

ENERGY AT WORK

A LOOK AT GENERATING A VITAL COMMODITY
FOR SUCCESS AT WORK TODAY

WRITTEN BY CRANFIELD SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
IN ASSOCIATION WITH LUCOZADE ENERGY

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Abstract

The energy of employees is recognised as an important factor in their performance and in maximising their overall contribution to the organisation. Organisational energy is dynamic in nature. It is more than just the sum of the energy of its employees and also includes the interaction and dynamics of teams and the organisation as a whole.

This report is an exploratory investigation of the role and relevance of energy in driving business performance. We examine the sources and dynamics of energy, in order to provide insights into the nature of energetic organisations, and how they can leverage the concept of energy to improve business performance.

I.O

INTRODUCTION – LINKING ENERGY TO BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

What is energy at work? We all know people who can work through difficult times with a smile and with a helping hand for their colleagues. These people are usually bright, resourceful, motivated and have a ‘can do’ attitude. Sometimes they are so driven by work they can seem like workaholics – but unlike people that are merely obsessed by work, some people seem to thrive on the challenges and stresses of working and can sweep others along with them, spreading their enthusiasm as they go.

What gives people like this the power, the drive, the ‘get up and go’ to overcome problems at work, to dispel tiredness and to go the extra mile?

An important factor in their success is their energy. This energy is not just their physical strength or stamina, or their mental power, but a much more elusive characteristic that drives motivation, powers teamwork, fosters creativity and gives organisations a competitive edge.

What effect do energetic people have on organisations? Intuitively, it is clear that they must have a beneficial effect on business performance, but what is the relationship between an energetic workforce and business performance? Can we do anything to manage it? How can we build an energetic organisation? What are the key ingredients of an energetic organisation?

These questions have generated considerable interest within organisations and amongst researchers. This report is an exploratory investigation of the role and relevance of energy in driving business performance. Adopting a deductive approach, on the basis of previous studies, books and articles, we explore the relationship between energy and performance. We also examine the sources and dynamics of energy in organisations, in order to provide insights into what constitute an energetic organisation. We then look at the nature of energy at work, how organisations can leverage the concept of energy to improve business performance and what organisations can do to develop and maintain their own energy – specifically the role of a new Energy Resource Manager.

2.0

UNDERSTANDING ENERGY IN ORGANISATIONS

What is 'energy'?

The Chambers English dictionary defines energy as 'the capacity for vigorous activity, liveliness or vitality', 'force or forcefulness', or 'the capacity to do work'.

The focus of this definition is primarily on physical energy however this provides a powerful analogy which can help us to understand energy within organisations.

What is energy in organisations?

In some organisations it is characterised in terms of the energy "around a project or people" or it describes energetic people and groups (Cross et al., 2003). It is often described as a physical entity, which can oscillate between energising and de-energising (Frijda, 1988), and that can be created and destroyed.

Loehr and Schwartz (2001, 2003) define it as "Energy is simply the capacity to do work". So, energy is that essence that allows us to perform physical, mental or emotional tasks – and all tasks take up some of our energy.

Whilst the Loehr and Schwartz definition captures the dictionary reference to 'the capacity to do work', it clearly does not encapsulate the sense of 'vigorous activity, liveliness or vitality'. This suggests that we not only need to consider the sufficiency of energy required to undertake day to day activities, but also a higher threshold of energy that ensures the full potential and contribution of individuals is realised in helping to deliver the organisation's objectives.

The concept of energy is intuitively understood and it is quite pervasive in much of organisational life. It is broadly recognised as a key factor affecting organisational performance, since it is widely believed that the more energy an individual has, the more effort he or she will be able to put into their work. In addition, energy is linked to individual and team performance, innovation and job satisfaction.

Whilst individual energy is the cornerstone of the work on energy, and the area where the majority of work is published, we believe that there are three types of energy: individual energy, team energy, and organisational energy. Although these different types of energy clearly exist, they are not explicitly separated into these categories in the literature. When considering energy at work and its management, it is important to clearly distinguish between the types of energy as they need to be managed in different ways if organisational energy is to be maximised.

