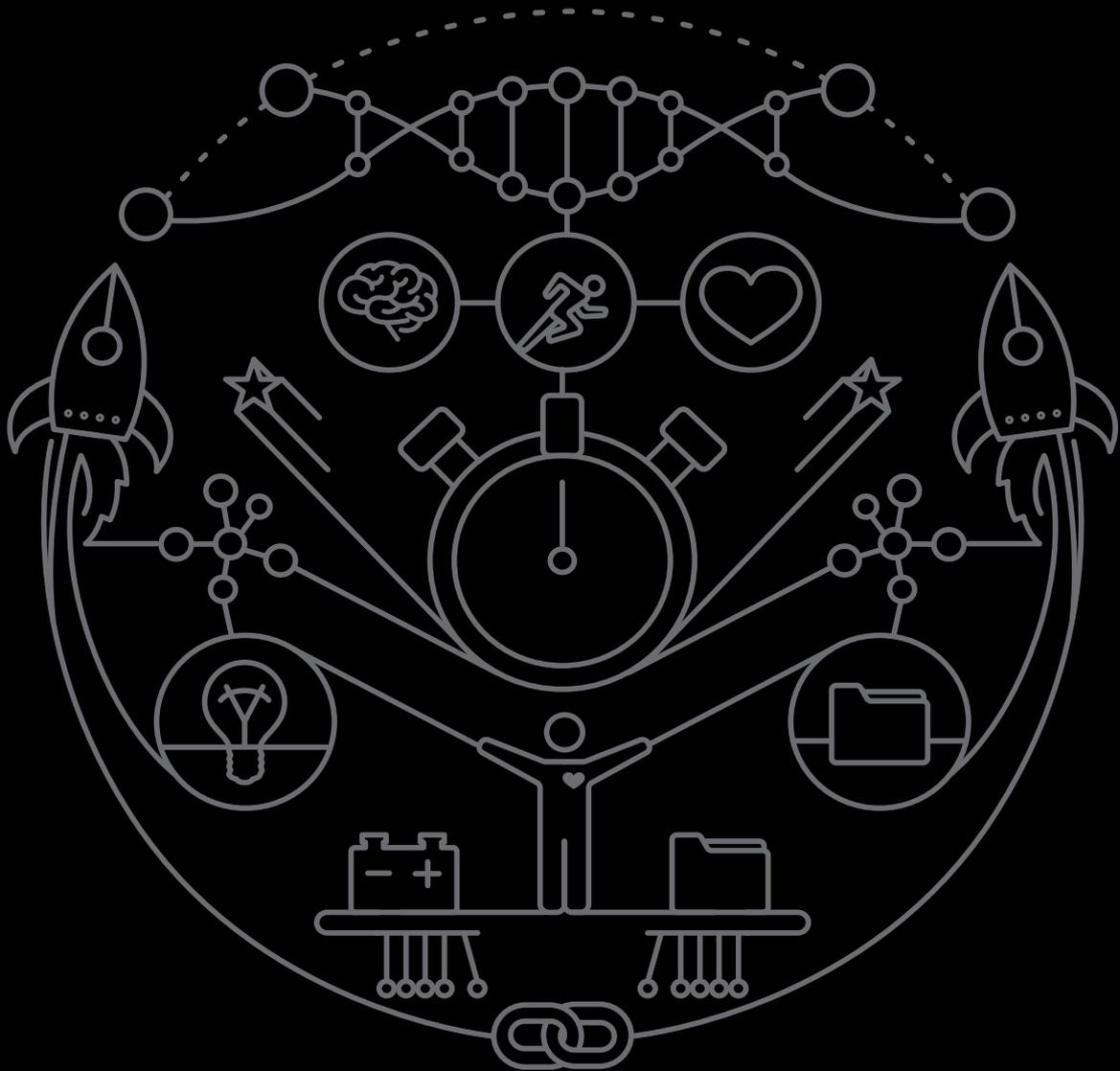


# Burnout and *Stress*

the most significant inhibitor for optimal business performance





## “Highly stressed!”

That would be most people’s choice of words when asked for a succinct description of their average workdays, thanks to the complexities that have crept into modern workplaces in recent years.

Most working people today have to both cope with the massive amounts of information coming their way, and also possess the technical and soft skills to deal with the digital technology-driven changes to the business processes they engage in daily. People are also finding themselves having to navigate often slow-to-change organisational cultures, which have not evolved enough to reflect the greater diversity among today’s business leaders and the workforce.

The experience can be, and often is, physically and emotionally draining. Most people cope by relying on the body’s stress response to generate the hormones cortisol and adrenalin for the energy to keep going. Sometimes, they rely on stimulants such as coffee and energy drinks to get through the day, and substances such as alcohol to take the edge off at night. Exercise, leisure activities or disconnecting completely from work in this wide-spread scenario are considered unnecessary indulgences.

This is neither healthy nor sustainable. And it can spell doom for a business when its most productive employees, who are most likely suffering from the effects of working in this adrenalised state, reach breaking point and burn out.

Business leaders need to ask themselves if this is a risk their business can afford to continue ignoring? The answer is no, ignoring this risk would be costly, if not terminal, for a business in the long term.

The organisations that are poised for success in the future are those that are implementing a strategy to use smart, mobile, analytics and cloud (SMAC) technologies to help their employees manage workplace stress and anxiety. One way of doing it is relying on an external service provider to run a wellness or rewards programme that encourages employees to focus on their health and well-being. Another more effective way is through integrating SMAC technologies into business and leadership functions.

Deloitte Digital Africa has developed an innovative SMAC digital solution called EnergiseMe, the solution gauges the energy state of an organisation’s people, and provides them with the tools and knowledge to navigate the gauntlet of workplace stress triggers. The solution also gives leaders a picture of the energy state of the organisation and empowers them to proactively make the changes to the design of the workplace environment to ensure people are productive, sustainably.

Real-time dashboards display the aspects and behaviours that trigger stress in a business, be it at the individual, team or organisational level. It could be that an organisation is underperforming because its people feel their work lacks purpose, thus disengaging. A desire to perform meaningful work is, after all, a trend we are seeing more of, especially among the large numbers of millennials who have entered the workforce. However, as more and more processes become automated and digitised, it becomes harder for people to see where what they do fits in the bigger picture, or why it matters.

Or it could be that a particular team isn’t operating optimally because of a poor working relationship with their line manager, due to differences in preferred management styles or cultural norms. No matter the trigger, EnergiseMe puts the power in the hands of individuals and business leaders to make the changes needed to sustain productivity and reduce, if not eliminate, the sources of stress in the workplace.

Beyond the cold, hard metrics of financial outcomes, a business that equips its leaders and people with the tools to identify their personal energisers and drainers stands to benefit in a more substantial way. When people are less stressed, tired and wired, they are more likely to exhibit more human traits, such as empathy, patience, creativity and ultimately creating a sustained high-performing culture.

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