

## **TIME, ENERGY AND THE INTERNET**

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**Abstract:** In the words of Michael Gerber (1994) “Everyone is an entrepreneur”. We are all the managers of a company of one, and whether that company fares well compared to others depends on two things, input and output. Whether our company makes a profit of 300, 3000 or 300 000 depends on how well we utilize the resources that are available to us. The resources readily available and at our disposal are 86,400 ounces of time per day as well as a constantly replenishing source of energy. Whether we spend them for something we need, invest it for something we will need or outright throw it away is the determining factor of how successful our companies will be. As a relatively recent addition we now have an inexhaustible, constantly expanding source of free and factually correct information ready to be used anywhere, anytime and under any circumstances. But in the words of Uncle Ben from Spiderman “With great power, comes great responsibility”, and what we’re witnessing as of late is a lack of understanding of the power we possess, the avoidance of responsibility and the misuse of resources on a scale larger than ever before.

In this work, I will first break our company of one in to two building blocks, or energies i.e. Mental Energy- or our ability to focus, learn, develop and work and Emotional Energy- our desires, fears, ambitions and relationships with people, which are all representative of our capacity for constructive behaviors. It will describe the

processes of managing, expanding and focusing said energies in order to significantly improve our input-output ratio.

Later I will focus on the physiological and psychological weaknesses that render us vulnerable to online businesses' strategies, which are utilized against us in order for us to freely provide them with all of our available time, energy, attention in return for some salvation from boredom and the potential of stumbling upon something meaningful. Here we will discuss how to optimize the process of acquiring meaningful and relevant information not only about topics that are interesting to us, but also about things that might make us feel uncomfortable, things that will make us doubt what we already know. To use this infinite source of information, not as something that just confirms our beliefs, but as a tool for us to explore and discover new horizons, expand on our perspective and start to understand... rather than just know.

As you may have noticed, this report will not be written in the most "traditional" of senses. The methodology I will use is auto-ethnography, whereby I will use the empirically tested knowledge I have gained while looking for a solution to my own problem with internet addiction and the depression and isolation that followed as a result of it. Having spent an upward of 12-14 hours per day in front of a monitor for most of the past 4 years of my life I've started to see some patterns that would otherwise be hard to notice. Now maybe I've gone a bit crazy from all the computer radiation and the enormous quantities of information I've absorbed from my laptop, but keep reading and I will try, to the best of my abilities to both entertain and educate, and overall make it worth your while.

## **Introduction**

Look around you, depending on where you are there's at least one technologically advanced device at your disposal which you can use to connect to almost anyone on the planet and gain almost any information or skill you could imagine. And we look at cats. Technology plays a significant role in how we learn, how we work, how we communicate and generally our abilities to use technology constructively determines how we live. Each person carrying a smart phone in his pocket, has a greater ability to receive factually correct information and make quick, informed decisions compared to even the president of the U.S. less than 20 years ago. Up until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the amount of information we accumulated would double every century or so. Currently this happens every 12-14 months (Russel, 2013). Which is awesome! But not that awesome. You see, as a species, we have developed to depend on information as a determining factor to our survival. Distinguishing between the edible and the poisonous fruits, the animals we can eat and the ones that can eat us, the people that we can trust and the ones that want to harm us. So we're constantly expanding our knowledge pool, seeking new things that will make us better prepared for the dangers to come, more adapt to the situation and more relatable to others(as there's safety in numbers). But currently most of the resources required for our survival are readily available at the click of a button or a short walk to the store (maybe a long walk). But our human programming pushes us to find new threats, to prepare for unforeseen obstacles and keeps us in a constant state of fight or flight, either running away from an uncomfortable task or striving towards a desired outcome, or both at the same time, like watching cat videos with the hope of feeling better while worrying about the 8 page report you are procrastinating on which in terms ruins your mood.

We simply cannot cope with the enormous quantities of information constantly pouring over our heads. There's constantly a new threat, a new disease to worry about, or a food item you've eaten for your whole life all of a sudden starts causing cancer, a new study telling you how to live your life or gazillionaire entrepreneur telling you that you simply MUST HAVE these (habits, principles, mindsets "insert generic term") in order to be successful and if you ever do anything different than that then you will be a loser and a failure for the rest of your and no one will love you. And we think to ourselves "Damn, this guy writes articles on the internet. He must be smart. I better start worrying" without considering that the new disease could be just a pharmaceutical company looking to introduce a new drug on the market, or the entrepreneur was just lucky to get where he is and is now just looking to add another zero behind his back, but he's on your facebook feed so he must be right, right? So essentially, we give control over our emotional and intellectual worlds, to someone, who doesn't necessarily hold our best interest in mind. Which, is essentially the purpose of every good salesman, to make you think, and to make you feel. The issue arises when we understand, that the price we're paying with our time, attention and emotion is more than the value of the product we're getting. So I'll argue that the internet has become more than just a necessity, it has become a way of life and an addiction. The constant competition over our time has refined the process of keeping us engaged to the point where anytime we are not holding a device in our hand and keeping ourselves busy, we feel bored.

