LEADER ENERGY DRIVING PERSONAL AND FIRM-LEVEL WELLNESS: LESSONS FROM 20 YEARS OF THE LEADERSHIP PULSE*

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ABSTRACT

In 2023, the Leadership Pulse project will have been running for two decades. Since the inception of the program, we have engaged thousands of leaders around the world to quickly learn from them via short pulse surveys conducted multiple times per year. This chapter is the first overall discussion of what we learned during the last 20 years about leader energy, energy flow, predictors of energy, and outcomes of energy, which have been focused on individual and firm-level performance. Over the years, we learned that leaders are not immune to personal energy challenges; in fact, we find that their energy is continually tested by extreme demands within and outside their organizations. Also, we learned that there are solutions for helping leaders manage their energy better, and these do not have to be expensive, outsourced programs. In this chapter, we review key findings from the data and hope to help leaders continue learning to help themselves, their employees, customers, and the organizations they work in overall. I also will review three different interventions that we found to help leaders and employees work and stay at their best and enhance overall organizational goals and outcomes.

Keywords: Leadership; energy; employee energy; wellness; measurement; pulse surveys; employee surveys; leadership energy; strategy

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Stress and Well-Being at the Strategic Level
Research in Occupational Stress and Well-Being, Volume 21, 119–136

ISSN: 1479-3555/doi:10.1108/S1479-355520230000021007

INTRODUCTION

> The average person puts only 25% of his energy and ability into his work. The world takes off its hat to those who put in more than 50% of their capacity and stands on its head for those few and far between souls who devote 100%. Andrew Carnegie (1835–1919)

The world has changed since Mr Carnegie made this comment. Today we applaud people who are energized about their work, and simultaneously, we have learned to be concerned about work–life balance and the short- and long-term well-being and health of leaders and the people they lead (Gragnano et al., 2020; Parkes & Langford, 2008). Because leaders set the tone of what is expected of employees, it is important to understand how leaders are spending their time and how they are expending their energy at work and outside of work. This is because leader wellness is related to their decision making, how they interact and influence others, and ultimately how leaders impact their organization's ability to achieve overall strategic goals and objectives.

The Leadership Pulse is a partnership between eePulse, Inc., and the Center for Effective Organizations, Marshall School of Business, University of Southern California designed to measure and trend leadership confidence and energy. Over the past 20 years of research and across 49 separate studies, a great deal has been learned about both energy, leadership, and firm performance.

The Leadership Pulse sample has evolved and changed over time. The initial sample consisted of alumni from the executive education program at the University of Michigan, and over time added people who attended university or professional association programs, conferences, and webinars. Responses for each of the studies or pulses have ranged from a high of about 1,300 to a low of 140. Each individual respondent receives his/her personal report after the pulse survey is closed. They have access to their own online report that shows their scores, including trend data, compared to the summary benchmarking data from the survey. They also can see their data versus results based on other demographics (e.g., industry, size of company, job type, etc.). Many of the surveys provide participants with workbooks and tools to use with their data; this provides enhanced learning and ways to communicate the results and issues with team members. Individual participation is at no cost. The surveys are sent out to the base population via email and today also launched on social media sites (e.g., LinkedIn and Twitter) so that individuals can opt into the program. We have a wide range of companies, leadership levels, and areas, locations and demographics participating in this initiative.

Overall Insights From 20 Years of the Leadership Pulse Research

Before going into detail on some of the key topic areas that we studied over time, below are some of the key overall findings from the project:

(1) Across several studies, we continue to find that 90% or more of leaders are reporting energy levels below where they are at their best. This means they are less productive and less well than they should be. If we can discover why this is the

case and help leaders change habits and behaviors, those leaders can be more productive and better able to deliver on the firm's strategic goals. Stacking work syndrome is often a major contributor to suboptimal leader functioning. More precisely, it isn't that leaders have too much work to do, rather the challenge is that they are not sure which stack of work to focus on first to produce the best results. Leaders and the people who work for them need ongoing help to focus their energy on the right projects (direction). Leaders have been reporting that it is the continuous stacking of more projects without taking away older ones that are causing them to deplete energy levels. Also, each stack is associated with a person, and in an effort to not disappoint, they spread themselves thin by doing a little on each stack and then not taking enough work to completion. Meeting goals and finishing projects help leaders re-energize. The constant lack of direction or focus depletes energy and has negative effects on the organization's overall ability to meet bigger goals and objectives.

