again.

I'd attribute this to a slight burnout being felt by executives due to many factors. For me, it's having to keep track of too many disparate functions and distractions from increasing information flow. A resulting lack of focus is draining and not productive.

I wonder if people are disillusioned with the speed of recovery, the pace of work, the challenges of leadership still remaining. For myself, I can honestly say that the pace seems to increase steadily without seeming to deliver significant results given the pace.

None.

COuld be seasonal - post holidays/winter blahs

Demands on time from many sources may also be wearing folks down

WOrld and US news have harly been energizing lately as well

Perhaps because their performance is not up to their expectations and so, they rationalize that if they just have a bit more energy, they would be more (most) productive.

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Little to no discretionary time.

Did NOT get results.

If I fully understand what you are positing, then, ipso facto, energy is the highest, when one walks through the door in the morning: They have had all night for their minds (cf. cognitive studies at MIT and maybe Harvard) to resolve knotty issues, they should have decided on what items on their To Do List to achieve right away, the blood sugar levels should be high (not falling off, as after lunch), and they have yet to be assailed by the myriad problems to be thrown at them.

More is being demanded during these 'down' times. Leaders are stretched to provide more accountability to regulators and shareholders alike. A lot of companies are also close to a breaking point -- make or break very soon if the economy does or does not rebound. Last, it can be fatiguing keeping a company poised to rebound with the 'pounce' seemingly always another quarter away...

This might be a circular question and answer - perhaps if energy level is high already you are productive. If your energy level is low you are less productive. Does being productive increase motivation? I would say yes, but it is the onset of the energy that is most important.

The oscillations are more frequent with higher peaks and lower valleys... compression over time reduces rebound elasticity and recovery potential.

I haven't any.

The increase in responsibilities outside of our most productive areas due to decrease in support people, increase in their search for new profit areas.

I think many are both very tired and also frustrated at the slow rate of real change in economic progress and overall opportunities for faster growth.

Executives/leaders would likely experience "burn-out" if they operated at the higher level too often.

They helped me

I didn't participate in the last survey, but I have some thoughts about possible reasons for that. I think it's the sign of the times.

It's been a while since 9/11, largely without any resolution. There is a significant amount of stress- an unconscious stress that terrorism creates that we have never had to deal with in the US- not really. Not until now. We never even thought about it- at least I didn't.

That kind of stress saps energy. I also think the stress of the financial times, at least in California, is also energy sapping- We are all suffering from depression- no one can find good support staff, people don't care about work ethic or quality- A thousand things a day are demanding our attention and energy-

I think it is in the zeitgeist at the moment. There is so much uncertainty in global politics and in the economy...and we know--whether we admit it or not--that the ways that were successful in the past, even the recent past, are not what is called for now.

Like the economy (good when there is confidence, poor when there is no confidence), the zeitgeist is composed of all of us. We can change it if we choose to. Not in a mystical way, in our practical day-to-day thoughts and actions.

Business exhaustion; weariness. Leaders get worn down when they hit the "failure wall" too many times. Energy levels are higher when we are on the street looking for business or mergers. Then leaders get caught in the drudgery of

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producing, burn out slightly, and go on to new challenges, with higher energy levels.

Too much workload, horrible work/life balance. Productivity takes precedence over brain-iac functions. Pitiful state of affairs.

The world and national stages are filled daily with stories of dangerous, threatening behavior by our leaders and their enemies. It's enough to take the stuffing out of even the most weather-hardened veterans.

The economic issues of recession and jobless recovery are particularly troubling and little leadership is being demonstrated by any visible player in solving these problems.

Instead, billions are being spent on a police action in Iraq.

How long can we sustain this?

Perhaps the circumstances of the samples influenced the results to some degree. For example, when you refer to "what you see in most organizations, where leaders often rate themselves at a higher energy level...", are they in a more relaxed atmosphere? Versus this venue, where day-to-day pressures might affect the responses.

They resonated with me. I shared them with others. Not quite sure what this means.

There are lots of external forces at work right now, and the continued war in Iraq, the economy, and the continual lies being received from the current administration has left me with a feeling of despair. We are no longer a government of the people.

Most are asked to multi-task on multiple levels without resource support. Consequently, I expect their energy to be drained rather than invigorated by this. This is sustainable for some period of time, however, it becomes draining after a while.

I believe I responded that my energy level and productivity level were comparable. I don't know why people would feel otherwise.

Silly question: are the two groups truly comparable? Perhaps those of us who reply to the survey are either more beleaguered or have positions of influence but not power (in tough times, it's folks without true power who suffer more psychically, as you know).

Engineering

We have been high energy in order to be productive for so long, are tired. The work load is very demanding and tiring.

I wonder if it could be weather based. Many of us in the northern part of the country see February as a bad month. You are ready for spring and it's still a long way off.

State of the economy - its defeating morale - although strategies, efforts are in place - one must constantly worry where the next job will come from and how we can hold on to our staff to sustain business - costs keep rising, ability to pay salaries, costs to acquire business are high - frankly again it's draining on purely an emotional level.

From my perspective today's leaders are bogged down with the day to day operations that are necessary to deal with the lower economic conditions. This lowers energy levels three ways:

1. There is little time to give to more creative thinking.
2. The depressed and uncertain economy are taking their toll on how leaders see themselves and their companies in the future.
3. Necessary reductions in the workforce is putting additional burden on leaders. They now find themselves taking on

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responsibilities that they previously were able to hand over to middle management.