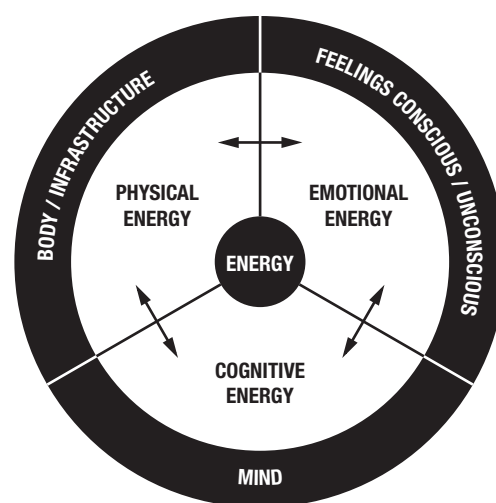
2.1 INDIVIDUAL ENERGY

Passionate individuals = energetic individuals

Individual energy is a complex result of multiple causes, which can be traced back to the fundamental laws affecting the conditions of well-being: the physical state, i.e. the body's conditions; the *cognitive state*, i.e. the mind's conditions; and *emotional state*, i.e. feelings,

both conscious and unconscious (Figure 1). These causes should not be interpreted as hierarchically structured, but rather as factors that are combined and integrated to define the resultant energy condition. Therefore energy is the result of a synergetic combination of physical energy, emotional energy and cognitive energy.

Figure 1. Dimensions of individual energy



Emotional energy is grounded in values and inner instincts, while cognitive energy is grounded in innate passions and life interests, which are in some way entwined with personality. However, these life interests do not determine what we are good at, but what kind of work and activities we love. Figure 2 summarises the main categories of activities that people love to perform (The Big Eight, 1999). The level of cognitive energy is higher when there is an alignment between what people do and what they love to do.

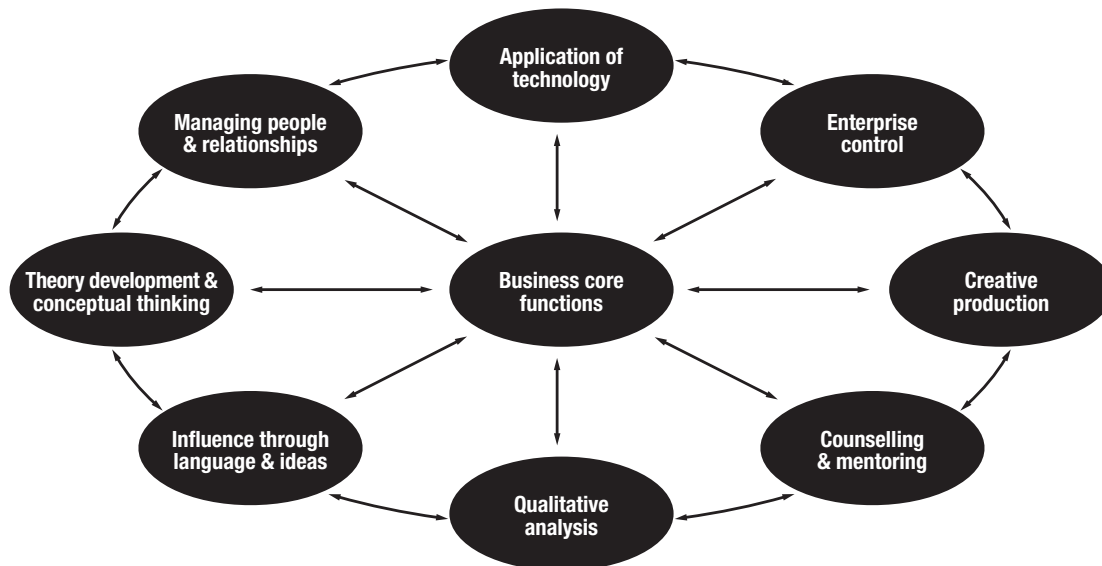
New research with workers in the UK has revealed that they currently feel that their energy levels are low and that this impacts on their daily performance. The findings include:

- Nearly 21 million employees regularly lack energy at work
- Over 22 million, or three in four, report they are less productive for two hours a day – which equates to 520 hours per year for each worker
- Over 10 million strongly agree that their lack of energy effects their performance at work

Recovery

Like exercising our muscles to achieve greater physical strength, we occasionally need to subject ourselves to extremes – physically, emotionally and cognitively. These periods of ‘training’ need to be followed by periods of rest and recuperation. This management process can be painful and difficult to maintain. By ritualising this management process we can make it easy to sustain when the going gets tough – a little like having a routine can make going to the gym easier!