(2) Energy, and particularly, leader energy, is contagious. The level of and variance of leader energy over time affects employees on their teams. A high variance in energy is worse than consistent low or high energy. Employees are often unsettled by inconsistency in what to expect from their leaders.
(3) Leaders are rarely aware of what their typical energy level is; they need time to assess and learn from their own trends. Although they frequently assume that they are aware of what energizes and de-energizes them, they are frequently surprised by what the data tells them.
(4) During COVID-19, as people started to work from home, we set up a daily pulse experiment. This revealed a common daily pattern that led to new additional research, and this work and results are discussed in the later section of this manuscript focused on interventions.
(5) Economic downturns frequently impact director-level leaders the most. These individuals often do not have the same kind of insights that the more senior people have concerning the strategic plan of the organization (knowledge about business plans, customers, etc.), but they are nonetheless getting a barrage of questions from employees and have a lot of responsibility to deliver in less predictable circumstances.
(6) The CEO and other C-core executives often have results different from the rest of the leadership team; however, the CEO scores are not always higher than others. For example, one of the most surprising results of the Leadership Pulse studies has been that C-suite leaders reporting less confidence in their business strategies and in their own leadership teams.
(7) Response rates have gone down over time. When the Leadership Pulse study started, the concept was novel and there were high levels of participation, but the normalization of this technology has meant that it now must compete with several other programs for the attention of already busy individuals.
(8) Reflective learning works at all levels when the process is simple and easy to use. Employees must manage their own energy; managers can help, but the employee is in charge. Thus, leaders do well when they engage employees in this same learning.

RESEARCH TOPICS

From its conception in 2003, the Leadership Pulse assessed leadership confidence and added assessments of energy in 2004. The first survey asked five different questions associated with confidence in leaders. Using a scale of not at all confident (1) to very confident (5), we asked respondents to rate their confidence in the following items:

- Your organization's leadership team overall.
- The economic climate of your organization.
- That your organization has the right people and skills.
- Your organization's ability to execute on its vision.
- Your organization's ability to change as needed.

A few years later, an additional question asking people to rate their confidence in their own personal management skills was added. Fig. 1 shows trends in the overall leadership confidence scale scores over time. The overall score (using a 1–5 scale) ranged from a high of 3.91 when we started the project to a low of 3.52 in 2023. However, all in all, the mean score for the scale has not varied tremendously over the years.

The early studies from 2003 were used to assess the reliability and validity of confidence and growth measures. The questions have not changed over time other than adding confidence in personal leadership to the overall scale.[1] In addition to demographic variables, later versions also asked about job levels, functional areas where they work, and organizational questions including the name of the company (optional), ticker symbol if a public company, industry, annual revenue in the last year, number of employees in the last year, rate of change (0-to-100-point scale), and country. Also added was a question on financial performance, asking them to rate their company's overall performance compared to others that are like them (in the same industry, size, and age). These data revealed a strong and positive relationship between the self-report financial performance data and public financial records.

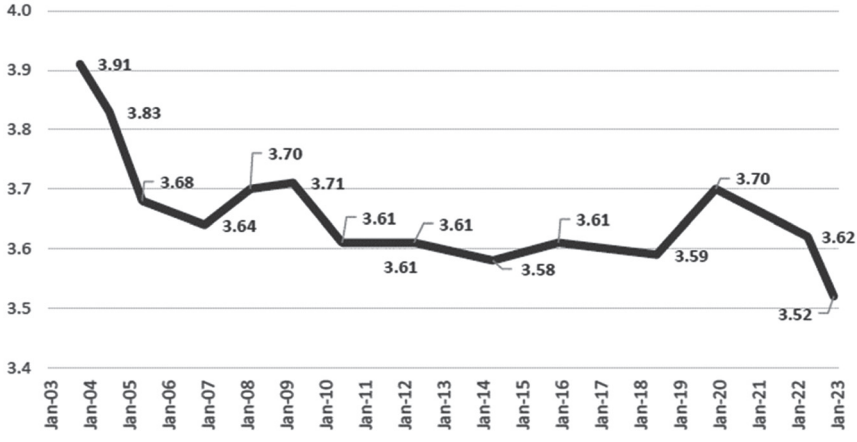

Fig. 1. Leadership Confidence Trend Data From 2003 to the End of the Year 2022.

In the very first survey in 2003, the highest scoring item was confidence in their leadership team (3.97), and the lowest was confidence in their ability to change (3.71). All of the growth questions were relatively high (4.07 the lowest and 4.68 the highest, out of a maximum of 5.0).

THE ENERGY CONSTRUCT DEFINED

One of the key constructs introduced and then used ongoing in the Leadership Pulse is human energy, the measurement of which is grounded in the literature concerning employee motivation (see Ambrose & Lulik, 1999; Landy & Becker, 1987). Specifically, the Leadership Pulse was concerned with energy exerted at work (vs on other non-work activities) and borrowed from the research on employee energy in sports physiology (Welbourne et al., 2005, p. 56), where this body of work

> specifically describes and assesses human energy directed at optimization of performance (in both its physical and mental aspects). In reviewing this literature, it was concluded that one key difference between sports physiology and the management motivation theories is that within the sports literature, more motivation or more human energy is not always better. In fact, the sports literature would suggest that athletes or anyone attempting to maximize bodily energy should find the level of exertion that is best for that individual. In other words, energy is something that should be optimized not maximized.