Concern for the future and the need to have tighter reins on the bottom line have put additional pressure on leaders. This is bound to take a toll on energy levels.

Those who are rating their energy higher than their most productive level probably have large staffs onto which they can dump their workload, or they are just lying out of fear that their responses will somehow get back to their superiors. The continuous pressure to do "more with less" tends to lead to less sleep as well, leading to my consciously cynical response above.

The Feb. findings may reflect the understanding that high level energy may mean that adrenaline takes over which ultimately may result in mistakes being made.

Already did by e-mail.

I don't have anything on which to base an analysis of why you found a different result than is usually the case. It does occur to me that the increasingly parlous condition of the economy, and the work involved in maintaining and increasing productivity, is wearing down and tiring organization leaders.

The current recovery has a high level of uncertainty about it. People are most energetic and productive when they are working towards something. Current requirements for leadership require a fair amount of defensive strategy - what do you do when you don't meet your goals? It's also less energizing when the outside environment has a huge influence on whether you can make progress while you only have a small amount of influence on the forces operating outside of your business.

First let me ask this question. Did you develop the survey to support a hypothesis that high energy equates to high productivity? With myself, my energy level doesn't necessarily dictate my productivity level, it does effect my attitude!

65% top line-84% bottom line for FY03. Brought the year in. Much more regulated environment-Sarbanes Oxley, many recent accounting changes and more on the horizon dealing with stock options, plant closure, revenue recognition, SOX 404. Very little timely guidance from regulatory agencies. Overwhelmed with magnitude of effort to comply.

The news media can effect my moods if I pay too much attention to their constant banter. Elections are too prevalent for too many months.

We have just been through a very tough time... downsizing, lower business levels, bleak outlook etc. - all while still cranking out new products at a very high rate. This is all very "energy sapping" stuff. Now that things appear to be improving, the main question is "For how long?". The prospect of better business levels is exciting and motivating and adds to the energy level. But the starting energy deficit and uncertainty of the recovery tend to still "sap" a great deal of energy.

Part of the answer could be the leaders are becoming burned out from the last 2-3 year economic downturn which has sapped their energy while trying to provide solutions to stabilize the bottom line and hold on to their best producers. There has been excessive stress and tension on the leaders to be ethically and politically correct causing emotional strain.

Too much knowledge (e.g., the true state of the company) causes much sleepless nights. Thus low energy levels...

Efforts must = results in order to sustain the peak energy level. Competition seems to be more cut-throught and less professional.

The energy level is low due to uncertainties caused by political, social, and international environment.

Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate

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For Public companies, the end of January marks the finalization of 2003 results. Take a breath and a break and get ready for 2004. Intensity begins to rev up for 2004 in March.

I think some of the issue is that everyone I know is more stretched than ever before; we've made ourselves too accessible; we live in a world that expects instant responses; we have few resources; more time-intensive strategies and projects that we're implementing, etc.

When a task comes up they are enthusiastic about, they are probably at a high energy level. After the task is complete and they return to routine duties, this could be a let down causing their energy level to decrease.

I think it is the time of the year. We have just finished the end of the year push and the holiday season so pressures in our personal lives probably add to the fact that we had to finish up the end of the year goals at work. You need to have a small time to recover and gear up for the coming year.

Doing more with less takes a long term toll on people. Boards are more demanding in terms of results and at the same time concerned about documentation issues that drains productivity.

For me it relates to the lack of resources that were available last year. Tough to get pumped about your job when you don't have the funds to execute strategic initiatives.

One turns on the steam when in a crisis. I would imagine that this would register with many as having a higher energy level - the sort you get when your adrenaline is pumping. However being in crisis mode for a long time doesn't work - your energy just can't keep up that level. With those who've been trying to keep their companies afloat for several years now, they've probably run out of adrenaline and the exhaustion is catching up with them.

Government

We're government. Since it's a presidential election year, the possibility of change at the top makes for additional inertia, on top of the usual resistance to innovation. The adminis-trivia takes up more time than the substantive work. That doesn't lend itself to productivity.

I can only add my personal perspective: high productivity is energizing due to the clear line of sight between work and results. Periods of low productivity tend to create situations where I am spinning my wheels which saps energy.

I believe you received the results that you did because many of us were finishing up with year-end projects and also starting the strategic planning for short-term goals in 2004; sort of "burning the candles at both ends".

One is the time of year. With a long cold winter and no breaks, everyone is tired and feeling drained. Secondly, many of the people around me are finding that work demands have picked up but all of the outside activities that people have volunteered for have also picked up. Consequently there is demand from all sectors and people are feeling frustrated that they can't seem to respond to all the demands.

my experience is that high energy levels don't necessarily equate to high productivity in executives. Decisions might be made too quickly, without all of the facts, mistakes might be made...energy and enthusiasm are wonderful when properly channeled.

No comment

Information Technology

Speaking for myself, though I know the feeling is shared by many in my organization, the energy required to perform at the level expected/desired on a very full plate and maintain some kind of work/life effectiveness is difficult to sustain for

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long periods of time with out feeling drained

Economic and competitive conditions are not good so I and my team are working harder to get the same of lower results. We are all exhausted.

didn't do survey

There is a weariness creeping in. The economy is still sluggish and most executives are not seeing high growth prospects. The uncertainty of what promises to be a contentious election year and concerns about terrorism, the war in Iraq, etcetera have dampened the collective conscience.

Our energy level is extremely high and motivated.

