

## How to Work Hard Without Burning Out

by [Eric Herrenkohl](#)



Chris Carmichael, Lance's coach, tells a great story about meeting a bike racer who bragged about having ridden or raced his bike every single day for years. Carmichael looked at him incredulously and asked how his body was holding up. The bike racer then deluged him with a list of injuries he had suffered but had "ridden through."

As Carmichael says, this is an example of a guy who doesn't understand that you have to have some easy days (and some days off) in order to push yourself to the edge on your tough workout days. Most bike racers have difficulty accepting this and so, as the saying goes, their easy days are too hard and their hard days are not hard enough. Because they refuse to pace themselves, they also are unable to push themselves to the edge when they should.

During this last year, my "hard days" got harder because I was writing a book – but my easy days got harder too. I simply ran out of time to get everything done. Then I realized that I had to stop trying to control everything that was going on. I was getting overwhelmed. Instead, I had to schedule in some easy days to let me recover and help me keep working hard and smart.

**Performance Principle:** We all have to figure out how to work hard without burning out. Here

are a couple of practical steps that have helped me do this during the past year.

First, I am doing my best to bring closure to each day. When I walk out of my office at the end of the day, I am working hard to have completed at least the most important tasks of the day so that I can have a sense of closure.

Second, I am working hard to keep my weekends work-free (or at least my Sundays, I am writing this on a Saturday morning).

Third, I have started to schedule an occasional strategy day out of the office. I did this a couple of weeks ago, and it was amazing. I had a breakfast meeting out of the office, and I just did not go back. I took my laptop, went to a coffee shop, and thought, strategized and planned. I couldn't get my wireless connection to work, so I didn't even have wireless access – and it made the day better, not worse. Fewer distractions and no email helped me create a to-do list and set my priorities. I did that planning three weeks ago and I have been more productive since because I have a plan to follow.

So, think about some ways to schedule some easy days into your schedule that will make you stronger and more endurable for the work you have to get done.

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