

syncwize



▶ Burn-out: the unwelcome side-effect of ambition 2



▶ Eat, dance, enjoy—an evening of good company 3



▶ Are you sure you're getting your beauty sleep? 4

coffee corner quarterly

Staying in touch with our freelance professionals

"I think I deserve something beautiful."

~ Elizabeth Gilbert, 'Eat, Pray, Love'

finding some balance

As we write, almost all of you will probably be on a well-earned (albeit not always well timed) break from the pressures of life in the fast lane. We pray that you have all been able to recharge your batteries and spend time with those who matter most to you.

The increasing trend of corporates to impose 'forced' leave over the December period on consultants, temporary staff and independent contractors indiscriminately leaves an unpleasant taste in one's mouth, and we have been distressed not only at the ethics involved but also the manner in which the impact on individuals — particularly as this ruling has in most cases been imposed without prior warning— has been studiously ignored.

To be part of a company is a wonderful thing. The lack of personal accountability inherent in acting on behalf of such an entity allows one to shake off any guilty feelings, thus avoiding further stress in an already toxic world. Being an independent contractor tends to have the opposite effect: every aspect of one's performance carries

an implication for one's reputation, which is really the sole marketing tool available to us. Every decision, every success, every failure, every action may carry an important reputational implication, and hence may drastically affect one's future.

And paradoxically, that is exactly why forced time out—as unwelcome as it may be—is also an enormous blessing in disguise!

The need for sustained high performance will without question lead to burnout. Unless we force ourselves to take time to regain some balance in our lives, to ground ourselves and to recuperate. As independent contractors, it is too easy to fall into the trap of pursuing every billable hour to stave off the risks associated with this form of employment.

We understand: we have been there too. And even as business owners, we find

ourselves afraid to let go even for a few days, in case we are not around when disaster strikes.

We too have to remind ourselves and each other not to lose ourselves to the demands of the monster of money, a career, risk avoidance and all the other horrors of a life lived at this fast pace.

Remember that your inner self needs to be recharged periodically, and sometimes being made to do so may actually be the best gift.



On the theme of things to do that aren't so much fun, please remember to begin gathering your paperwork preparatory for tax season. The deadline for filing tax returns is end January. What a fun way to begin the new year.

Also, as forewarned in our Q3 newsletter, please remember to plan financially for the after-effects of the December period: the reduced billable hours can affect your January cash flow.



a culture of overwork?

An interesting article by Alec Hogg, editor and publisher of Biznews.com on www.Leadership.co.za entitled, "Wake-up call ignored as culture of overwork takes its toll" (November 2013)

My drinking days are long gone, which is probably why I've never really gotten into Red Bull. Although judging from those I see quaffing the stuff, it's a great way to cure hangers. And, when vodka's added, rather adept at creating them.

The quality of one's contribution is directly correlated to how much we rest

So the effect of the caffeine-laced energy drink is outside my circle of competence. But even I can see Red Bull got a rough ride at Friday's well-publicised inquest in east London.

Among the most prominent feedback was that 21-year-old Merrill Lynch intern Moritz Erhardt just loved the stuff, and on the day he died had apparently been putting away Red Bulls like Klipdrift at a Pretoria braai.

The tragedy of the young City of London intern who died from overwork received blanket coverage in the UK. Erhardt was one of two selected from 1,500 internship applicants. He was coming to the end of his seven-week stretch. Eager to impress right to the end, immediately before his death he'd put in three all-nighters.

Coroner Mary Hassell said the young German died after suffering an epileptic fit in his shower. With typical British understatement, she concluded: "One of the triggers for epilepsy is exhaustion. It may well be because Moritz had been working so hard, his fatigue was a trigger for the seizure that killed him."

Merrill Lynch's lawyer waved the epilepsy straw like a sabre. Erhardt had not disclosed he was on epilepsy medication, he trumpeted. Nor did he tell any of his co-workers. So how were we to know?

The subtext is clear: the intern's death wasn't Merrill's fault. It was due to an undisclosed physical defect. Of course, the firm will conduct a survey into working hours to satisfy outsiders. But it's proud of a hard-working culture. It isn't killing interns. They work 100-hour weeks because they want to. It's the kind of people Merrill attracts. The best. But perhaps they should go a little easier on those Red Bulls.