I was somewhat surprised considering all of the positive remarks about the economy heard in the press these days. Since we have seen only a modest upturn in activity at this point, the constant news of strong economic recovery has been making me question whether I was doing the right things for our company. I believe that the findings show that many others feel the same way. Perhaps this means we are doing better than we thought.

The sluggish economy is reflected in the leadership. When you realize that the chances of hard work resulting in a true upswing in business - it saps energy. Sort of a "why bother?" feeling.

Discouragement

Interesting - in that my experience is that when growth is needed the execs work the hardest? No insight into the reasons.

Executives strapped to complete the required tasks while at the same time having to support numerous initiatives -- we are resourced constrained to meet required actions.

An ever increasing number of areas of responsibility loaded onto an individual manager will naturally create a situation where their personal feeling of productivity will be lower and they feel that they are expending more energy just trying to hit the priority items.

Due to the shear volume of tasks to be done. I do get overwhelmed at times which probably saps my enthusiasm.

Most companies experienced unprecedented growth in the 90's followed by recession. Doing more with less has become the norm and executives are being pressured to increase market share and profit during an erratic economic period. The turn-a-round for the economy has been slow and the grind continues, sapping energy without the euphoria of sky rocketing profits and the rewards associated with big gain. Additionally, the job market has not rebounded - if you are not successful, finding another position will not be an easy task.

This surprises me too. I was not conscious of my own response indicating anything specific at the time. My subjective impression is that I am personally at an optimal energy level. It's possible that very high energy levels were perceived as being associated with burn-out and, therefore, a reluctance to acknowledge that condition.

obviously, we leaders are doing too much to keep our companys alive during this economic crunch and we are tired.

Weather in Northeast has been colder and rainier than I like it;
it interrupted my walking routine.

The outlook for the next several months is muddled so people are not aggressively charging into new directions and initiatives.

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Observation is that the current market is stalled. Breeding frustration and further delays.

The overall economy and the overall state of capricious management coming out of the white house is completely demotivating. We can deal with terrorism, we can deal with a bad economy, we can deal with a good economy, but it is hard to deal with presidential stupidity and incompetence.

i would question the data-outcome is counterintuitive and not what i have personally exoerenced or observed-maybe the questions were not clear

You feel less energetic and less productive when you are battling uphill. Optimism will negate this perception.

I think it may relate to repition based boredom. For example, I am very good at work out situations. So I have a consulting business that gravitates to these types of challenges in IT environments. Often, I find that it takes very little activity to fix what are considered major problems, but that I have to marshall a great deal of energy to make my self do these minimal activities. I've done it so often that I get bored before I get effective. While the 'problem definition' changes with technology, the fix is always the same.

Personally, I think that the overall macroeconomic issues facing our economy are very depressing, and as such, this could be one of the main causes of your findings such that most of the leaders in your study reported to be at energy (or motivation) levels lower than where they are most productive.

I also think that even true blue Republicans are starting to acknowledge, even if it is privately, that this is due to the Bush Administration's failing economic policies of huge tax cuts, growing and record setting deficits, continued trade deficits, uncertain world markets, etc.

Specifically, I think that most leaders see a repeat of when President Bush's father was in office and the economy continued to falter for some time until the administration was changed with President Clinton's election.

I think that many organizations are going through massive changes to incorporate the productivity changes that are being so widely reported. At least in IT technology, where I work, the upside opportunity is often not as great, while expectations have increased.

I think that, faced with increased market opportunities combined with fewer resources (otherwise known as productivity), leaders are feeling tired just imaginging the next 9 months of work...

My energy level was better so I am not in sync with the trend.

I did not take the last leadership pulse question.. However my company did best when I worked very hard on projects at customer sites outside of the office, this happened more than once. Perhaps the leaders felt less energetic and motivated, where not in the office, but the office thought they were doing something productive for them and worked harder? (I, of course, was doing productive work for them and the growth of the company :-)

I think many of us are tired of fighting the battle of jobs going overseas, downsizing and are worried over how we are going to survive. That takes a lot out of you and effects the productivity.

It seems to me that lower energy levels would not equal productivity. Productivity requires effort thus more energy. Unless, I have misunderstood the findings above. Then again, it could be that technology has reduced the effort required thus resulting in a lower energy level.

This contrast could result from the age, also from the fact that energy levels are lower when there is a recession, because there is so much strategizing and reorganizing from leaders that they might not be as "productive" because so much time is spent thinking.

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I would believe that the energy levels at most companies would vary dependent upon the cycles of their fiscal year. For instance most executives would have a higher level of energy at the crunch time or the end of a quarter or end of a fiscal year. I know that after the end of year the beginning of the new year is often times a view up at another mountain, a start over and often times the momentum will need to build, also budgets are new and spending is held back and used as the year progresses.

World events are weighing on everyone.

In today's "do more with less" economic and business philosophy, combined with an expanded workday and work week, due to a globalization of commerce, and quicker and more extensive access, which demands, or at least expects, a more timely response, Managers and workers are required to work more, while watching the workload increase rather than decrease which leads to a physical and mental energy drain. Just my opinion.

Manufacturing

Only a guess, but coming off this long recession many managers are just plain "burned out". I agree that to operate at too high an energy level is not optimal productivity, but after 18 months or more of operating at very high energy levels required to combat a major manufacturing recession, managers feel like they have been banging their heads against the wall. After a few months of a recovering economy, which will make managers feel that all their work is finally paying off, and this attitude will revert back towards the norm.

