

THE LEADERSHIP LENS Newsletter

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A monthly resource providing insight, opinion & practical information on leadership, creativity, personal development & balance

Operating at Peak Performance, Part 1

There were two bowls of snacks staring right at me during this late-morning meeting with one of my customers. I was tempted to reach over and grab a few handfuls. One bowl was filled with miniature Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and the other with Chex Cereal Mix laden with the right amount of Worcestershire Sauce. Many people took one handful after another. Since I had a Cliff Bar (a type of healthy organic energy bar) in reserve, I didn't want to indulge. However, I thought I could find something healthier at the corporate vending machine. No luck there either, but there were plenty of sodas, pretzels, potato chips and various flavors of candy. Hum, more sugar, salt, processed white flour and hydrogenated fat. I believe that part of living a life in balance is to pay attention to what you eat.

The vending machines had yet to catch up to the recent 'low carb' craze that was recently espoused in the bestselling book, "The South Beach Diet." In Dr. Arthur Agatston's book, he teaches the student of healthy living how to avoid bad carbohydrates (carbs) such as white sugar, baked white potatoes and white (processed) flour. The white flour and white sugar are prime ingredients in many vending machine snacks and are prime suspects at many corporate meetings taking the form of bagels and Danishes. More importantly these bad carbs cause our bodies to produce an insulin response causing a temporary energy 'high' followed by a crash in our energy levels. This ultimately leads to a decrease in our performance and attention!

And when hydrogenated fat is consumed (found a lot in vending machine snacks and other processed food in order to increase shelf life), it accumulates in our bodies, and according to Dr. Andrew Weil, one of the world's foremost experts on integrative medicine and healthy living, "hydrogenated fat increases risks of both cardiovascular disease and cancer. It increases total cholesterol, raises "bad" LDL (low density lipoprotein) and lowers "good" HDL (high density lipoprotein). Beyond that, trans-fatty acids (of which hydrogenated fat is one type) may also have adverse effects on cell membranes and the immune system, and may promote inflammation and aging." Let me get this straight, the snacks that most organizations either provide at meetings or have for sale in their vending machines actually reduce performance and make their employees a lot less healthy.

It seems that most organizations have it backwards! They constantly want higher performance from their employees, but are rewarding the opposite behavior by contributing to the nation's number one public health problem, obesity. According to the August 2004 *National Geographic* article, "The Heavy Cost of Fat," obesity increased from 14.5 percent to 30.9 percent of the US Population from 1971 to 2000 setting the stage for soaring rates of diabetes. The article goes on to further state that, "Obesity-related diseases cost the U.S. more than 100 Billion dollars annually. Next year (2005), being overweight is predicted to surpass smoking as the leading cause of preventable death." We are becoming more obese, seriously endangering our health and becoming less productive by consuming all of this white processed flour and trans-fatty acid laden food.

Luckily, there is an anti-junk food movement already underway in some of the nation's high schools. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Stonyfield Farm, an organic yogurt maker, put health-food vending machines in three Rhode Island high schools while White Wave, Inc., the maker of Silk organic soymilk, recently installed over 50 vending machines selling soy products in Los Angeles and Texas. These organic food companies want to instill great habits in our young people so that they will demand better quality food when they arrive at an organization near you. However, you don't need to wait for a health food vending machine at your organization. Take action now and start bringing your own healthy snacks to the office or with you when you travel. I certainly bring my own snacks when I am on a photo assignment or when I am speaking professionally. This allows me to maintain a sustained level of performance and a consistent energy level when capturing additional photographs in the field or when speaking during one of my programs.

Educating employees on healthier eating now will lead to an increase in their performance. By helping to promote consistent and sustained energy levels, an organization's profits will subsequently increase. Organizations can show even more of a profit due to lower insurance premiums as a result of improved employee health. The next time you are staring face-to-bowl at those horrendous snacks, be prepared and bring your own healthy ones. Since I couldn't find any healthy snacks at the meeting, I ate my Cliff Bar and fueled my body with quality nutrition complete with complex (good) carbs and protein. You are what you eat and more importantly, what you eat directly affects your attitude, health and ability to perform. Why would you want to operate at anything but 'peak performance'?

About Mark Sincevich:

Mark Sincevich is a photography expert who speaks professionally to organizations on creativity, balance, leadership and personal development. Mark has been practicing photography for over 21 years and continues to sharpen his skills as an instructor at the Washington School of Photography. He is an active member of the National Speaker's Association and brings over 17 years of experience in high technology sales and marketing and public accounting into his programs. He has written two books and numerous articles. For more information on Mark's professional speaking programs, photography, books and CDs contact Staash Press at (301) 654-3010, info@staashpress.com or www.staashpress.com.

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