The biggest tragedy of Erhardt's passing is that epilepsy delivers the perfect excuse. Nothing need change. Now nobody internally needs to honestly analyse its destructive culture of praising excessive work, indulgently smiling at those declaring themselves workaholics.

It's not just in the City of London where this attitude permeates. The experience of Cell-C CEO Alan Knott-Craig is instructive. Five years ago, Knott-Craig was so far gone after his third heart attack he had an out-of-body experience, chillingly described in the opening chapter of his autobiography. He told me shortly afterwards that he was finished with the business world. That his future would be devoted to the genteel art of bird photography. But when Cell-C came calling last April, the challenge was too enticing. Knott-Craig threw himself into leveling the playing field of the cellphone industry. He lobbied hard and successfully to get mobile termination rates reduced. Recently, he admitted to "never having worked harder".

Earlier this month, Knott-Craig's body called time. Again. His team at Cell-C was quick to issue a public statement that he had suffered only a "minor" stroke, declaring their leader would soon be back in harness.

Don't be so sure. Those close to the mobile phone entrepreneur know there's no such thing as a "minor" stroke. Knott-Craig was lucky. This time he really knows it. His return is anything but imminent.

Carol Loomis's wonderful book on Warren Buffett called *Tap Dancing to Work* relays the Oracle of Omaha's view on the subject. In one of the more insightful passages, Buffett says he would rather do his first job than run industrial giant General Electric.

Of being a paperboy for the Washington Post at the age of 13, Buffett says: "I can think about what I want to think. I don't have to do anything I don't want to do. It might be wonderful to be the head of GE, and Jeff Immelt is a friend of mine. And

he's a great guy. But think of all the things he has to do, whether he wants to or not."

Ditto the late Merrill Lynch intern. And Alan Knott-Craig.

Buffett possesses an instinctive appreciation for what Harvard economics professor Senthil Mullainathan calls "bandwidth", our emotional reserves.

Having enough bandwidth helps you to be a good boss, an attentive spouse, a contributor in meetings. Running a deficit, as the author and economics professor puts it, means "when we schedule things, we just show up".

Mullainathan argues that bandwidth is built through life balance. Get enough rest and you're easily able to resist impulses. You also focus better, absorb new ideas, have creative leaps. Without it, you simply go through the motions.

Media entrepreneur Arianna Huffington is more direct. For her, it's about getting enough sleep. At least eight hours a night. She's so big on the subject her *Huffington Post* headquarters in New York has two "snooze rooms" where staffers are encouraged to recharge.

Huffington's conversion came five years ago after visiting colleges with one of her daughters. To ensure focus, the BlackBerries were stored away during the day. The Greek-born new media tycoon caught up on work when everyone else was sleeping.

On arriving home, she literally collapsed from exhaustion, bumping her head when falling, breaking a cheekbone and requiring five stitches below her eyebrow. As she put it: "When it comes to wake-up calls, few are as effective as the spilling of your own blood."

Huffington says the scare transformed her into a "sleep evangelist", preaching that the quality of one's contribution is directly correlated to how much we rest. In Mullainathan's terms, the depth of our bandwidth.

From everything we've seen it's a message that's still not gained credence at Merrill Lynch, even after Moritz Erhardt. Shame.



Parag Sharma, Oracle database administrator
Richard Peitzsch, Folashade Gilbert, and Richard Bean, project managers
Richard Kagaba, technical specialist
Elma Schreuder, project administrator
Constance Talane, Thabo Moeng, and Edrich Eachus, business analysts
 And welcome back to **Fran Roberts**, ARIS specialist
 ...even though it's confused the hell out of our office to have so many Richards starting with us simultaneously,
 we are privileged to count you our colleagues!



October Haydn James, Present Siwele
November Mary Addington, Johan Landman, Liezl Portmann,
December Egbert van der Walt, Yvonne Blignaut, Andy Lawrence, Bertus Erasmus, Monica Hepplewhite, Ashley Lowe, Harry Naude,

Please pray for Dave Newington, who was forced to resign after being with us for two months, having been diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer. He has undergone treatment and we are waiting to hear the outcome.