There should be a lot of anxiety in the future of their business due to the present world situation especially with the threats of terrorism.

Thus business leaders tend to calm down their enthusiasm by themselves to expand their business rapidly.

no insights

Sarbanes-Oxley, corporate boards that are feeling their way along the new governance trail, public scrutiny all create energy draining stress.

The continued lag in the creation of jobs in today's economy adds to the workload. Additionally, my company is going through major reorganization which adds additional stress and burden to already overworked employees. All of these factors contribute to an overall lower level of enthusiasm (enthusiasm equates to energy).

I believe the work demands on executives are potentially reaching a point of diminishing returns.

I think that the current business climate has taken a toll on executives both in terms of length of the downturn as well as the new era of structural change leading to more global competition.

You can be very productive (by doing fast and well the right things). However, if the content of the job isn't rich or challenging, you might be working at lower levels for this only reason..

The economy has been down for a long time. We keep hearing that recovery is here but we just do not see it. To defend profits we continue to cut costs, this is a very draining process and we know that it is short term. We are just tired!!!

Could be that your definitions of both productivity and energy level were insufficient for the respondent to differentiate. When I completed my Ph.D., I recall the biggest threat to research validity was the failure of the researcher to put directions in a layman's terms. Could be you want to pilot the terms on a group of non-academics.

I think all companies are trying to do more with less. The result is that everyone is just simply running out of gas. When we ask everyone to do more with less, there has to be some residual effect somewhere down the line. This is probably the reason for the decline in energy.

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Today, most of us are doing the work of several people. I have "roles" that five years ago were done by 4 people. I also find that with the downsizing of other groups, and the "automation" that has occurred in some functions, I have to personally do more administrative functions, with tools that save time for accounting, but require me to input information.

The downsizing of IT support and outsourcing has lead to a constant stream of PC support people who don't know a lot about pc's. They operate by rote and checklist, and it leads to a loss of productivity for me and my colleagues.

I am pulled in many directions and triage is difficult. I am already doing what is important.

I think that this leads to a constant sense of urgency, coupled with frustrations because there are too many non-value added but required tasks. Your adrenaline kicks in too much, from frustration, and from urgency.

The result is fatigue, and a loss of the ability to kick it up a notch.

Perhaps because with the down economy, leaders energy has taken a hit after working on issues to minimize the impact but have not been as successful as they hoped

Due to business environment, economic conditions, and the need to do more with less has been a battle cry for awhile now. It is difficult to be at your highest when you feel underappreciated and undervalued for what you have already been doing. Top level leadership needs to come forth with a rally cry and strategic plan how to survive in these tough times.

Low energy levels are the result of having to do more with less. Cutbacks in personnel are rampant, employees have extra workload. Less money to work with. All this results in depressing work times.

Because the last three years have been very tough on business and you get tired of working hard with little positive results.

A lot more Government in their lives than necessary (HIPPA, Sarbanes-Oxley, USA Patriot Act, etc.)

Not enough data to provide response.

I think it is a combination of the economy and the weather. It has been a long, hard winter for many parts of the country. The economy is not growing at expected levels. I think people in general are feeling listless.

This is easy. We are overworked to beyond where our usual high level of energy and enthusiasm can cope. It's the difference between an extra boost of energy being needed to climb the hill and feel the thrill Vs the needle pegged at redline pulling up a steep grade with no end in sight.

I'm suffering from depression, which often affects my energy level. I find that the lower the energy, the more likely I am to make mistakes. Sadly, this tends to make the depression deepen.

I can only speak to why my energy level is below the most productive level, not at or above the productive level.

In my case it involves our company and our struggles over the past 2 years to find a strategic vision, and act on it. We have bounced around, initiated 2 re-organizations and are about to have another. My energy/motivation level now has bottomed out, I find it more difficult to "carry the torch" when the company vision and core business units are changing. It also makes it difficult to motivate my staff as they see change as negative, and there are constant concerns about job losses. Where once the idea of a re-org could be a positive action for the company, lately it just signals more layoffs and lack of overall vision.

they are producing in pain; meaning, they might be able to get work done, but they have no energy to do it, but force themselves to do it b/c it must be done b/c no one else is left to do anything.

I think the last few years have taken a toll on people in all areas of the organization, including executives. It has been a

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long haul, overwhelming at times and the work load is consistantly more than any one person can manage. It burns people out. They lose all energy. So they are at an energy or motivation level that is lower than where they are most productive.

With today's expectations of constantly having to do more with less, there is an "expectation" that we have to be constantly doing something or working on something. This leads a person to feel less productive. With the uncertainty of the economy the growing fears of what is happening next make anxiety grow as well causing us to feel less sure of where we are and thus less productive.

I can only answer for myself. My energy level gets zapped when I do work that is non-productive (or work I don't find to be either fulfilling or value added). I will have high energy, then get stuck doing non-productive work, and it takes my energy away to do the work on which I need to be most productive. Chicken & Egg.

We are being beaten down by a variety of factors, the much hyped turnaround in the economy and world situations are not happening-things appear to be worsening our own customers are using use to beat one another up on prices and move jobs off-shore. We cannot compete with labor costs below minimum wage...people have started to think if manufacturing is leaving the US what is left ? The answers for the short-range is devastating; were will our already marginalized workers go ? What will they do? The inability to compete will demotivate leaders.