Figure 2. Categories of activities people love to do (adopted from *The Big Eight*, 1999).



2.2 TEAM ENERGY¹

Sparks between individuals generate ‘team’ energy

The energy associated with a team is related to the energy of its members, but it is not identical to the sum of the energy of individuals. It is a composite result of the individual energy plus a quantity of energy associated with the systemic and synergetic combination of its members. It is generated in day-by-day social interactions.

Energy in a relationship is affected by three orthogonal dimensions: emotion, i.e. the level of intimacy created between two or more people in the interaction; cognition, i.e. the decision of taking part in the interaction; and motivation, i.e. the reasons prompting the involvement in the interaction (Hassebrauck and Buhl, 1996).

2.3 ORGANISATION ENERGY

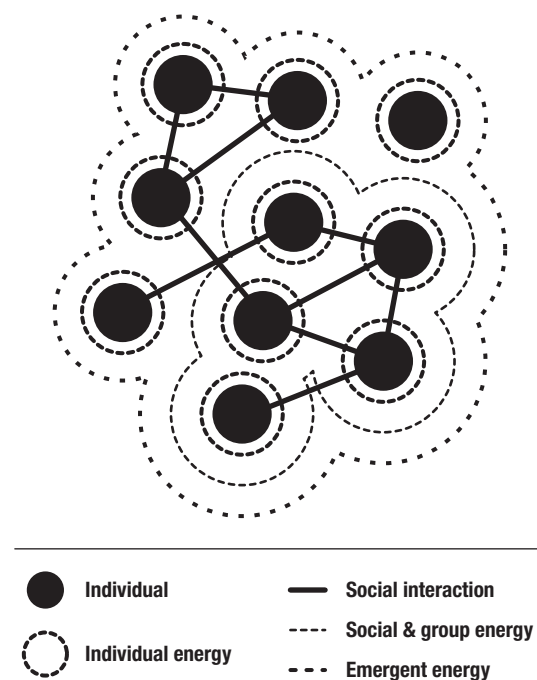
Individual, group and social network energy

Organisational and individual energy can be conceptualised as being functionally similar, i.e. as the strength, vitality, power and capacity to perform tasks and drive towards execution of activities (Lounsbury et al 2004). Like team energy, organisational energy is a social outcome and is related to both individual and team energy by mechanisms of aggregation, cross-level transfer, and distribution.

The concepts of individual, team and organisational energy are related by the equation shown below (Figure 3). We believe that organisational energy is related to the sum of the energies of all the employees, plus the sum of the social network energy created within and between teams. The emergent energy is the result of synergetic integration and combination of all the other forms of energy.

Figure 3. Organisational energy.

$$E_{ORG} = \sum E_{INDIVIDUAL} + \sum E_{SOCIAL-NET} + \Delta E_{EMERGENT}$$



¹ For the purposes of this report, teams and groups are considered to be synonymous. We recognise that teams need not necessarily be focused on a specific task, but may be a sub set within an organisational structure.

3.0

HOW DOES ENERGY DRIVE PERFORMANCE?

Business performance is the result of a complex mixture of causes - both organisational and external.

3.1 ENERGY LEVELS

The energy level can be assessed on the basis of two main variables: intensity and quality (Bruch and Ghoshal 2003). Intensity refers to the strength of organisational energy and it can be arrayed on a continuum ranging from low to high. It can be revealed in the number of activities performed, in the number of interactions, the extent of alertness and emotional excitement. Quality represents the impact of the energy on the task or objective achievement, and ranges from negative to positive.

Organisational energy needs to be bundled and channelled in order to drive organisational performance. This can occur within an organisation intentionally or unintentionally. The result of the bundling and channelling process is the creation at any given point of time of an organisation's energy states, as discussed in the following section.

