Sleep to be successful

Sleep and business are two concepts that most people do not immediately think of going hand in hand; as tech start up culture and the rise of digital communication has increasingly changed the way we do business, sleep has been the one thing most often sacrificed to accommodate this increasingly fast-paced lifestyle.

Take Marissa Mayer, for example, now Yahoo's CEO; when she was employed at Google, she reportedly worked as many as 130 hours during some weeks, leaving little time at all left to sleep.

The belief that one can—and should—cheat sleep to be successful is born of the many myths about sleep, all of which are widespread in the world of business. For example, there is the myth that one can "make up" for lost sleep by sleeping in on the weekends; not only is this untrue, it actually confuses the body's circadian rhythm so that satisfying sleep is more difficult to attain during the week.

There is also the myth that some people just "need less" sleep, and can safely get by on three to four hours of it; this is also largely completely false (with only about 1-3% of the population being capable of functioning well even on five or six hours rather than eight). What actually happens is that these individuals simply get so used to being tired all of the time that they begin to feel that state as what is "normal". In truth, when tested, they showed the same impairments in memory, motor skills, and judgement as any other sleep-deprived person would.

The true cost of sleep deprivation, therefore, manifests itself as reduced productivity, poor decisions in the workplace, impaired motivation, and a higher incidence of accidents at work. There is also a long term cost to physical health, with chronic sleep deprivation leading to heart disease, hypertension, stroke, and diabetes.

How to Get More, and Better, Sleep
Many of those in business who do not intentionally trade sleep for more time to work still suffer from insomnia, owing to stress and the demands of their jobs making it hard for them to "shut off" mentally at the end of the day.
To help combat sleep deprivation and get more rest at night, try the following strategies:
• Go to bed early, at least two hours earlier than you need to. Darkness cues the body to start producing the sleep hormone melatonin; ergo, to get a full night of sleep, you'll likely need to spend some time in total darkness before the body realizes it's time to shut off for the night.
• Keep on a schedule, even on the weekends. Sleeping and waking at about the same times each day keeps the body's internal clock functioning well, meaning that it's easier to get to sleep. Try to follow the same pattern of activities prior to bedding down, too (have a routine of brushing your teeth, then hair, etc. and stick to it).
• Try meditation. Meditation will lower your heart rate and quiet your mind, mimicking the first stages of sleep and preventing racing thoughts from keeping you up all night.

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