And we all know how bad being bored feels.

### **Literature Review**

Within the literature review I will first describe in as much details as possible the 2 energies i.e. emotional, mental within the framework of the 4 energies (Loehr,

Schwartz, and Bull, 2007). I have omitted spiritual and physical energy as the length and the format would not allow for such a lengthy discussion. I will identify the building blocks of said energies and provide the necessary scientific backup, by using a mixture of journals on psychology, medicine, neurology as well as some TED talks and other scientifically backed articles. Upon completing that I will also try to provide viable methods and techniques to increase individual energies, as well as methods to not allow them to be high jacked by outside influence. As you will notice, the energies are intertwined. And when the concept of time management is introduced to them, a whole new thing is born. The literature review will conclude with an explanation of how our desire to replenish these energies is used as a tool by corporations online to influence us into staying/buying/watching/reading or whatever you might be doing online. Sounds fun right? Let's get down to it.

### **Emotional Energy**

“We are not thinking machines that feel. We are feeling machines that think.”(Damasio, 2010)

There is a common misconception that human beings are rational creatures. In his book “Psychology of Investing” Nofsinger (2012) attributes some aspects of the financial crisis as well as many mishaps within the world of investing to a simple yet very important miscalculation. Most of the software used within the major investment banks was based on the misconception that humans... or in this situation investors, are rational beings capable of making educated decisions without emotion.

No one is able to completely shut down his or her emotions, and really even if we think we are making a rational and educated decision it is more likely than not to be influenced by emotion (Fredrickson & Nakamura, 2001). The problem with emotions is that people rarely know exactly which emotion is driving them in that

particular moment, they are really hard to identify and even harder to control. Another problem is that negative emotions are a lot stronger in terms of our physical reaction to them and a lot more memorable in comparison to positive ones, therefore we could easily get the misconception that everything in our lives is going bad and there isn't anything to be happy about.

Emotion is one of the more rarely discussed topics when it comes to business and science. Although everything points to the idea that emotional intelligence has a much bigger impact on career success compared to skill level (Bradberry, 2015) the subject is so complicated, that business education seems to avoid it. Emotion helps in memory formation, motivation, building of habits and strongly affects our perception of the world (Csikszentmihalyi,2001). My research shows that control of the emotional world is one of the aims of successful people, being able to utilize the power of emotions, the ability to reframe negative experiences into positive ones as well as to appreciate your achievements could provide a significant tool in stimulating productive behaviors and remaining focused and motivated (Fredrickson, 2004). Both positive and negative emotions have their respective roles in the lives of every successful person, and every person in general. In regards to how they affect us The “Broaden and build (Fredrickson, 2004)” theory provides the best explanation. Basically negative emotions activate the part of the brain responsible for the fight or flight reflex, called the lizard brain, a remnant of our ancient ancestors which narrows our spectrum of possible outcomes in order to allow us to make quick decisions and avoid danger. Positive emotions have the opposite effect, they broaden our perspective, joy sparks, the urge to play, interest sparks, the desire to explore etc. (Fredrickson, 2004).

When it comes to emotion, there is one thing that impacts it more than anything else. People. This is the main reason as to why I find the current state of social interaction especially disturbing. The average Facebook user has 338 friends (Mazie, 2016) which mean we're more connected than ever, which in terms should mean that we're happier than ever right? Wrong. In fact it causes us more stress than we could imagine. There is now such a thing like Facebook status anxiety, whereby the pressure of people seeing your thoughts and feelings feels as though we are being judged (Basulto, 2012). Others have linked Facebook to depression due to the unrealistic expectations it puts on us. The problem is that on Facebook people would share only their best selves, to the point where the avatar whose account we're managing feels as though it is a different entity from the real person behind it (Psy, 2015). I've personally experienced that, when I would feel inadequate, and looking at all the happy faces and party people would make me wonder whether there really is something wrong with me, whether people are really that happy and I'm the only one feeling dead inside. The important thing to remember is that most of the time, we act on instinct. We make emotional decision, which we later rationalize in order to give explanation to ourselves, and to whoever else might need it.