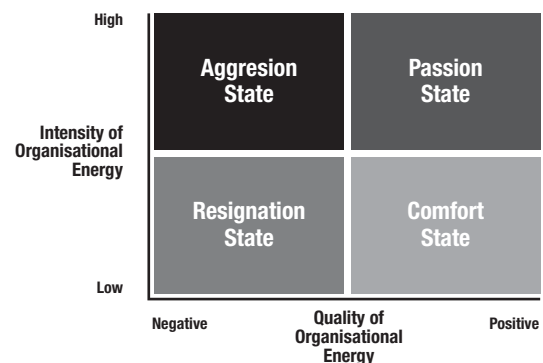
3.2 ENERGY STATES

The energy level and energy states are closely related, but while energy level relates to the amount of energy, the energy state relates to the nature of that energy. An energy state determines the quality of a person's experience, how positive a person's current subjective experience is, their state of well-being and happiness, the effort a person is likely to invest in the activity, and how attractive a person considers alternatives to be (Collins, 1981, 1993, Quinn and Dutton, 2005, Rafaeli and Sutton, 1987, Ryan and Frederick, 1997, Thayer, 1989). Energy states indicate how much effort an individual or team is willing and able to invest. People who feel high and positive levels of energy tend to view events positively, expect that positive events will occur, and will invest effort to achieve objectives. Moreover, energy makes people more likely to appraise subsequent events positively (Arkes et al., 1988).

Any organisation at any given point in time can be characterised by a specific energy state. It involves aspects such as the emotional excitement, alertness, the engagement of intellectual capabilities, total intelligence, complete creativity, the sharing sense of urgency for taking actions as well as enthusiasm and satisfaction. Bruch and Ghoshal (2003) propose four main energy zones characterising an organisation's energy state (see side bar "The Four Energy States").

The Four Energy States

Bruch and Ghoshal (2003) propose a model of organisational energy states with four zones that an organisation may possess, based on the interaction of energy intensity and quality (see figure). These states dictate how the organisation will cope with environmental pressures, and defines their modus operandi.



Those companies in the comfort state *"have low animation and a relatively high level of satisfaction. With weak but positive emotions such as calm and contentedness, they lack the vitality, alertness and emotional tension necessary for initiating bold new strategic thrusts or significant change"*.

Companies that are in the resignation state *"demonstrate weak, negative emotions – frustration, disappointment, sorrow. People suffer from lethargy and feel emotionally distant from company goals. They lack excitement or hope"*.

The aggressive state is associated with *"internal tension founded on strong, negative emotions"*. Companies in this state have *"high levels of activity and alertness – and focused efforts to achieve company goals"*.

The Passion State: *"In the passion zone, companies thrive on strong, positive emotions – joy and pride in the work. Employees' enthusiasm and excitement mean that attention is directed toward shared organisational priorities"*.

3.3 MOTIVATION

As we have indicated, motivation and energy are interrelated (see sidebar “Energy level, Motivation and Purpose”). However, energy is a necessary condition, but is not sufficient to determine motivation. Hence, motivation needs energy to be realised. In this regard, Steers, Mowday and Shapiro (2004) highlight that all of the main definitions of motivation are primarily concerned with the factors that energise, channel and sustain human behaviour over time. In this context energy is a fundamental component of motivation. In one sense it can be considered as the engine of motivation. It affects both the direction in which a person chooses to act and the effort a person invests (Marks, 1977). In addition, energy determines the perception of the attractiveness of various alternatives. In this way it supports risk taking behaviour.

Energy Level, Motivation and Purpose

Mary Chapman, CEO of the Chartered Management Institute, when interviewed by the BBC, said *“If you don't feel motivated, you don't have much energy and vice versa. There are those who clearly feel overloaded, overtaxed and therefore de-motivated and de-energised. I suspect those are the people who don't have a very clear idea of what is important to achieve in their job”*.

BBC News Online Wednesday 30/06/2004 “Stressed out managers running on empty”

Energy represents a good indicator to predict whether an individual will achieve results, as people tend to invest as much effort into activities as they feel they have energy to exploit (Collins, 1981, Marks, 1977). Moreover energy can increase expectancy of high results and rewards (Vroom, 1964).