This body of work is also consistent with the concept of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), which leads to energy being in the "zone" for optimal performance. Being at an energy level that is best for an individual, per these theories, leads to optimal output and wellness.

The sports physiology concept of energy also fits with definitions from the field of physics, where energy is defined as the ability to do work (Welbourne, 2014). This body of research lays out the fact that there are two types of energy: (1) potential or stored energy; and (2) kinetic or moving energy. In order to be at an ideal energy level, where work can be done, potential energy must be converted to moving energy. Thus, these two concepts of an optimal level of energy (where someone is at his/her best) and current working energy (which is the energy level being converted into work), were consistent with the sports physiology and physics definitions of energy.

In order to create measures of energy, we merged these two concepts of energy (from physics and sports physiology) by assessing not only how much energy one has, but also the optimal or ideal energy level for getting work done. The goal was not just helping leaders learn to get work done but to do it in a way that does not lead to burnout or other negative outcomes. Like athletes, they needed to be trained to optimize rather than maximize.

Athletes have ideal or target heart rates; they are not told by their coaches to maximize but work out in a way that keeps them "in their target heart rate zone." The idea is to work at a rate that is ideal for your body type so that you do not exhaust yourself and to assure you have enough air to continue breathing, burning calories, and stretching muscles (Gilbert & Jamison, 1994; Hargrove, 1995;

Leifer, 1988; Perry & Jamison, 1997). This type of recommendation shows up in overall health-related Surgeon General Reports as well as in today's searches for new wearable devices to help optimize exercise (e.g., Duking et al., 2017).

The energy research done through the Leadership Pulse as well as in other settings suggests these same guidelines should be used when talking about human energy at work. Find the work level of exertion that is optimal, then measure where you are today and learn to close the gap so that you are working in a range that is best for you. When engaging in sports, no one wants to be harmed; the same idea applies to work. Get the work done but do it in a way that keeps every employee and leader healthy and well.

Energy and Related Constructs

There are a number of constructs that often accompany discussions of energy at work. Employee engagement has become part of most organizations' annual employee survey strategies and made its way to academic research. In some cases, energy is seen as part of the engagement, and some researchers talk about different types of energy (Loehr & Schwartz, 2003). The challenge in understanding the research on the topic of employee engagement is that the idea grew from the practitioner world and then was brought into academics; therefore, there is no pure theory of engagement, and definitions differ significantly.

According to Macey and Schneider (2008, p. 3),

> The notion of employee engagement is a relatively new one, one that has been heavily marketed by human resource (HR) consulting firms that offer advice on how it can be created and leveraged. Academic researchers are now slowly joining the fray, and both parties are saddled with competing and inconsistent interpretations of the meaning of the construct.

A number of psychological models have been added to the discussion (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991Saks, 2006), and in addition to engagement, the topic of vitality has been added to the mix (Ryan & Deci, 2008; Ryan & Frederick, 1997).

In our research, we have found that the three-item employee energy measure correlates with engagement, but the evidence also suggests that these two were different constructs (Welbourne, 2014). For example, energy (and the gap between optimal and working energy) predicted numerous performance indicators, whereas measures of engagement did not predict those same measures.[2] Engagement data did predict a number of different variables, many of that were collected in the same surveys (e.g., employee satisfaction, intent to turnover, pay satisfaction metrics, and more). The differential predictors suggest that although these two key metrics are related, they are uniquely different in their ability to predict future outcomes.

The study of energy and engagement continues to evolve and has become quite substantial (e.g., Kular et al., 2008; Macey et al., 2009). As noted in a fairly recent literature review,

> employee engagement is an important issue in management theory and practice. However, there are still major differences in the concept, theory, influencing factors and outcomes of employee engagement, and there is still no authoritative standard. (Sun & Bunchapattanasakda, 2019, p. 63)

Two other relatively newer terms are being used, thriving and vitality (Porath et al., 2012). In an article published by Spreitzer and Porath (2012), they note that "thriving employees are highly energized, but they know how to avoid burnout." This concept describes the way energy is measured in the Leadership Pulse study; thriving seems to be similar to what our research measures as being "in the zone." Energy is not too high, but at a level where an employee is at his/her best or optimized. Vitality is an outcome of ideal energy levels; people are happy, enjoying life, and positive (Bruch & Vogel, 2011).

MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENERGY

As noted earlier, the measure of employee energy grew out of a very large (over 150 questions) study on the drivers of firm-level growth (e.g., stock price growth, earnings growth, growth in employees, and survival) and transitioned to three questions asked weekly. The first pilot study was with a company going through an initial public offering (IPO) where weekly assessments were collected before, during, and after the IPO (Welbourne & Felton, 1997). This allowed more refined analyses and understanding of the predictors of individual employee performance, changes in performance, and the percentage of stocks sold when employees were able to purchase shares, sales, and bonuses.

