

flip the switch

why performance increases when you play hard and recover even harder



andrew may

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burnout goes global

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the challenge

the world has changed
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1

the challenge

falling walls,
computer geeks and
forks in the road

When did life suddenly become so hectic and fast-paced? Every time you pick up the paper, watch the news or even just walk out of your front door you're likely to encounter something else that's new, improved, faster, smaller. How about these:

- One-minute bedtime stories
- Express lanes in fast food restaurants
- Speed-dating.

Not to mention the following company slogans:

- When it absolutely, positively, has to be there overnight (Fedex)
- We update the news every second, on the second (BBC)
- On demand (IBM)

Can somebody please tell me what happened? Why does everything absolutely, positively have to be there overnight? And when did we start expecting everything on demand?

Measured in bits and bytes

When did speed not only take over, but suddenly consume every part of our lives? Every year, month, week, day, minute, our lives are dissected and measured in bits and bytes.

Like it or not, the way we live and work has changed forever. Even the speed of change seems to have quickened up. Just think about how much the world has changed in the last five or six years. And while the digital age has brought with it some stunning improvements to our lives, it has also whipped us into a fast-paced, on-demand, 24/7 frenzy.

Every day is a Grand Final game

Thanks to modern technology, we can now work faster and longer than ever before, no matter where we are in the world. But on the flipside, we're all under constant pressure to perform, day-in, day-out. Every day is a Grand Final day. No wonder so many people are turning up physically, but switching off mentally. Many of us simply can't fully cope with everyday life anymore.

Extra leisure time – what a myth

Not so long ago social commentators pondered what we would do to fill in all the additional leisure time we'd have as a result of technology improving the speed and efficiency of our lives and work. Remember those futuristic 60s movies where every appliance in the house had a remote control? You could virtually program the robot to cook your dinner for you. These visions of the future were kind of right in realising that technology would 'save' us time. (Try doing your laundry in an old-fashioned wringer machine, or mowing the lawn with a push blade mower, or imagine how it took my mother-in-law six weeks to get from Copenhagen to Sydney on a boat when she emigrated from Denmark and you'll get the picture.) However those visions of the future completely missed the mark in terms of how we've chosen to spend that 'extra' time. Rather than working shorter days, or fewer days, we work harder and longer than ever. The internet has revolutionised the workplace, no one can deny that. But how much extra work has it created?

Technology is one part of the whole – the other is that somehow social expectations have changed. We carry our work-technology with us everywhere and therefore can work on our computers late at night at home, or take a work call on our mobiles while on holiday. But this isn't just workaholism, it's also about the expectations of our employers. Maybe it's something to do with our affluent society – where we have more money than ever before, yet there is an expectation that we're paid well but have to work much harder for the privilege than our parents' generation did.

The entire world is on fast-forward. Instead of opting for the logical choice of more leisure time, somehow, unconsciously or otherwise, we've chosen more work time. We're chained to our desks, laptops, PDAs and mobiles in an effort to get more done. In theory the aim is to get off the treadmill, to have more leisure time to enjoy our lives. But what really happens is that our behaviour simply speeds the treadmill up ... faster and faster and faster.

The rules have changed

The speed and intensity of the modern world puts totally different stresses and pressures on us than our parents or grandparents ever had to endure. For our grandparents, stress was about drought, floods, war and famine. The world was different. Your job was for life, in most cases. People worked nine-to-five days – that is, they actually went home at 5 pm.

(Sound familiar? Probably not.)

Families were likely to live nearby and could help out with the kids. People saved for a new car or a family holiday to the beach. Modern-day stress includes traffic gridlocks, email overload, data deluge and ever-climbing credit limits, the struggle to find childcare, not to mention paying off that whopping mortgage. Today's stress has a lot to do with an increasingly fragmented society. We rely on computers for work, for social lives, for keeping in touch with relatives. We're connected 24/7, always available and on call, even during our down-time. Because of this we need a different set of rules to not only survive, but thrive in the modern world.

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Always connected, always on

This constant, on-demand connection makes it almost impossible to 'switch off' at the end of the day – with email, the internet, wireless connections, laptops and BlackBerrys, we're always connected, always on. Eventually this takes its toll on our energy levels, and

our relationships. Holidays are something we store up and collect rather than use. Weekends are a thing of the past: too often, they're nothing more than a good time to catch up on all the backlog of work. The word 'weekend' is actually meant to be two separate words – 'week' and 'end'.

We can work anywhere, any time. No excuses. But the end result is that for many people, the end of the day or week never comes. Work has infiltrated our every waking minute and has a constant 24/7 presence in our lives. We're way too busy and don't have enough time to recover, recharge and renew.

Before we get into the solutions, let's take a little trip down memory lane and take a look at how quickly the world really has changed...