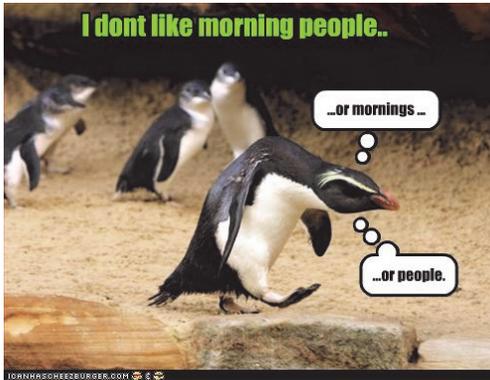
The staff of syncwize and Knowledge:Worx wish all of you the very best for 2014. May you all be blessed abundantly, and here's to not just getting what we want, but wanting what we've got!

well, WE certainly enjoyed ourselves!



Thank you to all those who took time to join us for our final networking function for 2013. It was our genuine pleasure to spend the evening with you, and to meet your partners—for the first time!

a good zzzz is never wasted



The consequences of sleep deprivation

Most of us need around seven or eight hours of sleep a night. When we don't make our personal quota on a regular basis, sleep deprivation may occur.

According to the Mayo Clinic, sleep deprivation occurs when you don't get enough sleep to feel alert and well rested.

We've all been in a space where we aren't getting sufficient 'down time' but prolonged periods of deprivation can result in more than just bleary eyes and daytime sleepiness, so watch out for the consequences!

Changes in cognitive function. According to the Mayo Clinic's website, research shows that people who have insufficient sleep over many nights stop performing as well on complex mental tasks, and perform significantly less well than those who get closer to seven hours of sleep a night.

Sleep deprivation can also cause irritability, decreased libido and poor judgement.

Weight gain. Less than five hours sleep a night can increase the likelihood of weight gain. This could be because sleep duration affects hormones regulating hunger and stimulates the appetite. Deprivation can also lead to general fatigue, which in turn may result in less physical activity.

High blood pressure. The Mayo Clinic indicates that less than five hours' sleep a night may increase one's risk of developing high blood pressure, or worsening already high blood pressure.

Weakened immune system. Studies indicate that those experiencing sleep deprivation have a higher likelihood of falling ill as a result of exposure to a virus, such as the common cold. Moreover, lack of sleep can also affect the speed of one's recovery.

Motor accidents. Unsurprisingly, and of immediate importance to those travelling to holiday destinations—it has been found that excessive tiredness is a major cause of car and truck accidents.

Quality of life. Fatigue may cause you to limit time spent on previously enjoyable activities. And of course, the bad moods accompanying excessive tiredness is likely to cause friction both at home and at work.

Strategies to overcome sleep deprivation

In today's fast-paced, high stress world, it's easier said than done to say that the best way to overcome fatigue caused by sleep deprivation is to meet your sleep needs.

However, it's not merely a matter of how much time you spend sleeping... focusing on the quality of your sleep is also important.

If possible, sleep in until you wake up on your own feeling alert for several days in a row. Hopefully you've been able to do some of this over the December lull period.

Strategic short naps—less than thirty minutes—may also be helpful.

If you know you're about to experience sleep loss, the value of getting extra sleep beforehand is apparently not a fallacy, and may in fact reduce the impact on your alertness and performance.

Where sleeping in or finding times for naps is not really possible, the following temporary strategies will assist: physical activity; caffeine; bright light exposure; and as a last resort, prescription medication.

Habits to help you sleep tight(er)

The Mayo Clinic suggests that certain habits will encourage better sleep, and provides some useful tips:

Stick to a sleep schedule. Go to bed and get up at the same time, even on weekends and holidays. The consistency reinforces your sleep/wake cycle and promotes better sleep.

However, if you don't fall asleep within 15 minutes, get up, do something relaxing and go back to bed when you're tired.

Pay attention to what you eat and drink. Don't over- or under-eat before bed—the discomfort might keep you up. Treat nicotine, caffeine and alcohol with caution. The

stimulating effect of the former two can take hours to wear off, and the latter can make you feel initially sleepy but disrupt sleep later in the night..

Create a bedtime ritual. Doing the same things every night, preferably of a relaxing nature, tells your body it's time to wind down. But be wary of using the TV or other electronic devices—some research suggests that screen time or other media use can interfere with sleep.

Get comfortable. Make sure your room is ideal for sleep: cool, dark and quiet. Get a mattress and pillow that are conducive to sleep for you personally.

Limit daytime naps. If too long, these can interfere with nighttime sleep, especially if you're already struggling with insomnia or poor sleep quality. If you do nap during the day, limit it to 10 to 30 minutes, preferably during mid-afternoon.