The three questions asked participants to rate their energy on a 0–10 scale. Using the optimization concept, the measurement process starts by asking respondents to rate their working energy and optimal energy, and then a gap score is calculated. The measurement works with 0 being no energy, then moving to low and medium energy (5–6), and 7–9 high and very high energy. But at those higher levels 9–10, individuals are so overwhelmed that their energy is being depleted. Thus, rating yourself a 10 may not lead to a good outcome. The gap is calculated by taking working energy (where you are today) minus optimal energy (where you are at your best). The resulting score can be positive or negative. For example, if I report I am at a 6, and my ideal is 7, my score is –1. If I am at a 6, and my ideal is 4, then I am +2 (over my ideal level). This gap, along with the standard deviation over time (variance from week to week) predicts outcomes. See www.whatsmyenergy.com to see the measure and reports. The graphic used in the assessment of energy is shown in Fig. 2.

The energy measurement graphic has a radar icon on it that allows respondents to move around the donut graph. Participants see this graphic two times, and first score their working energy (today) and their optimal energy on a second page (where they are at their best). As they move the radar around the donut picture, descriptors of what each number represents pop up on the screen.

Another key measurement aspect of energy is the body of calibration work we developed. According to this work, energy is a function of pace, efficiency, and job satisfaction with pace having a linear relationship with energy, but efficiency and job satisfaction being curvilinear or more related to the gap between working and optimal energy. Figs. 3 and 4 provide an example from one of the Leadership Pulse studies. In Fig. 4, the relationship between the energy gap and

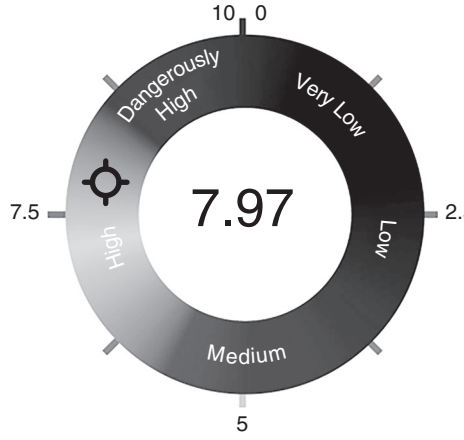

Fig. 2. Energy Pulse® Online Measurement Graphic. This is an interactive measurement tool that allows the user to move the radar (black ring near the 7.5 scores in this figure) and choose which energy level he/she is at. As they move around the donut, descriptors of the various numbers pop up. Once an answer is chosen, the survey taker hits enter, and the score is recorded. The donut is used for two questions: (1) what your energy is today (working energy), then it pops up again and the user answers a second question and (2) at what energy level are you at your best (optimal energy). Lastly, a third open-ended question is used, and participants record what's affecting their energy; this is put into a journal that they can review.

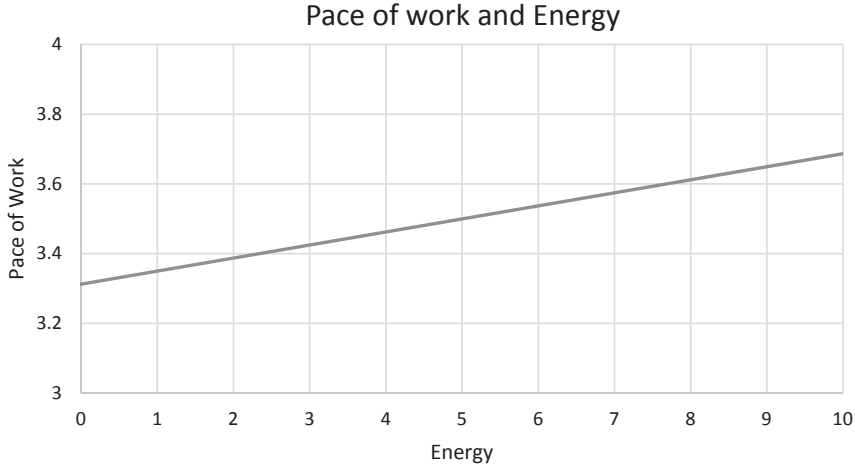

Fig. 3. Pace Versus Energy Results. This analysis is run on a regular basis to calibrate energy. To date, the data show that as the pace of work goes up, energy goes up. Calibration is also run with efficiency and job satisfaction.