### **Mental Energy**

Knowing that we are primarily emotional creatures does not, however, mean that knowledge does not play an important role towards achieving control and prosperity. Au contraire, with the abundance of information we have today, he who is able to go through the barren field of useless stupidity and get a hold of the small deposits of gold hidden underneath does indeed hold the upper hand in any situation. Successful individuals tend to get into the habit of constantly acquiring relevant

information that helps them achieve their goals, and never feeling content with their knowledge.

When it comes to mental energy, scientists have identified that there are 2 entirely different modes in which the brain functions i.e. focused mode and diffused mode, or as it is described in the academic literature Default Mode (BUCKNER, ANDREWS-HANNA, and SCHACTER, 2008). The 2 modes are entirely different in the way our brain functions. During the state of focus, we basically create new neurological patterns within our brains, which through repetition and understanding move within our long term memory. The default mode network however takes a much broader perspective. During that state our thoughts do not follow any predetermined pattern. Rather we are able to perceive and understand how the newly acquired knowledge fits within our current base of knowledge and understanding.

The internet is a master of constantly keeping our minds occupied. Be it with facts about platypuses, Kim Kardashian's ass or whatever other trash we're willing to take from it. Now don't get me wrong, I do not believe in discrimination against information, anything that will make me a tiniest bit more relatable, or knowledgeable on a topic (yes, even the mainstream pop culture) is something that I would gladly consume, in small quantities of course. However, there are people that devote their lives to that. Constantly consuming information about some made up persona and giving away their most valuable resources, in return for knowledge that has 0 impact on how they live their lives.

### **Time and Energy**

“The only currency that we really have to spend during our lives is time. Everything else is just a sub-category.” Stephen R. Bown

Giving our time to something, or someone, is the only real way for us to show our love. Be it in the intellectual world or the emotional one, if we're thinking about it, reading about it, learning about it or talking about it we're giving it the only real resource we have. From that aspect, it can be said that the internet, is really just a place where people compete for your love. And, having given a bit too much love, to the most profane of things, we sometimes are left with too little to give to the people that actually matter. So when we start thinking about the different combinations of time, emotion and thought we get to some fascinating yet scary conclusions. Most articles and videos online are based on a few things. They want our attention in order to do that 3 things must happen. First of all they need to engage us emotionally, so that we even consider clicking on their link/website/article/video, usually this happens through the use of a cute or disturbing picture, some music playing in the background or an engaging sentence "This raccoon learned to drive a car and you WONT BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT". Then they need to engage your intellect, if the account is your personal one, then it's okay, they already know what you like, so somehow the information will be very relevant and intriguing for you. You like entrepreneurship, look how this guy made a million bucks in a week. You prefer kittens, we have you covered, go have a 12 hour marathon if you like. Unfortunately research shows that technology , although empowering on a certain level actually harms our attention span. A research done on 2600 children showed that exposure to television in infancy creates long term harm on the attention span of the children (Christakis et al., 2004) some argue that the harm done from internet browsing is even more severe due to the ability to get anything you want, anytime you want it. According to (Watson, 2015) humans now have an attention span of around 8 seconds, due to smartphones and other devices that are capable of giving us

momentary high at any time, in the form of sending a message, getting a like or taking a photo of your food, basically, getting some lovin’.

There is however, a more powerful combination of these resources. If we have both rational and emotional attachment to something, and we decide to devote our time to it, people are capable of accomplishing extraordinary feats. This is called willpower. Willpower is one of the most important skills that anyone can develop, it is however an exhaustible resource like everything else (Baumeister et al., 1998). When we are motivated and willing to accomplish a certain thing, is when the true beauty of the internet shines. This is when we can focus everything on consciously gathering, refining and bundling information together to create something extraordinary. But, as stated earlier, it is an exhaustible resource, and this is where sites like facebook can again harm our productivity. You see, every time we make a choice, we exhaust a little bit of that energy. And the fun thing is, that facebook is basically one big choice making platform. You choose whether to reply to that person or not, whether to read that article or not, whether to like a comment or not and without even noticing, we’ve scrolled down a few times, read a few articles, and what do you know, now you don’t have the willpower to make the decision to get back to work. And the worst thing is, you are not even the one making the choices, you choose from a predetermined variety that facebook has decides is relevant to you. This takes us to the next point.