In order to explore the links between energy and motivation, we adopt the notion of motivational force introduced by Wofford (1979). Motivational force can be defined as the amount of effort expended to perform a task. It can be assessed as the speed with which a task is performed and the amount of physical and physiological effort expended in performing a task.

3.4 LEADERSHIP

It is a leadership task to define an appropriate vision and strategy which play a fundamental role in shaping and creating an energetic organisation. They define the mode of energy management, provide drivers for bundling and channelling organisation energies toward shared goals, and guide organisational design and objectives setting. It is a leadership task to define an appropriate vision and strategy to enable the unleashing of organisational energy and marshalling it in order to capture people's emotional, intellectual and physical capacities in support of key strategic goals (Bruch and Ghoshal, 2003).

3.5 ENVIRONMENT

The external environment acts on the organisation in many ways, and it is one of the roles of management to scan the environment for opportunities and threats, and use this information to refine the strategy. In this way the organisation transmits information about the organisational environment to its employees. The way in which this affects employee energy depends on the culture and communication styles of the managers.

It should be remembered that for employees the environment is multi-faceted – the environment in which each employee exists is different to that in which the organisation exists. Our personal environments include our home life, our past times, our perceptions and our relationships. Each of these effects our energies in many ways.

Energy in Balfour Beatty Rail (BBR)

In 2004 Balfour Beatty Rail focused on energy to guide its change management program to meet customer needs, achieve better safety levels, and above all, make a profit. According to BBR, focusing on organisational energy allowed them to remove silos and above all work with much more of a customer focus.

Taylor, S. 2004, Tapping into the energy equation at Balfour Beatty Rail, Human Resource Management International Digest, 12, 6, 11-13.

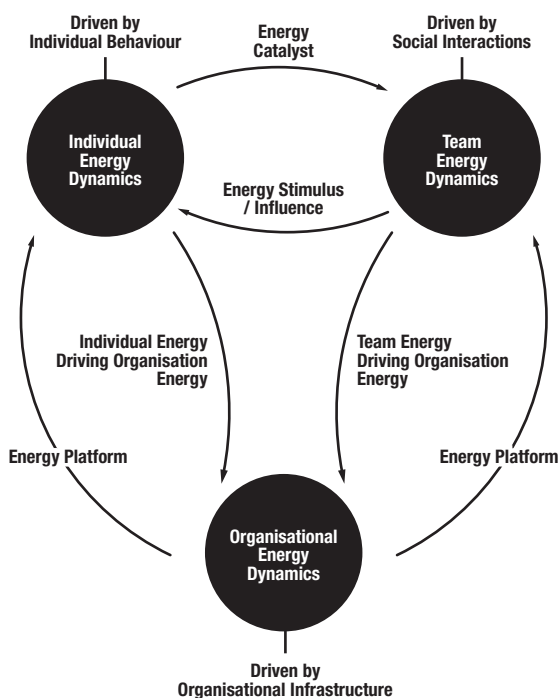
4.0

ENERGY DYNAMICS IN ORGANISATIONS – HOW TO BUILD AN ENERGETIC ORGANISATION

Energy within an organisation is dynamic in nature. It changes continuously over time on the basis of oscillations between energy expenditure or creation, and energy renewal or recovery. It is also influenced by constant changes in demand and stress. Managing energy means first and foremost managing energy dynamics. These dynamics are related to both structural and contingent factors.

Three main sources of energy dynamics in organisations have now been identified: organisational infrastructure, social interaction, and individual behaviour. Their functioning and interactions dictate the organisation's energy conditions, i.e. energy level and energy states, at any given point of time. They represent the mechanisms and levers for creating and managing an energetic organisation. Figure 6 depicts the sources of energy dynamics and their relationships within an organisation.

Figure 6. *Energy Dynamics in Organisations*



STEP 1: THE INDIVIDUAL ENERGY DYNAMIC

HR holds the key

Using recruitment and selection processes as well as general HR practices, organisations seek people who can bring energy to the organisation and spark energy in others.