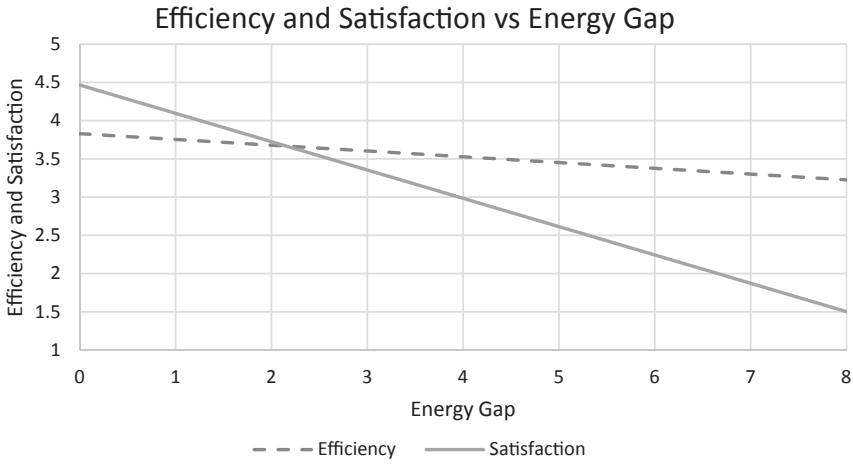

Fig. 4. Energy Gap Versus Satisfaction and Efficiency. This analysis, which is part of the calibration exercise, shows that as energy goes up, efficiency goes down, and satisfaction goes down. This supports the optimization versus maximization concept behind the sports physiology approach to measuring energy. This calibration exercise has been done in various surveys in the Leadership Pulse and with companies using these metrics. To date, the results have been the same. Note that in this analysis, the gap between working energy (where one is today) and optimal energy (where at best) is used; the results are similar when using the overall mean of energy.

the two outcomes is plotted (the gap is calculated by taking today's energy minus optimal energy; the number can be negative or positive, and we use the absolute value for the purpose of creating the graphic). The data show that as the gap closes, individuals are more efficient and satisfied at work.

SPECIFIC LEARNING FROM SUBSETS OF THE LEADERSHIP PULSE DATA

Fig. 5 shows the trend for mean energy from 2003 to early 2023. The last few years, from 2019 to 2023, have presented systemic shifts in how business is done, and with that, big challenges, and changes for leaders. In this section, I will present findings from pulse data during this time and second, via an experiment we ran doing daily pulsing with leaders during the summers of 2020, 2021, and 2022.

First, from the beginning of COVID-19 until April 2022, we see that leader energy declined (see Fig. 5). The mean scores change from 6.46 to 6.32 between 2019 and 2020, and then 5.69 in 2022. In April 2022, as companies were recovering from the pandemic and coming back to the office (in some cases), we asked questions focused on leadership confidence. For the overall scale, there was not much change from the prior year; however, a review of the individual confidence

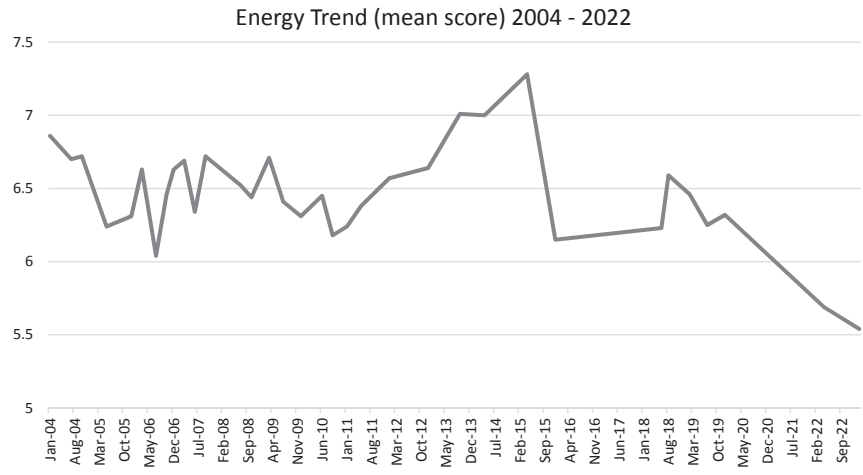

Fig. 5. Energy Trend Data (Average Energy for Each Pulse Survey; 0–10 Scale).

questions showed a decrease in confidence in both the overall leadership team and in the individual's confidence in their own personal leadership and management skills. It is not unusual to have confidence in leaders decline during times of high change and stress, but we rarely find confidence in "me" going down. The confidence questions range from 1 to 5 with 1 being not at all confident and 5 being very confident. Confidence in the leadership team went down (from 3.93 to 3.70) while confidence in "your own personal leadership and management skills" went down from 4.08 to 3.85.

In a study from 2010 that examined confidence and firm performance (using self-reported firm performance data, confirmed by comparing with financial data in the subset of publicly traded firms), we found that when the economy declined higher performing firms had a pattern of data showing that the senior leaders had more confidence in their teams than in themselves personally. Fig. 6 shows the confidence data from 2 years. Note that in this sample (about 700 executives, 40% C-level; 60% directors up to C-level), the only item that improved from year 1 to year 2 is economic climate; everything else declined, including confidence in their own leadership skills. In addition, Fig. 7 shows the data cut by firm performance (assessed high or low for ease in displaying the data). Only in the lower performing firms is confidence in "me" higher than confidence in the leadership team (even though, recall, these people are part of the leadership team).

