

Snooze To Lose And Profit In The End

By Robert Selders, Jr.

Numerous studies show nearly 50% of Americans have difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep.

Newsstands and libraries, to corporate firm lobbies, and coffee shops are replete with publications ranging from the Wall Street Journal to USA Today all citing, at some point or another, sleep deprivation as America's latest silent epidemic.

With small businesses making up 99.7% of all employer firms and having created 65% of the nation's net new jobs for the past 17 years, sleep deprivation is not an issue we can afford to ignore.

Intellectually we know that inadequate sleep can adversely affect us in many ways: problem solving skills, written and verbal communication skills, learning and memory skills, and motor skills. This can especially be a huge problem for small businesses and their employees because it can also lead to impaired judgment, diminished productivity and creativity, slower reaction times, and inability to focus and concentrate leading to lost opportunities and lower profits.

Additionally, sleep deprivation can also lead to unwanted weight gain. Dr. David Rapoport, Associate Professor and Director of the Sleep Medicine Program at the New York University School of Medicine in New York City indicates that the hormones leptin and ghrelin can influence our appetite and their production also influences how much or how little we sleep.

Ever stay awake to meet an important deadline, only to experience a sleepless night and then wake up the next day feeling ravenous? No matter what you ate or when you ate it, you never felt fully satisfied? Then you've experienced these hormones at work.

Ghrelin (produced in the gastrointestinal tract, stimulates appetite) and leptin (produced in the fat cells, notifies the brain when you're full) both act as a check and balance system to control feelings of hunger and satiety according to Michael Breus, PhD, of the Atlanta School of Sleep Medicine and Director of The Sleep Disorders Centers of Southeastern Lung Care in Atlanta.

Breus points out that when you don't get enough sleep, it drives ghrelin levels up, which stimulates your appetite and you desire more food. Sleep deprivation also causes leptin levels to decrease, which means you don't feel as satisfied after you've eaten.

This is a very dangerous combination because you'll continue to eat and your brain doesn't get the signal that you're actually full...even after you've waited the standard 20 minutes. Over time, these additional calories will show up in unwanted and unsightly places.

Researchers continue to look at this in more detail, however one thing is for sure: if you and your employees want to improve productivity, profits, and lose weight, getting a few extra hours of sleep each night can help. You'll have more energy and significantly fewer cravings for sweets and other high carb snacks and energy drinks to keep you awake – you'll lose weight because you're taking in less empty calories and will be more focused, productive, and creative at the office.

So if you're regularly staying up past your bedtime to finish business meetings or complete last minute projects, do yourself a favor: get to bed and snooze, it may be just the thing you need to lose...weight that is; and improve productivity and profits in your business.

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