A trip down memory lane ... in the family Kingswood

I can remember as an eight-year-old when my father packed us into the family car, the mighty Holden Kingswood, and proudly drove us to his office, just outside Glen Innes, in country New South Wales. Dad was a Sheep and Wool Officer with the Department of Agriculture and he had just received the very latest technological instalment from the Department. A device so revolutionary, so exciting and so fast that it would literally transform the way people in his organisation worked and communicated. And the machine in question? The facsimile. Back in 1982 when dad and his colleagues received this amazing new machine, it replaced the faithful old telex. (Now if you can remember this, don't fret. You're not old – it just means you have a lot of experience!)

These new machines were so much quicker and more efficient. I remember watching in amazement as this



big metallic device hissed and hummed then spat and spluttered a message from one of dad's colleagues in Orange, at least 700 kilometres on the other side of the state. Wow! And it only took three and a half minutes to spit out one thermal page. Dad could receive three pages of data in just over ten minutes. This seemed amazing, so much quicker than writing a letter and having to wait two or three working days for it to arrive via snail mail. A new era was born and speed was becoming king.

Moore's Law and the last twenty-five years

Fast forward twenty-five years and a lot has happened. Can you imagine having to wait three and a half minutes to receive a fax (if you still have one); or three and a half minutes to receive an email; let alone three and a half minutes to receive a text message? We get irate if we have to wait more than three and a half seconds!

In 1966 Gordon Moore, the founder of Intel Corporation, the manufacturer of the Pentium processor, proclaimed that the power and complexity of the silicon chip would double every twelve to eighteen months.

This eighteen-month prediction has proven true. Processing speed has doubled at least every eighteen months. Today's silicon chip is four million times as powerful as its predecessor only twenty-five years ago. Remember seeing the old pictures of high-powered computers that filled rooms floor-to-ceiling back in the 1960s? The latest tiny laptop has almost twice as much processing power as one of those cutting-edge 1960s computers.

So what do Pentium processors have to do with burn-out? Basically, there's a school of thought that agrees with Moore's Law, but applies it to the speed of change in general. That is, the rate of change in our world is exponential and not linear. And if you thought things were speeding up...you're absolutely right! Scientific and medical breakthroughs, technological change, and economic growth are just a few of the things that are causing our lives to feel more harried and rushed than ever before.

The world is flat

Thomas Friedman, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The World is Flat*, talks about the world as we know it changing in 1989 when the Berlin wall came down. While we watched this unfold on TV (and a big, clunky one too ... no plasma or LCD back then!) we really had no idea at the time that this would be the catalyst to add rocket fuel to the pace at which we work and live. Within the space of months Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania had all overthrown their communist regimes. The fall of the iron curtain fundamentally altered the world's balance of power. It also meant an official end to the Cold War.

When the wall came tumbling down we moved from east and west; it ceased being us and them; and we

formed a collective – in essence a flatter structure and a level playing field. Suddenly the entire world was starting to become a level playing field. With the roll out of fibre-optic cable across the Atlantic, linking continental Europe to the far east and Russia, down under the ocean and into the Middle East, straight to South East Asia and then through the Pacific and into Australasia – suddenly we were all connected. Through the World Wide Web you can talk to friends holidaying in Alaska; check up on colleagues working for the parent company in Stockholm; and buy cheap digital cameras direct from the factory outlet in China. Back in the 70s and even the early 80s – going overseas was a big thing. This year alone I will travel to London five or six times for work. We just pack up, jump on a plane and work across the other side of the planet like it's nothing revolutionary, nothing new. We send emails, IM, SMS and Skype in every time zone, anywhere, any how.

Global sun centres

Tonight while we sleep, regions all over the world spring to life and go to work. So while you're re-charging your batteries in Sydney, people in India and Pakistan start processing our accounts. As stockbrokers in Tokyo bed down for the night, their counterparts in New York are just getting going, checking their peripherals to see what's happened in Japan's money markets while they've been getting their beauty sleep. And when you hit the pillow in London, it spins around all over again and colleagues in Auckland start working on proposals and trying to get the one up on the competition with strategies ready to roll out the following day. Get the picture?



A snapshot of change

Then (late 80s/early 90s)	Now
Analogue	Digital
Rotary phone	Mobile phone
Record player	MP3/iPod
Fax machine	Email
Library	Internet
Typewriter	Laptop

Monster mobiles

Another story firmly imprinted in my mind goes back to the same year the Berlin Wall came tumbling down: 1989. We were living in Dubbo and my parents were just about to renovate the family home, complete with a brand new pool room. I had just ridden home from school and Mum and Dad were having a cuppa and sponge cake, proudly looking over the finished plans that had been dropped in by the architect. 'Better be quick and grab a slice, kids,' Dad said, offering up the sponge cake, 'the builder is on his way over.' 'What's he like?' I asked, taking a huge bite. 'Really successful,' replied Mum. 'He's got a mobile phone.'

