

Business stress busters you need to know

by Kate McIntyre | 04 Dec 2020

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Email to a colleague

Andrew May is no stranger to the challenges of the past eight months. As a small business operator, the CEO and founder of Strive Stronger said his business lost about 90% of its revenue when COVID-19 hit; prompting him to execute a “digital backflip” and transition his mostly face-to-face performance coaching business into an online offering. His success in doing so is surely why NAB chose to partner with Strive Stronger to deliver Business Fit; a complimentary online program designed to help business owners and staff increase their resilience, transition to new ways of working and look after their physical and psychological wellbeing. *MPA* spoke with May for his top business stress busting tips for brokers.

1. Breathe properly

It may sound simple, but the way we breathe can have a huge effect on our health – and our performance. May recommends taking time every day to breathe deeply and fully, particularly during stressful moments, keeping in mind the Hebrew proverb: “This too shall pass.”

2. Look at what you need to do to evolve

There have been several changes in the finance industry over the past couple of years, but the core business of being a broker has remained the same - developing and maintaining good relationships in order to be a trusted source of information.

Keeping this in mind, it is important to look at what you need to do to evolve and adapt in the rapidly changing landscape of lending. A good example is the move towards using video call technology to conduct meetings in place of face-to-face contact.

“It’s a different skillset to having a coffee and being with someone face to face,” said May. “Spend some time to really master that.”

May recommends buying a good quality webcam, an external monitor and good lighting in order to create the best digital image possible.

“That’s the way you present now,” he said. “It’s really important to have that looking professional.”

He said to remember that not every call needs to be a video call – sometimes a good old-fashioned phone call is just as good and can even help people to focus better on what is being said.

3. Look after your energy levels

Our bodies are full of energy powerhouse cells called mitochondria – and when we stop moving, these cells shrivel away, said May. This can leave us feeling tired and depleted, but, luckily, there are ways to ramp up our mitochondria and recharge our energy levels.

May said avoiding alcohol, exercising regularly and being in nature can help – as can being in cold water every day. Swimming in the ocean during winter is one way to recharge, but if this isn’t practical or possible, ending each shower with 60-90 seconds of cold water could do wonders for your energy levels, he said.

Remember to breathe deeply and slowly while doing this – and don’t jump straight into a cold shower without spending some time in the warm water first.

4. Improve your mindset with mental skills training

Just like you can train someone to have product knowledge in sales, so you can train your own mind to think and perform in different ways, said May. Most of us develop mental habits based on those of our parents, but it is possible to step back and reauthor whatever negative thoughts are coursing through our minds.

Journal writing is a simple exercise that can enable us to identify the way we react to our circumstances – the patterns of automatic negative thoughts we may have - and ponder ways we can change our attitude. Writing down the things you are grateful for in your life can also help, he added.

A “trigger” is another helpful tool that can help you train your mindset. This involves creating a cue in the form of a word or saying that helps you to focus your intention and be present in the moment. For instance, before meeting a client, you could affirm “be mindful” to yourself mentally in order to create the right headspace when interacting with them.

In addition to this, spending the first five minutes of your day watching your breath and being present in the moment can help to calm you down and be responsive rather than reactive, he said. Setting a daily intention and avoiding technology for at least 20 minutes afterwards can also help.

5. Future-proof your business

We all hear talk of future-proofing – but what does this really mean? May said future-proofing is all about building a buffer in your life now in order to help you stay strong for the future. This involves carving out some time to manage your energy and exploring learning options in order to stay relevant over the next two, three and five years. Appreciative inquiry is an important mindset to adopt – think of the way a child always asks “why” and “how” when learning something new.

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