Be happy

Emotional expression can be considered as a formal and planned approach for transferring energy. Emotion display involves the approaches of showing or hiding feelings. Many organisations have in place 'feeling rules' as well as formal approaches to drive emotion expression. Walt Disney World, McDonald's, many airline companies and hotel chains use handbooks, training and procedures to drive employees to convey positive and esteem-enhancing emotions to customers.

Develop organisational values

Organisation culture defines the organisational values and purpose that affect energy dynamics because they provide behavioural drivers for both individuals and teams. Greenfield (2004) identified that when there is a disconnect between personal values and the perceived values of the organisations, employee disengagement is often the result. Greenfield estimates that organisations may waste up to 66% of their available employee energy through a variety of disengagement behaviors.

Managing individual energy

David Holman's study of employee stress in call centres has produced an interesting and useful set of guidance for promoting employee well-being.

"In summary, the job and organisational factors that have strong positive effects on employee well-being are:

- *having high control over work methods and procedures and what is said to a customer;*
- *having a degree of variety;*
- *a performance monitoring system aimed at developing individuals;*
- *a performance monitoring system that is not perceived to be intense;*
- *a supportive team leader; and*
- *supportive HR practices"*

Holman, D. 2003, *Phoning in sick? An overview of employee stress in call centres*, *Leadership and Organisation Development Journal*, 24, 3, 123-130.

Looking After Yourself – What Everyone Knows Already

There are a number of basic strategies for renewing energy at the physical level. As with all advice of this nature, these are generally accepted as best practice, but there is some debate over the efficiency of some of the individual elements. They should be treated as a holistic approach – picking just those elements that we find easy or attractive is unlikely to provide much benefit!

- 1) Actually do all those healthy things you know you ought to do!
 - Eat five or six small meals a day
 - Always eat breakfast
 - Eat a balanced diet
 - Drink plenty of fluid throughout the day
 - Get physically active
- 2) Go to bed early and wake up early
- 3) Maintain a consistent bedtime and wake-up time
- 4) Seek recovery every 90 to 120 minutes. This can be as simple as:
 - eat something
 - hydrate
 - move physically
 - change channels mentally
 - change channels emotionally
- 5) Complete at least two exercise workouts a week.

(Reproduced from Loehr and Schwartz 2001)

STEP 2: FOCUS ON SOCIAL INTERACTIONS: THE PERSONAL DRIVER OF TEAM ENERGY DYNAMICS

Team energy dynamics are driven by social interactions. While, in an emotional transaction a social emotion is created on the basis of a display of emotions, reaction, and readjustment (Rafaeli and Sutton, 1989).

Interpersonal workplace relationships serve both psychological objectives at the individual level and collective objectives at the organisation level (Leana and Barry, 2000). They are usually necessary to perform organisational activities, but from an energy point of view their relevance is related to the support they provide for socialisation processes, social support, career development, friendship ties, and other forms of information flow that may influence personal motivation and personal growth. Particularly important in shaping and influencing social network dynamics which drive energy creation and destruction is the role of trust which facilitates energy flow and creation.

Five questions for the individual:

- Do you treat relationship development as a daily part of your work life? As trite as it may seem, treating others decently, and actively seeking relationships throughout our organisations and externally is the basis for trust – a cornerstone of energetic team working.
- Do you make good on your promises? Nothing destroys energy, and ultimately trust, more effectively than missed deadlines.
- Is your decision making guided by principles and ethics? Teams respond energetically to clear purpose and direction, and consistent responses to difficult issues.
- Are you a good listener? Maintaining full engagement and interaction with team members should be the normal mode of working – apparent disinterest and lack of focus is another big ‘energy killer’.
- Do you avoid dominating discussions? Everyone has skills and experiences to bring to team solutions. Dominating discussions with your input, whether it be to demonstrate superiority or for a quick solution can destroy both energy and trust. (Based on Cross, Baker and Parker, 2003)

STEP 3: FINALLY... THE ENERGY RESOURCE MANAGER

Infrastructure can be considered as the mechanism that stimulates and drives energy creation in organisations. Organisational infrastructure includes tangible and intangible dimensions and defines the energy platform for developing and managing individual and group energy dynamics. They can be intentionally designed and implemented to stimulate, create, sustain, maintain, and drive energy in the organisation.