My brother and I looked at each other and gave an accepting nod, devouring Mum's prized sponge cake. If he had a mobile, surely he must be good!

Amazing to think back on how having a mobile phone back then was such a status symbol. I can remember Macka the builder screeching to a halt in the driveway, his Holden work ute covered in a tonne of dust, complete with mandatory blue cattle dog tied up and barking loudly in the back. Stepping out, he reached back into the car and grabbed his mobile phone. It was so big he had to bend his knees to pick it up off the passenger seat. Come to think of it, I should have rushed outside to grab a spare wheelbarrow to help poor Macka carry it inside. It's a wonder he didn't do his back in.

Miniscule mobiles and the last five years

So you can see how the world really started to accelerate post-1989. Now let's talk about the last five years. Moore's Law continues to hold firm. In fact, it has been taken to an entirely new level. While we

have seen a number of changes over twenty-five years, the past five years have gone to an entirely new level. Broadband, wireless technologies and iPods have become ubiquitous. The entire sequence of human genes has been mapped. Stars are born not through record companies but simply via uploading their music onto MySpace for anyone, anywhere to listen to. China and India are on their way to becoming this century's superpowers, changing the global face of trade and international relations; our foods and crops are becoming increasingly genetically modified and 'smarter'.

Mobiles and many electronic devices are smaller, faster, more powerful. Today's mobile phone makes Macka's early adopter model look like an ancient relic. The only problem is we don't have museums big enough to display them in.

A few years back I bought the new Canon G2 digital camera hot off the shelf; it boasted a full 4.0 megapixels. All this in a digital camera so there were no worries about ever running out of 35mm film again. Wow! I couldn't wait to start using it.

The latest mobile phone not only fits into the palm of your hand, is a fully integrated MP3 player, weighs less than 70 grams but takes photos with more than six megapixels, and makes the G2 look like something of a dinosaur. But hang on, this was less than five years ago.

Crystal gazing

So can you see the path we have taken over the past few decades to get where we are today? The way we work, live and play has not just sped up; we are in super fast-forward.

And while this does bring some amazing advantages... hang on for the ride, because if you think the pace of life has changed in the past five years, just wait until

you see what's in store for the next five years!

Advantages of working faster

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that there are no benefits of working faster. Each month I can send an e-newsletter to thousands and thousands of people around the globe by pressing just one button. Fifteen years ago it would have taken days to write to each person individually. Or I can outsource tasks I'm not good at, which speeds up my efficiency massively and allows me to focus on what I do best. I can upload an audio file to www.elance.com and get someone in India, Ivanhoe or Idaho to type up my audio interview and send it back to me (with corrections) the following morning for the equivalent cost of buying lunch up the road.

I can run a conference event and take video footage, photos and then use my Mac to put together a slide show and video montage, set to the latest number one hit song that I just downloaded from iTunes. A similar package would have cost more than \$10,000 to \$15,000 for the equivalent output ten years ago.

And of course we can fly around the world relatively affordably and easily now; we can keep in touch with friends and loved ones with cheaper phone rates and the internet; and medical and scientific advances have improved the quality of life of many people. And so on.

Forks in the road

I really believe we have hit a fork in the road. There's no doubt that society is changing fast. And in some ways we are too. But humans can't evolve at the same kind of rapid speed that technology can – and so I believe that the journey forward has two very different and distinct paths we can choose. You can either carry

on trying to keep up with life, work and the world, getting gradually more stressed, and perhaps ending up joining the ever-expanding list of people who are broken, burnt out and battered. Or you can learn to not only survive, but thrive.



New world, new skills

To do this you'll need a completely different behaviour pattern and skillset. We weren't taught these skills at school, let alone university or at our company induction day. I'm talking about ensuring you're at an optimum level of physical, mental and emotional health to cope with life in the twenty-first century. This is what *Flip the Switch* is all about. I'll teach you the skills to be on when you have to, performing at your peak; and off when you can be – that is, the ability to relax, recover and recharge. I'll teach you the tricks that top athletes and high achievers use to stay on top of the game...

How do you turn up and turn on – rather than turning up and turning off?

So how do we sustain performance without hitting the wall? How do we survive in an on-demand society? How do we stay ahead of the pack without burning out?

This book provides a road map that'll show you how to sustain performance over the long term. I think it is not too difficult to have a good month, maybe even a good couple of months. It is much tougher, though, to continually back up and have a good year, then a great three years, followed by an unbelievable decade. It sounds too good to be true, right? Most of us struggle with day-to-day life, and it's too easy to think 'next year will be better' without taking a look at the stark reality: this year isn't going so well; I'm tired, stressed, harassed...over it! How on earth can you get on top of things enough to have a great year, let alone an unbelievable decade?