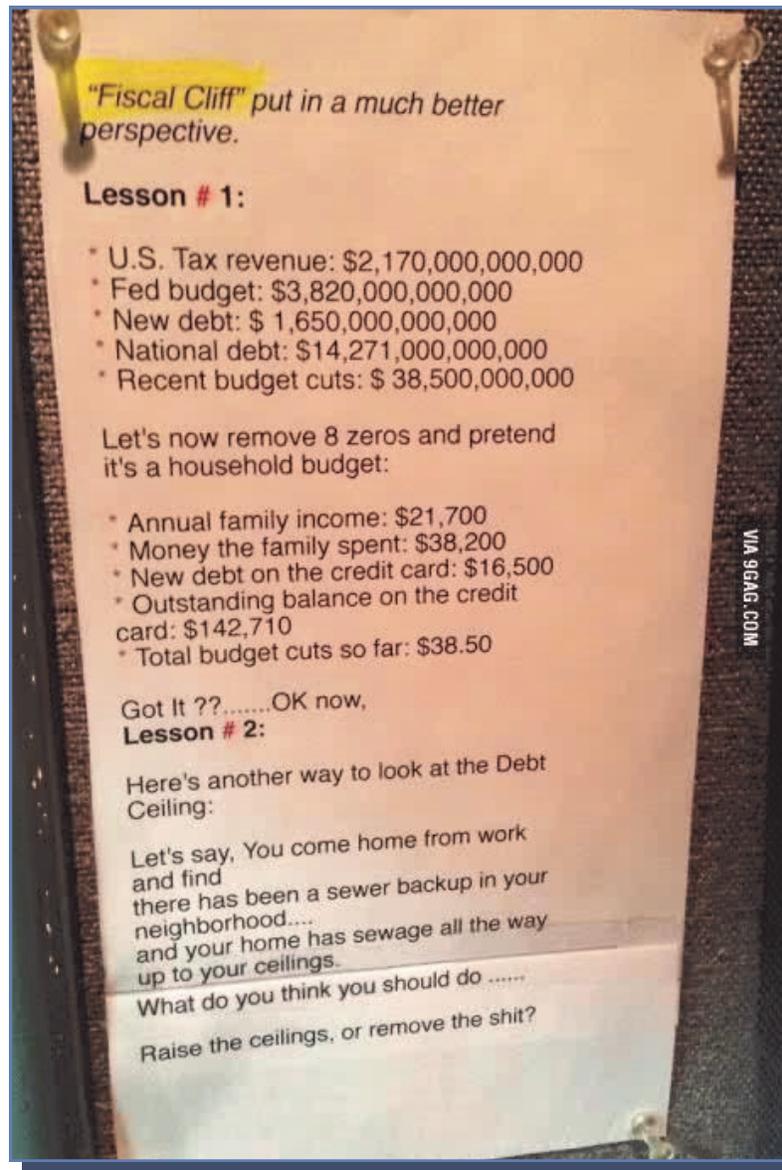
Get physical. Regular physical activity can promote better sleep, help you fall asleep faster, and enjoy deeper sleep. But timing is important... if you exercise too close to bedtime, you might be too energised to fall asleep.

Manage stress. LOL! Having too much to do, and too much to think about, will likely result in poorer sleep quality. Try to find healthy ways to manage stress: start with the basics, such as taking time to get organised, set priorities and delegate tasks.

Give yourself permission to take a break when you need one—at least you'll be better able to cope afterwards.

Share laughter with friends.

Before bed, or even when you wake up at night, write down what's on your mind. This way, your brain is more likely to rest better, with the assurance that the thoughts won't be forgotten. Of course, there's the story of an American president who tried this and woke up one night with the brilliant answer to the world's problems. He wrote it down, but was speechless the next morning, when he saw what he had written. The note said, "BUY MORE BANANAS."



**Until the new year...
keep smiling, live your life in full colour, and may you be blessed daily!
the syncwize team**



syncwize (pty) ltd

tel: 0860 109 080 | fax: 0860 109 081

www.syncwize.co.za

Unit B16 Greenoaks Office Park | Cnr Bekker Rd & Gregory Ave | Midrand | 1685

This newsletter is intended for syncwize's contractor team and the consultants representing its sister company, Knowledge:Worx, and is published quarterly as a means of conveying general information. We would love it if you would like to contribute, place an advertisement, or have a specific request for inclusion. If so, please contact Lizzie or Helen.