With business so slow, I am spending time doing things that I would not usually do, such as respond to so many surveys. I am answering a dozen of them this week alone. That leads to a sense of non-productivity in the area of our core purpose. However, in the long-term, those actions may lead to information that increases productivity once business picks up.

I believe that we have been working so hard for so long without seeing our efforts affecting a change that it beats us down.

Might be due to the fact that people hold back for when then need to give it thir all and that just wasn't currently required. Also, Survey could have been filled out at a time of day when things are winding down, etc.

In my industry, the level of regulations requiring extra paperwork often keeps us from being as productive as we might be. Another factor is that the machines we use never sleep.

1. These are cold, internet-based surveys that allow the respondent to tell the truth without being judged by the questioner!
or

2. We respondents have nothing better to do than answer blind surveys, and therefore feel unproductive about the things in our business lives that are REALLY important!

Hey - you asked.

In the Manufacturing Sector, companies tend to hold on to existing workers even if greatly reduced productivity results. This is because the training costs for new workers is high. This is especially true for machinists and technical staff.

These are subjective answers that are influenced by their environment, job type, personality profiles and a host of variables that make the results suspect. You may need to define the respondents more closely. Why lower than when most productive? subjective reflection, emotionally influenced???

This affect may be the result of longer hours, larger workloads, and lower employment levels.

Personnel are taking on additional loads and levels of responsibilities. Working at those levels over an extended period of time will drain energy levels.

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In our organization are thin in the ranks of senior level leadership and our energies are taxed by the workload. We don't lack motivation, just the energy to do justice to all the opportunities and challenges we have.

I know that personally, I am so busy that whether my energy level is high or not, I have to be productive. My motivation is being the company owner, so at ANY energy level, I have to be productive. Does that make sense?

Simply put everyone is just overworked. Actual productivity could be higher and more jobs could be created if Americans took more time off (like the Australians). Northern European countries appear to be well positioned for ongoing globalization - they invest heavily in education, work hard, yet they take more vacation time than American counterparts.

Due to the uncertainty of the business world, things seem to drag on rather than come to immediate conclusion. Part of motivation is getting things done and progressing on the the next challenge. Energy levels are drained by lack of progress!

Could it be related to it being February, a generally grey and dismal month?

energy in the work place is as much or more a matter of attitude as it is physical condition. The environment around is not lending itself to "postive vibes" so self perception of energy level is going to in the negative.

When a worker, at any position, has low energy level, it would most probably due to lack of challenges, excitement, or growth opportunities on the job.

Too much time and effort is spent dealing with non-productive compliance issues. Workers' Comp, managing healthcare issues, government regulations, and other issues require my attention, but drain more energy than they produce measurable results.

I believe that technology is demanding that we react and respond with less creative opportunity. We have to fit into parameters designed for expediency and this diverts energy to left side brain function. Creativity is not called upon as frequently, thus our overall level of energy is reduced.

The economy is not getting better like we believed it would or people said it would.

I believe the tasks of leadership in this global economy are often beyond the known capabilities and experience of many leaders and this complexity lead to a sense of loss of control. Leaders are busier now than ever but the tasks don't yield as tangible results leaving leaders sapped of energy!

I believe there are a large number of factors - stagnant stock market, little job growth, worries over outsourcing, inevitability of medicare/social security cuts and increased costs, Mid East conflicts, high gas prices - that contribute to a general level of worry that is hindering enthusiasm. My company is experiencing a record month in sales but my concern for the future of my family, business and country remains quite serious.

I believe that when energy levels are "high" this tends to be a response to high input levels. A lot of data, demands on time, and other things "pulling" at your sleeve tend to raise awareness and activity.

This is not necessarily productive activity. When you have time to analyse and implement ideas and policies, which are considered more productive, the results are more positive than just "doing and reacting."

An almost "frantic" pace does not mean the outcomes are meaningful. Executives become more "doers" rather than managers. This results in a drop in meaningful executive decision making.

Perhaps most exicutives are feeling a bit overworked right now. There are quite a few unusual stresses on many businesses and the future is cloudy for many. This may make them feel unable to focus on the things that they enjoy doing the most, and so the feel less productive.

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That was not my response. However, when I look at the issues and personal responsibilities placed on leaders today many may not be equipped to take them on. Too many may have grown up with "me first" attitude and current responsibilities do not support that.

Not surprising to me that energy level is down during a mild recession.

I did not provide any input in the Feb. LPQ.

I believe it is related to the amount of work that is incoming into the business arena. Given the fact that productivity is higher per individual worker subjects us all to a drain on our resources rendering us lagging behind on finishing the amount of work at hand. This is to say that yes we are more productive yet we are not able to finish all the work at hand hence the feeling exhaustion creeps in and one feels at a lower energy level.

For many print company leaders the past 3 years have been a constant struggle to maintain volume and profitability. The volume contraction with commensurate staff reductions has led to levels of depression effecting the energy level.

For the past several years there has been, lets say a lack of executive support by Directors and investors. This in turn has made the executives feel the need to push ourselves past the point of peak performance. I can only speak for myself but, I took a 50% pay cut 2.5 years ago, I have not take a vacation day in that same time frame and now that I am back up to my original pay scale and have been for a year my company has given me a 30% pay cut now. I work an average of 11 hours a day at the office, and I am available 24/7. This is my personal example but I think it can be applied to many of the tired overworked executives in America today. We have families and need the jobs. We are affraid to push back and get the respect we deserve.