The tangible and intangible

Tangible and intangible factors influence an organisation's ability to create and keep energy.

The tangible: facilities such as coloured, bright, well-aired, and well-designed rooms, spaces and equipment.

The intangible: organisational infrastructure that includes recruitment, selection and HR practices, organisational culture, and performance measurement systems.

Instigate performance measurement

Performance measurement systems represent a powerful approach for driving individual and organisational behaviours (Neely et al 2002). They can be adopted by organisations to drive individual and team dynamics as well as to monitor the level of energy within the organisation. Interviews, questionnaires and 'mystery customers' can be adopted to reveal the quality and intensity of energy at work, mainly assessing the expressed and/or displayed emotions, and adopting these evaluations as proxies of the energy level. Other researchers have produced psychological instruments that can be used as proxies for energy measurement (e.g. Lounsbury et al., 2004).

An Energy Resource Manager

In many organisations a new corporate executive should emerge – an Energy Resource Manager. This position could be created to initiate, drive, and coordinate organisation energy management programs. An Energy Resource Manager fronts the mobilisation and focusing of an organisations energy in support of key company strategic goals.

An Energy Resource Manager should be responsible for designing and implementing initiatives aimed to stimulate, support and activate energy. This needs to be a continuous process, since energy is fluid and dynamic in its nature.

What could their goals be?

The main role of the manager is to ensure that the company's vision and strategy capture people's emotional excitement, engage their intellectual capabilities and produce a sense of urgency for taking actions. Their goal is to make energy management endure, embedding it in daily organisational life.

- Develop an awareness within the organisation of energy management.
- Drive people, teams and the organisation to leverage energy to drive value creation in business development.
- Unleash and marshal energy in order to create the appropriate energy levels to deal with the contingent competitive environment, threats and opportunities.

What could they do?

An Energy Resource Manager should spend a lot of time "walking around the organisation", "meeting and speaking with people", "understanding people's feelings and energy".

They have to be able to identify and distinguish the 'energisers' from 'de-energisers' or 'energy sappers'.

Who could it be?

The two principal design competencies of the Energy Resource Manager are as psychologists and coaches. They have to be able to manage the emotional facets of individuals, as well as coach them as 'organisational athletes'. Moreover, they have to create a social environment that stimulates social interactions – thus facilitating energy creation. They operate through influence, demonstration and involvement. Important dimensions of their personality traits are: emotionality, extroversion, openness, agreeableness, tolerance, pragmatism, and conscientiousness. These dimensions can be used for a psychometric assessment of personality.

Appointing an Energy Resource Manager is a good place to start when embarking on an energy management program. It can serve as a way to galvanise and drive the attention on energy management. However, it is unlikely to be sufficient in itself. What matters is that energy management becomes embedded in organisational life, recognising its role as a source for motivation and productivity, which in turn drive value creation and competitiveness. Therefore, all members of the organisation have to own and drive energy management as part of their working and personal lives.

5.0

CONCLUSION

In the following we address the key findings of this exploratory research report.

- There are three forms of energy in organisations : individual, team and organisational. Each of these energy forms must be managed to drive performance.
- Although the majority of the literature focuses on the energy of individuals, energy in organisations is the capacity and willingness of an individual, team or organisation to take actions and perform activities with vigour.
- Energy is more than merely the ability to do work – it includes the harnessing of vigour and vitality. Managing energy effectively enables the full potential of employees to be realised.
- Energy needs to be created, sustained, exploited and not destroyed. The way in which this is achieved varies depending on the energy form.
- Energy in organisations is a key driver of business performance.
- Energy is dynamic in nature and changes constantly over time, oscillating from energy expenditure to recovery.
- Energy dynamics are driven by three main sources and at each stage people can control this.
 - Individual energy dynamics are mainly driven by individual behaviour
 - Team energy dynamics are mainly driven by social interaction
 - Organisational energy dynamics are mainly driven by organisational infrastructure

The interrelationships between the above components are fundamental to the stimulation of organisational energy. Only by looking at all three can you really achieve the optimum energetic organisation.

- The appointment of an Energy Resource Manager is one way to help businesses build an energetic organisation

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