A similar pattern emerges with the data from the COVID-19 years. For example, data from 2022 show that in very high performing firms (see Fig. 8), confidence in the leadership team is 4.09 compared to confidence in personal leadership skills of 3.89 (team higher than individual). But in the low and very low performing firms, the opposite pattern exists; confidence in the leadership team is 3.62, and confidence in personal leadership skills is 3.85 (personal

Fig. 6. Change Percent Confident in Leadership Confidence Items From 2009 to 2010.

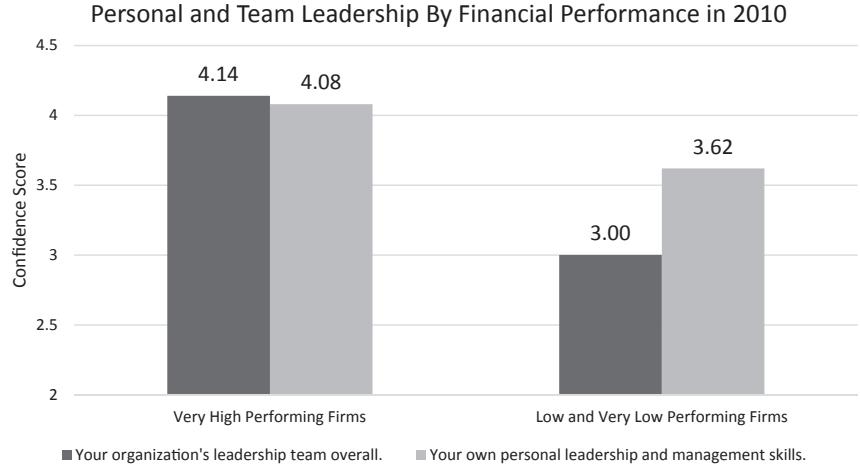

Fig. 7. Change in Personal and Team Leadership Confidence From 2009 to 2010. Differences in confidence from very high to very low financial performance are statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

higher than a team). External pressures from the economy affect how leaders work with their employees, and we have seen over the years that leaders are more likely to give credit to their whole teams when dramatic events they are living through shine a light on the fact that to get the needed work quickly done it really does take a team.

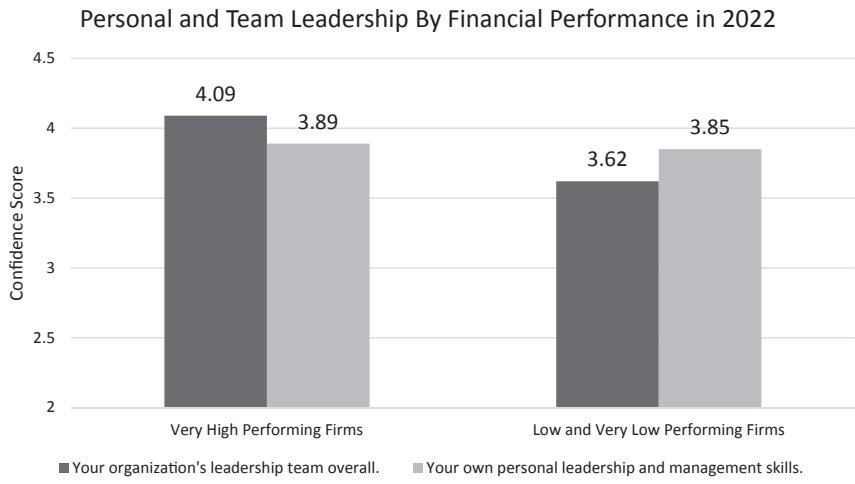

Fig. 8. Change in Personal and Team Leadership From 2020 to 2022. Changes in leadership team from very high to very low performance (4.09 vs 3.62) are statistically significant at the 0.05 level; differences for personal leadership are not significantly different (3.89 vs 3.85); however, the trend is in the same direction as in the 2010 data where only in high performing firms is confidence in the confidence in the team higher than confidence in me.

THREE INTERVENTIONS TO MOVE FORWARD ON LEADER WELLNESS AND FIRM-LEVEL WELLNESS

Three interventions have been used to help leaders move beyond stacking work syndrome and feelings of being overwhelmed with the massive amounts of unknown and change they are experiencing. Of course, the first step in these interventions is ongoing measurement; it is hard to reflect, discuss, and change factors that are not out in the open.

Reflective Learning

The first intervention is personal, and it is focused on helping individual leaders. It's also fairly simple, but it does take time. There is a long tradition of helping individuals move forward with new habits via reflective learning. From the perspective of our project, we use data to help leaders track their own energy levels and focus on what's affecting them positively and negatively and then also learn how they are affecting the people around them. This is not a complex process. There are four steps:

Data: Collect data to provide a source of reflective learning. In our case, they engage in the Leadership Pulse, and they receive personal reports back that show their responses versus benchmark data. They also keep a journal and can view their comments on various dates. This is all an automated process for the

participants, and it is something that any organization can do to help employees get through challenging times.