Working hours per week are 65 plus. Stress levels are high. When vacation time comes around, it is hard to utilize them and we need this time to get away. Instead of taking a two week vacation, vaction is used one or two days at a time. This does not allow enough time to regenerate energy levels to the productive state. It is a downward spiral that ultimately leads to burnout or poor productivity.

frustrated with economic direction and leadership

Not-For-Profit Agency

(1) I can safely state that the executives are getting worn down from all the hype of an economic/manufacturing recovery (i.e., the jobless one!) that really hasn't trickled down to imnprove our enthusiasm and outlook for a bright future!

(2) Feb. Energy levels should have been compensated for the initial higher levels they reported in January, which were due to folks returning rejuvenated to work after the holiday/festival season - in Feb, reality sank in!

Perhaps leaders who responded are feeling a bit overwhelmed and that reduces their energy level somewhat as well as their ability to feel they are as productive as they should be. But this is only conjecture....

Living in a northern climate, I traditionally find my energy level lower in late winter(February)when I tire of the snow, cold, and short daylight hours.

I believe that most leaders are really stretched to do more with less. In today's very competitive economy, we are all taking on tasks that used to be tasks that could have been delegated to other. Since money is tight, we now do our own work and the work of others as well. Also, I would be interested to know the ages of the "leaders" who are being surveyed. A personal opinion that I hold is that "baby boomers" such as I, have a higher work ethic than other upcoming generations. Therefore, we tend to pick up the slack for others and this makes up tired.

It could be linked to bonus checks...or lack of them. Workloads are increasing, but the rewards are less tangible than in years past.

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Survey needs to take into account the time of year the survey is conducted. December is rushing to get everything done before Christmas and then January we are rushing to try to catch up.

All the hype about the "growing economy" doesn't seem to be borne out in employment growth or retained earnings. My impression is most of us are trying to wring more savings out of a dry turnip. Cost cutting is generally an anti-motivator in my experience.

It is the drive of the organization. Sometimes the engine keeps on working and it takes to the places you've planned for--it's more than one person, it's the machine, the system, the flow of process by which we all are hooked into.

Those that have demonstrated a high energy level draw in more and more taskings, which drain from the productivity and eventually the energy level. The old adage of "if you want something done, give it to a busy man (woman)" may have held true until the saturation point is reached and now that person has been overwhelmed.

I assume that it may have to do with the current financial/economic situation that many of us are facing.

Aging of the experienced leadership population

I think these are just complex and tough times and they have been since 9/11. Cumulative burnout.

When you are working hard but not on satisfying tasks or are working without a strategic direction, your energy level is lower than optimum. Burnout is less about volume sometimes, and more about too many priorities and thus a scattered approach to the workday.

Other

Business is very cutthroat right now. People who once felt secure and confident are tired of looking over their shoulder and worrying if they will have a job next week or not. There is a constant pressure to improve every aspect of one's business performance. If sales, delivery, quality, profit, efficiency, everything must improve.

It seems to me that many of our leaders, and management in general have lost what Dr. Demming called "the joy of work". That many leaders[managers] feel what they do has little impact on the results of the big picture. Instead of fostering the motivational factors that spur one on to peak performance, we encourage the 'don't make waves' theory of work. This is in complete contrast to one being able to use their full potential.

inability to focus.

overworked, not enough staff or funding for staff, so have to do more tasks

I may be energized by what is going on (jazzed, working on overdrive and really motivated) but that does not make me effective or productive. Planned, strategic measured tasks aren't sexy but they are effective

Your survey is right most leaders do feel Lower energy due to several factors, unstable markets, political inconsistency, economy being still in tumbles.

I think we're tired. We're still pulling out of a slump, and for many of us the slump isn't completely over -- there's a lot of baggage we're carrying from a couple of really bad years, both financially and in terms of our companies' internal morale.

Also, though business is up, it's not way up.

Add to this some degree of doubt about the future, and you have a reason to feel low on energy. There's nothing to spark extreme optimism. Even the promising new technologies (which is what we do) seem to be fraught with peril. We can't always see how to make money, even when the technology is likely to be a major success.

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workload and stretching resources

It's taken so much energy and time to get to the income level where we are now that we're somewhat worn out. Also, we need to hire more people and just haven't identified the right ones yet.

The past several years have been stressful for leaders who have seen their teams diminish in size and businesses suffer. Leaders are going to be cautious and careful rather than bold and energetic until momentum builds over a period of time.

Retail Trade

Impact of Sarbanes Oxley and other regulations on public companies.

My sense from talking to people is that many are just tired of work. The issue of work/life balance is no longer theoretical or just something they apply to their organizations, but exempt themselves from. People do want to stop and spend time elsewhere but they can't figure out how and it leads to a lower energy level at work simply because they would rather not be there so much. The entire country needs a sabbatical.

Over the last 2 years I have think the stress of the economy, war on terrorism and fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan are affecting all of us. Many business are working with key members or family members of there team called up on active duty. It makes work harder to do when you have fewer resources or your key people are focus on other needs then getting their work done.

As more troops come home and the economy improves I think this will change. But in the mean time it will continue to affect most business.

A lot of the problem with me is that we have been inondated with regulatory changes in the areas of safety and taxes as well as client requirements. There is a lot of shot gunning going on and very little logical thought. This coupled with the uncertainty of economics in our industry and security drags you down.

Services (other than consulting)

It is possible the energy levels are connected to the lower level of daylight (exposure to sunlight) due to shorter daylight in winter. Health studies have found a correlation to feeling more energized, active, motivated in spring and summer to fall months as opposed to winter months

I think it is stress with the current economic environment.