### **Psychology in Technology**

Currently one of the highest priorities for all designers, content creators and website developers is to make everything more intuitive. On one side this is fascinating, as everything becomes easier and more accessible. On the other hand it could mean losing track of time and spending inordinate amounts of time on

unproductive tasks. The part I personally find annoying at best and terrifying at worst is that most of it is accomplished through the use of algorithms tailored specifically to our behavioral patterns through the use of Big Data. Big Data is basically all of the information that we generate through our online presence. It measures EVERYTHING, from our location through everything we've seen online, the amount of time it took us to decide to click on something, the amount of time we spent on that something, the pictures we've looked at, the people we've talked to. Yeah, Everything pretty much sums it up. And once it gets that information, the algorithm then decides on what to show you, but it shows you what IT thinks you want to see, not necessarily the things you need to see. In the words of Mark Zuckerberg "A squirrel dying in your front yard, might be more relevant to your interests right now than people dying in Africa" (Thoughts Awakening., 2011) and that's both very sad, and very scary. So in effect Facebook and Google can omit valuable information under the pretext that you simply wouldn't be interested in it. While at the same time force feeding your subconscious mind with information that they deem valuable. And we have to keep in mind, that the only agenda these two companies have with us, is to use our time in order to generate ad revenue and they have no other obligation than towards their shareholders. They have no moral obligation, no ethical standards, and as of late, it seems as though a good deal of censorship is going around as well.

What I mean is the recent demonetization of controversial YouTube videos (Eordogh, 2016).

Or the fact that Google's search results were adjusted so that Hillary Clintons controversies don't come out in suggestions, using the bandwagon effect, otherwise known as herd mentality. Whereby, if you've seen the most googled results you are more likely to click on them rather than search for something else. (Motley, 2016)

Or the fact that Facebook's algorithm is designed to create a feedback loop, whereby we're constantly given information which is in sync with our thoughts and basically sends us into a confirmation bias loop, where, either because of indifference or lack of vision, we end up constantly nodding our heads and admiring how right we are about everything. (Veritasium, 2014)

### **Concussion**

So in this Conclusion/Discussion I want to make a couple of bold statements. First of all, let's try not to give away the key to your consciousness to people that only wish to profit from it. Although, considering the current speed at which A.I. technology is developing we might be a bit too late for that. Second, don't think that the game is rigged against us, because it's not, it's just people wanting to make money at the expense of other people (capitalism at its finest). The technology by itself is perfect, it progresses our species and constantly, the problem is, that while the software is constantly upgrading, the hardware has barely moved for the past 20-30 thousand years. We still function in pretty much the same way in terms of all the biochemical reactions and neurological reactions to stimuli, however, now there are more stimuli than ever, so maybe, just maybe, instead of constantly looking to the future, learning about it and worrying about it, we should stop and look inside for a moment. Learn to understand ourselves better, learn to know our bodies, our minds and when we do, no amount of manipulation and influence can stray us from the path we've chosen to walk. If you've somehow gotten hold of this report, and have experienced similar problems with addiction to the internet, allow me to give you a personal suggestion. Remember when we talked about the default mode network in mental energy, meditation is pretty much the opposite of it. While in DMN you focus on everything, meditation is about focusing on nothing. This topic has been a major

trend in recent years and has been adapted by most of the major entrepreneurs around the world, ( if you don't believe me google any famous entrepreneur's name + meditation) Now I can't really go into much detail about all of the benefits of meditation but if you are interested these journals from Harvard and Yale go into much detail of all the neurological and physical changes that occur as a result of it i.e. growth of grey matter, boost in neurotransmitters such as dopamine, epinephrine, glutamate and reduction of cortisol as well as improvement in focus to point out few.

(<http://www.pnas.org/content/108/50/20254.short>)

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1361002/> and are well summarized within this short video ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAcTIrA2Qhk> ) Oh, and coincidentally, the medically proven “happiest man alive” says it only takes 15 minutes a day to be this happy (Shontell, 2016)

And remember, the internet is similar to people in one special way, it won't teach you anything unless you know how to ask. Learn. Learn about learning, learn about yourself, determine what's important and what's not. Clean your facebook likes, as you are not the same person that decided to like them, or better yet, delete that mood altering asshole. Subscribe to the important channels on youtube, don't just use it for music and cat videos.

We are all entrepreneurs, take responsibility, take control, take action. If you just float down the river of information, you either drown, or barely scrape the surface. Learn to swim in it, learn to have fun and enjoy the ride. The information is all there, you just need to find it.

As for the technologies of the future, it is my strong belief, that people who have the most knowledge about the technologies of the past, about the mechanics of

our bodies about the processes in our minds will be more adaptable, more fulfilled and more successful, no matter what comes their way. Do that and you will be in control of the most advanced technology known to humans: other humans.

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