Dialogue: Leaders reflect on their own results and then engage in dialogue with others; this may be their coaches, their employees, family, or peers. Dialogue is an important piece of their learning.

Action: Leaders put a plan together to change their habits and actions. I use a model that plots actions based on two criteria: (1) I own the action, or I can influence someone who owns the action; and (2) the action is short-term or long-term. We work with leaders to help them focus on actions in the "I own" and "short-term" buckets.

Results: By focusing on actions that lead to short-term results, leaders are motivated to continue to change habits. This is particularly important when leaders have data (cycle start over again), showing that their actions had measurable results. The advantage of starting with data and ending with data (results) is that you can share learning with others, and this is a particularly helpful habit for leaders to engage in doing. Openness begets trust, and as we saw in the earlier comments about confidence and energy, this type of sharing of results also can positively affect confidence, which then affects energy that is extremely important for all employee wellness, productivity, health, and leaders' ability to achieve more positive organizational outcomes.

Ambassadors Engage in Action Taking

The Leadership Pulse project and the pulse surveys have been running for over 20 years, but early on it was apparent that the thought of getting frequent data from employees was not a priority agenda item for many leaders. Their first thought was typically "oh – another way to ding me with some secret and different performance measurement process." Leaders did not want more complaints; there are many who do not think employee surveys of any sort are good for their careers.

In order to change this paradigm, the ambassador program was developed. This initiative utilizes a reflective learning exercise, but the reflections are handed over to employees. Leaders are asked to assign a group of employees to be ambassadors and help with the habit-breaking work. Using data, the ambassadors ask their peers to reflect on what they said in their own surveys (employees have copies of their own results and personal journals so they can go in and find these data). Instead of refining complaints, they work on suggestions and idea development with their peer ambassadors taking the lead in managing the dialogue.

The resulting action recommendations are provided to leaders. Leaders get help; employees engage in reflective learning; and this turn has been leading to very positive outcomes.

The 20 years of Leadership Pulse data and learning have led to some important findings, more than I can cover in this chapter. However, I would say one important outcome has been to help leaders think about habits versus big and hard to understand concepts. Habits can be changed, and in general, leaders resonate with that assumption because they see examples in their daily lives of helping children change habits.

Leaders often are taught such highly complex ideas that they ignore them. The beauty of the Leadership Pulse project has been providing simple and easy-to-use data as a guide to leaders who want to learn from their own reflections and from their peers. Perhaps our biggest insights on leader wellness came from an experiment we ran during the first summer of COVID-19 and then in the years after.

Learning While Disrupted: Daily Energy Pulse Experiment

Before COVID-19, the most frequent data collection that I engaged in doing was weekly. Although consideration was given to daily assessments, the potential tradeoff of overwhelming employees was thought to be too high. However, things changed during the pandemic, and many people were suffering from fear and loneliness. In response, we decided to run the Daily Energy Pulse experiment during the summers of 2020 and 2021 and then for groups of leaders in several organizations at other times from 2020 to 2022. We had about 100 people participate in the experiment, and with some, we also met with them to discuss the data and how it was changing from week to week. Overall, what we found is summarized below:

- Over time energy improved, the energy gap decreased, and the variance in energy scores over time was lower.
- We taught participants how to use reflective learning techniques focused on their energy trend data and personal journals. We instructed them to reflect on what was negatively and positively affecting their energy, and as a result, they found ways to take control of many of the factors affecting them and make changes. Their actions focused on changing habits led to less variance and more time "in their zone."
- By studying the comments (from the journal work) and running group sessions with participants, we found that the reflection process led participants to work through a specific pattern. What people wrote about and what they changed from week 1 to the end of the project represented a pattern that reminded me of the long-studied Maslow's needs hierarchy. In the first few weeks participants focused on and wrote about things like food, time of meals, what they ate, how much they drank, and exercise – did they go for a walk, work out, etc.? In week 3 or 4, they went beyond this and became more focused on what I would call wellness – learning new habits to help them cope with stress, including meditation, participating in regular exercise programs through new apps, etc. Then after this phase, we started to see comments and changes focused on family, friends, and social relationships. Along with this social phase, they moved to the topic of work – how they did their job, when they were most effective, how long they could sit at a computer before they needed a break, people who energized or de-energized them, work they liked to do and not do.

Participants tended to move from the inner circle areas of Fig. 9 as the focus of their habit changed to the outer ring, but different from the Maslow model, they easily went back and forth between the various groupings of activity over time.