I see the last year as having been very tough, though many firms had significant success. Unfortunately, the political and economic situations are foreboding of a pretty tough road ahead. When you did the survey last, I think people were getting tired, and in need of some good news that would spark some enthusiasm. Instead, everyone is talking about a 'hard, long slog'.

Another way of seing it is that business leaders are working evry hard to make the economy successful, but a lot of people, including politicians and market analysist seem to be doing their best to make it more difficult. I think energy levels will be back up as soon as the jobless rate goes down.

I know that in my organization a lot of us are "zapped". Financially speaking most organizations have been at a low time for the last couple of years. Everyone is trying to do more with less. We are all tired. It is exhausting to continue to watch a company lose profits, and try to remain positive and energetic.

Are most of your respondents HR leaders? If so, I have 2 theories:

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1. As an HR professional, I am most comfortable with a highly fluid, highly dynamic, changing environment in which I need to juggle multiple priorities. Often this produces high stress in other types of senior execs, but HR leaders thrive on it. I am actually bored when the company and workforce are stabilizing and no new issues or initiatives are underway. I am optimal when there are company crises in which I play a significant role. Perhaps the finding is an indication that companies are stabilizing.

2. My second theory is that HR professionals are used to dealing with tough issues surrounding "human behavior" as opposed to "analytic business issues". Issues that business executives may find "energy consuming" may be the same issues HR staff find "energy generating". Again, when there are few "energy generating" issues to address, I become more bored and feel that I am less productive.

For me it is a simple issue of having too much on my plate and working too many hours which does not give me time to rejuvenate.

NO WORK LIFE BALANCE

Personally, the economic downturn hit our industry extremely hard and things have not turned around yet. This continues to be a factor in my motivation, productivity and energy level.

Maybe they are bored with the job and perhaps life in general. The world has a way of emasculating men and leaving women lonely and wondering where all the real men have gone. Many people lack a true sense of purpose and adventure in life

None, probably worth doing some qualitative work on this apparent inconsistency.

Let's take Iraq as an example. All we hear is about the bombs, deaths and other negative events. Why isn't anyone talking about the fact that oil from their wells are flowing again, their seaport is open once again, an interim landmark constitution is in place, etc.? In other words, in general, our society is focused on the negative events instead of adding some balance of positive things. This affects people personally and they feel drained. I am not suggesting "feel good" news, I am suggesting that if we start talking about what's right (i.e. ONLY 5.5% unemployment, best housing stats EVER, lowest interest rates EVER, etc.) in the world and at home people might feel more positively energized and motivated.

I think that the current economic/political/world situation is having an impact on the entire business community. Uncertainty can set up a 'negative energy field' that can be difficult to overcome.

I see this often in my work as a Small Business Coach - business owners/managers begin to accept the status-quo rather than reach for their ultimate goal because they have become convinced that the goal is unreachable.

In today's world economic climate, we may be reaching 'critical mass' and feeling that our most productive levels are not longer available to us.

Facing tougher challenges - it has been a long couple of years - scratching and clawing for every dollar and % of profit. It wears you down.

Motivation appears to be higher when there is proof of accomplishment, as in production.

Doing more with less resources results in overworked, tired people?

I find that I am most productive when the sun is shining & I've had a good morning. That is; when the beginnings of my day are full of sunshine & I've had my coffee/ VitaMix chock full of sunshine filled veggies/fruits, the drive in isn't oppressive & the stuff sitting on my desk when I arrive isn't full of gloom & doom. If I can make it to my desk without six people moaning or otherwise whispering about any ruckus that's happened since I went home the previous evening. I don't need to know what our stock is doing the moment I set foot in the building & no, I'm not interested in who is tickling

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whom in the supply larder.

When my energy level is high, so is my creativity level; when both of those things are high the day simply flies by; things are attended to; dead-ends are accomodated into cul-de-sacs & my outlook positively energizes my team; most of them. There are some who will never motivate unless the news is bad & I cannot help them, thankfully.

I believe that the constant availability brought about by email and cell phones is exhausting and reduces energy levels. It reminds me of the overtime problem where long hours over an extended period actually results in lower productivity.

Typical

We have too much stress, wear too many hats, have to make too many quick decisions, too many meetings, too much email - I feel all of these factors can be de-energizing.

On the whole, I find our clients are at extreme levels of frustration re: the "task(s) at hand"; the lack of staff to achieve objectives and the level of achievement expected from them. All are areas we see seem to point to the fact you can't perform at the ideal energy level when you are too tired to or don't have the time to re-charge the batteries.

David Paschall

Most productivity takes place after a company is successful on a bid/RFP. The drudge work of selling or marketing is extermley tiring and as a CEO part of our job description is cheerleader and crative salesmen ship. These jobs are tough on staff and tiring on management. Our economy has been robust but jobless, which equates into no revenue for us or staff. There is no bonus as there is no dollars tor reward. Basically it is a circle and wears down the management and leadership. You want to go to meetings where you can share but are afraid to becuase you have to keep marketing or writing bids, or listening. All and all motivations goes out the door quickly because as one of my people put it " I was in a negative cycle".

greater levels of uncertainty and stress wears on the body, but the mind thinking positively aways thinks it is doing better than it actually is.

That would have not been my answer,so I would guess that perhaps after everyone has been so beat up in last 3 years they have to remotivate themseleves. I am so happy it's turned that I am at a very high level.