But that is what great performers do. They have the ability to back up week after week, month after month, year after year without burning out or running themselves into the ground. They also take regular time out to recover, recharge and renew.

Lessons from sport and business

I've been very fortunate that I've learnt from some of the best coaches and athletes in the business. The fifteen years I've spent working in sport have served as a classroom as I learn and absorb high-performance habits. I've had the opportunity of working with Kieren Perkins; David Misson (the Sydney Swans' Physical Performance Manager); the Sydney Swifts and NSW netball teams; Olympic athletes in basketball; tennis; hockey; softball and track and field; as well as the NSW and Australian cricket teams (including two great coaches in Steve Rixon and John Buchanan, two great captains in Steve Waugh and Ricky Ponting, and two absolute legends of the game, Glenn McGrath and Shane Warne)

In between travelling the world with elite sporting teams, I co-founded Australia's largest corporate health company, Good Health Solutions (GHS). GHS was bought out by the ACCOR international hotel company in 2003. As a consultant, I have worked with some great companies including Coca Cola, Ernst & Young, CB Richard Ellis, NAB, MLC, and more.

ON or OFF - the choice is yours

At some point, every great performer has made a choice. They've chosen to get with the program – to work hard, to relax hard, to excel. They've chosen to *Flip the Switch*.

So now it's time for you to make a choice. Have a look at the following list.

- Low energy levels and fatigue
- Too much to do, not enough time
- Spinning in circles and feeling out of control
- Wired up and unable to switch off, twenty-four hours a day
- Always feeling tired and flat
- Filling up on sugar and caffeine to get through the day
- Can't see a way out of the rat race
- Disorganised and disenchanting
- Underperforming in personal and/or professional life
- Stressed out, stretched out, burnt out

Does this sound like you? If so, maybe it's time for you to take charge and make some changes.

To take a new path sometimes requires a lot of effort and discipline. Our brains are wired to take short-cuts and the easier option; this helps save time by automating decisions. To make change is often not easy. Your body and mind will rebel as you learn new habits, new skills and new processes. But after you spend the time and energy these new skills will pay you back over and over again in improved efficiency, happiness and increased performance.

In this book, I'm going to show you a new path. I'll talk you through the proven techniques I've used with elite athletes – and top businessmen and women – helping them to achieve top levels of performance.

In the next chapter I'll discuss how so many people are getting stuck in a fast-forward society and how technology and multitasking have taken over our lives.

switched on

Supporting your employees to be ON when they have to, and OFF when they can

At Switched On we are obsessed about performance and the development of human potential. Optimal performance doesn't just happen by accident, it can be taught.

Grounded in the sciences of peak performance, physiology and positive psychology; blended with the most up to date principles on leadership and change management; combined with experience of working with some of the worlds leading teams and performers - our programs and products provide your key players with the knowledge and resources to kick more goals more of the time.

Considering that resources, tools and equipment are available to all in a market-based economy – the day to day performance of key people will ultimately make the difference between just going OK and really standing out.

We have assembled a team of leading coaches, consultants and tertiary qualified specialists in fields including psychology, change management, team building, leadership, nutrition, physiotherapy, exercise physiology and performance coaching, who are consultants to some of the world's best athletes and coaches.

Our core offering includes:

- Leadership programs
- Team building
- Conference events
- Performance coaching
- Education and seminars (performance workouts)
- Performance bootcamps
- Resources and manuals
- Information products

Above all we love what we do and inspire individuals and teams to be the best they can be!

www.switchedonperformance.com



upcoming titles

switched on performers

Why is it that some people seem to sail through life making everything look so easy? Yet for ever people life is exactly the opposite? Do peak performers follow a similar path or adopt a similar set of behaviours and beliefs? *Switched On Performers* outlines the 'success secrets' of 25 of Australia's top Performers in business, sport, coaching and entertainment. A great read for anyone interested in what it is that makes great performers tick.

switching off

The human body is not designed to go flat out, around the clock. Life is meant to be a series of sprints interspersed with periods of rest and recovery. It is impossible to be 'on' 24/7. While we regularly need to boost the throttle into turbo drive and plough through those To Do lists, it is equally as important to spend time in cruise mode, or time recharging, recovering and renewing. Learn a fresh new approach to pressing reset without having to wear orange robes, sit on a rock and hum, or meditate under a stainless steel triangle.

road runner syndrome

Are you the type of person that races from appointment to appointment, task to task, and project to project? Ever had that overwhelming feeling that no matter how much faster you go, you're still falling further and further behind? Meep meep – broooooo! Welcome to the world of Road Runner Syndrome. Avoid becoming one of the statistics with proven strategies to manage hurry sickness and tools, tips and techniques to take control once and for all.

