

## **CEO Tip of the Month: Channel Your Energy**

by Guido Quelle

One of the most absurd statements I know is when someone tells an individual or a team they need to give "120 percent." Not only does this not work mathematically, it also makes poor business sense. Granted, you could demand that tomorrow someone give you 120 percent of what they delivered today, as that would mean you expect them to get 20 more done, but telling people you expect them to deliver 120 percent on a regular basis is nonsense, is a message that won't sink in, and will tend to waste more energy than it releases.

On any given day, we should have 100 percent of our energy. True, if we're feeling fine that 100 percent tends to go a longer way than when we drag ourselves to work even though we're sick, but still every day we have 100 percent—nothing more and nothing less. The question that arises is how that energy can best be channeled so as to be most effective, and so that at the end of the day we're not asking ourselves where all our energy went. Here are three helpful tips:

### **1 Concentration**

Concentrate on just a few things that you can make concrete progress on. This statement has a double meaning, and is intended to: on the one hand, you have to be able to concretely make progress with regard to these things, and on the other, the things you focus on must be of such nature that such progress with regard to their development, mood or insights can be made. Focus on fewer topics, not on more. Of course there are more than three or five subjects that we need to or want to work on, but: all in good time, and not all at once. Focusing allows you to invest more energy in each subject. Also, concentrate more on future-oriented issues and less on those that concern the past.

### **2 Making the most of negative energy**

An American colleague of mine, Chad Barr, once told me he'd come to the realization that problems made him increasingly angry, the longer he had to deal with them. To counteract this, he had learned to use the energy of his frustration for something more productive, like writing an article. At first I wasn't convinced, but a closer—admittedly "pseudo-mathematical"—observation shows: the energy level is the same, regardless of whether you're happy or angry. As such, the challenge lies in repurposing that energy. Does it always work? No, but even if it only works once, it's better than just stewing in your own anger.

### **3 Attention**

This third tip is very closely linked to the first, as your attention can be more easily focused when you deal with fewer topics at once and not with more. But attention is something that can release a great deal of energy. Have you ever noticed how when you had a clearly set and consistently pursued goal, it shifted the attention of your entire team to achieving that goal, which they also ultimately did? There you go, proof positive.

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