It would be interesting if you have the information about how long the leaders have been in their position of leadership to see if the longer a leader is in the position the less energy they have.

Speaking from my experience, the last two years have been challenging for all organizations thanks to the constant threat of terrorism and the struggling economy.

Most organizations have reduced staff size, doing more or the same amount of work with fewer resources.

Leaders can get tired, too.

Another interesting thing would be to know how long it's been since a leader has had a 30-day break.

I think it was Tom Peters who said if you haven't had a 30-day break in 5 years, you are essentially useless to your organization.

Being or feeling productive increases "energy" - i.e., the body produces adrenaline, seratonins, endorphins, etc., which people may read as energy. Or, eventually, as stress.

It is my belief that leaders percieve their energy/motivational levels to be at a lower level when they feel that they are being the most productive can be the result of the inherent stresses associated with decreased response times and accelerated business cycle times for projects. The speed of business is outpacing the stamina of the leader.

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A sign of the times, ie, war and the sluggish economy, will tend to drag us down always. It is the extremely special case, the one who can maintain himself above the medium, the one that will have great success.

In my situation, because of the state of the economy (poor), I am doing and chasing work that I normally wouldn't.

During the latest downturn and as things begin to pick up companies are asking more and more from their current employees and it is putting them at the point where they are feeling stressed and less productive.

multiplicity of function now.

Concern about our economy and country... the possibility of a Democratic President or a Democratic Senate bodes ill for the business community. Protectionism and increased taxes seem to be on the horizon and the Republicans seem content to let it happen.

Perhaps the results reflect high stress levels which are consistent with high energy levels but nonetheless not as productive.

Transportation and Public Utilities

Executive burn out?

At first blush, I would attribute it to an increased demand for productivity without the addition of resources or support to encourage the increase. For example, leaders are relied upon to produce but have few motivating factors/incentives to encourage the productivity. You do it to get it done and hopefully move on to the "fun" aspects of your job, where your energy level increases because you enjoy what you are doing and are reminded of why you did not jump ship.

Web-based Technology

Leaders like change, and moving forward. And leaders know what it takes to move forward. With overly conservative trends towards status quo, and multiple paths distracting many from the optimal path, it takes more upfront time, and more time spent on what should be obvious, to currently effect change. Just when we should be cutting costs by moving forward, many don't want to move forward, or waste too much time on lesser quality products which costs management more time and resources. Nonproductive time drains leadership energy faster than anything.

Two possible areas

those that fill surveys out might have too much time on their hands and thus and slightly skewed sample.

Business is down from a few years ago and execs are comparing to the rah rah days when they were busier.

you could have reached a demographic of execs where business is flat or down and the execs have some spare time. I am one of those... Three years ago I likely would not have responded, now I have been looking to change things around and spent some time to research it...

NA

I believe that this is still related to questions about the economy. Even though the economy is picking up on many indicators, they are not on the job front and so this has leaders feeling a little uncertain about the future. This does translate into an energy low about what kind of market there will be for products sold by one's company.

Seems like many revenue-generating efforts are failing. Executives just aren't buying yet. With all the energy CEOs put into energizing themselves, their employees, and their markets (prospects), it just isn't paying off yet. The market is still soft.

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Many folks trying to operate at 25-30% over stretch, sustainable capacity. Somethings go to give & it is usually energy level as people have difficulty producing a consistently qualitative result. "Something you can feel really good about" In addition the earnings results are less than stellar partly due to a sluggish economy which means your efforts are not translating the way you might expect to the bottom line.

Doing business is very hard now, and it doesn't matter if your a very large company or very small. competition is extreme, Government regulations and taxes are extreme and it is difficult to keep energy levels high when the job can't get done correctly no matter how much you work. Requires great leaders and even they need some positive reenforcement from time to time.

i agree with the above and only thing i can think of is that the past three years have been so trying - and filled with ups and downs - that some level of exhaustion and fatigue is natural.

Look at the status of the world's civilizations. Information is provided to us to consider so much more quickly that it affects the mental status of everyone in a negative way on a daily basis. The electronic media is throwing so much more negative than positive that people are generally depressed. This in affects the mental stature of everyone, not just key executives. Your higher level executives are trained to be mentally tough and ALWAYS positive whether they concur with changes or not. Surveys tend to be more objective because they are less threatening when they are anonymous.

I think in a self assessment leaders want to do more and feel a personal responsibility to increase their drive, desire and determination to succeed. I think it is a 'relative' measure on how leaders want 'more' energy and are willing to share their 'weakness' to other leaders where they would say they are more energized when the perception is that they are 'sharing' with a general population.

Wholesale Trade

I think it is because a significant percentage of business leaders in the U.S. quite frankly have not figured out what the next big step for their business will be, that this is relatively new territory for many of them, so they get depressed. Meanwhile human capital sits on the sidelines waiting for them to make up their minds, cash piles up on the balance sheet, and Alan Greenspan continues to throw piles of M1 at them. I submit it is not a lack of capital, human or financial, but a dearth of ideas lie at the root of this dichotomy.

Overall business climate - or the least motivated or productive executives are taking time to do this survey.

I believe leaders often feel as if they are never doing enough. The desire is to operate at an energy level of 100 MPH, and we often feel as if we fall short of this expectation, when in reality we may not.

Just a personal note: When I complete this survey, I am at a lower energy level than when I am conducting day to day business.