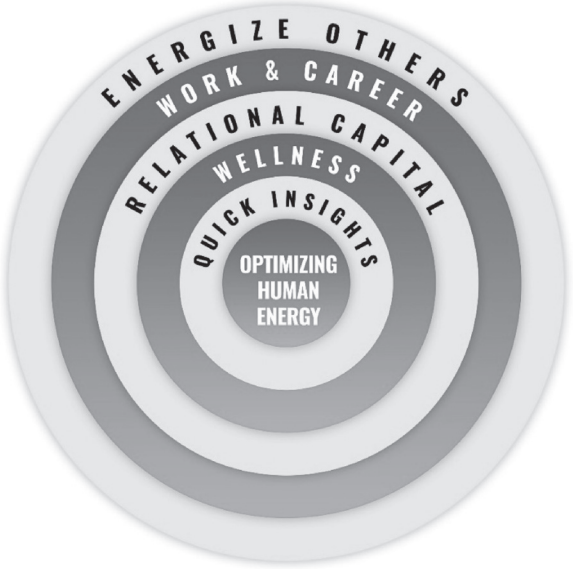

Fig. 9. Emergent Themes from the Daily Energy Pulse.

Their movement from ring to ring after the initial progression from inner to outer ring appeared to be based on what goals they set for themselves and their sense of accomplishment over time.

As we learned from them, we started bucketing interventions to help participants target their actions. Fig. 10 is an example of various intervention targets they can focus on in any ring. The concept helped encourage dialogue about habits that could be changed in order to drive personal wellness. For each ring from the inner circle to the outer, we had them focus their activities on targeted relations at work, at home, in their social network, and with other connections. This simple model seemed to help the participants take easy actions to take to help them improve their energy.

In our era, at least in the United States where this study was conducted, wellness appears to have taken hold as an established need that individuals can personally control. Ample resources, be it via classes, employers, or apps are available to help individuals create their own new habits and environment where wellness is an achievable goal. Caring about personal health and taking time to improve oneself is seen as a good use of time, and most know that doing a bit more today for personal well-being translates to longer-term positive health results.

The other learning from the daily energy pulse experiment was that after wellness goals are discussed, we found participants moved to the next levels in their ring hierarchy. They started to talk about friends and family or social needs. Additionally, participants found that they were very energized by helping others in their social circles improve their energy. This gets back to the idea that energy

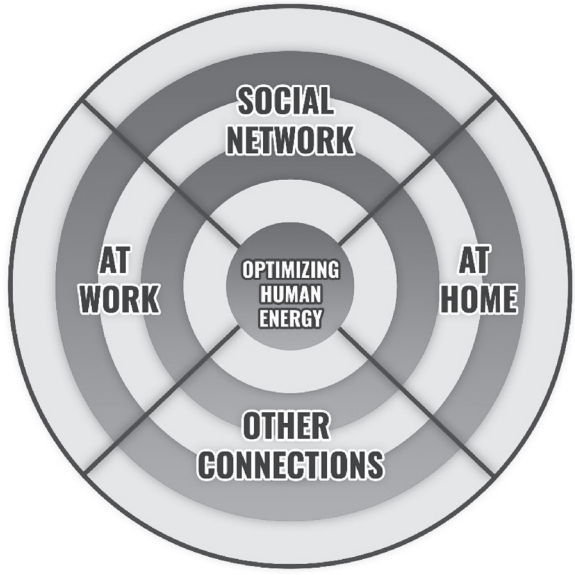

Fig. 10. Target of Intervention Activities.

is catchy, but what we did not observe as much earlier was that the actions to help others improve their energy appear to be having a very positive impact on the person teaching and modeling positive energy habits.

CONCLUSION

Energy is something that employees and leaders understand. Leaders will tell you they can "feel" the energy in an office or a plant. People who are by nature energized and positive know that they are sharing their energy with others. As much as people may think they understand energy, it does not mean they know how to measure it or manage it. The challenge for leaders is being intentional and making sure they help themselves and their employees, and this takes some rigor and often changing habits. However, when successful, our research has documented positive outcomes at the overall firm level.

One additional concept that comes out of this body of work is recovery. We know by experience that every organization will be hit with negative experiences; well-loved leaders leave, companies engage in mergers or acquisitions, large customers leave and maybe layoffs result. In all these situations, our data show big declines in employee and leader energy. Lower scores, in these situations, are less important than the time it takes to recover. Thus, understanding how these big events impact employee energy and confidence is critical for developing strategic recovery plans that pull the employee population out of the negative spiral that

usually happens after these types of events. And the people who start a recovery initiative are the leaders.

Leader wellness, self-awareness, and the ability to energize others are all key to the type of decision making that leads to long-term firm health and performance. The Leadership Pulse, and the new daily energy experiment, provide evidence that some regular processes of collecting meaningful data, engaging in dialogue and reflective learning, taking action to change habits, and again measuring results can lead to positive changes.

NOTES

1. The current version of the Leadership Pulse uses only three items.
2. The outcome data we studied included sales per salesperson, patient satisfaction in hospital settings, customer service ratings in call centers, performance appraisal scores, unwanted turnover, and number of suggestions made in companies that use these programs.

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