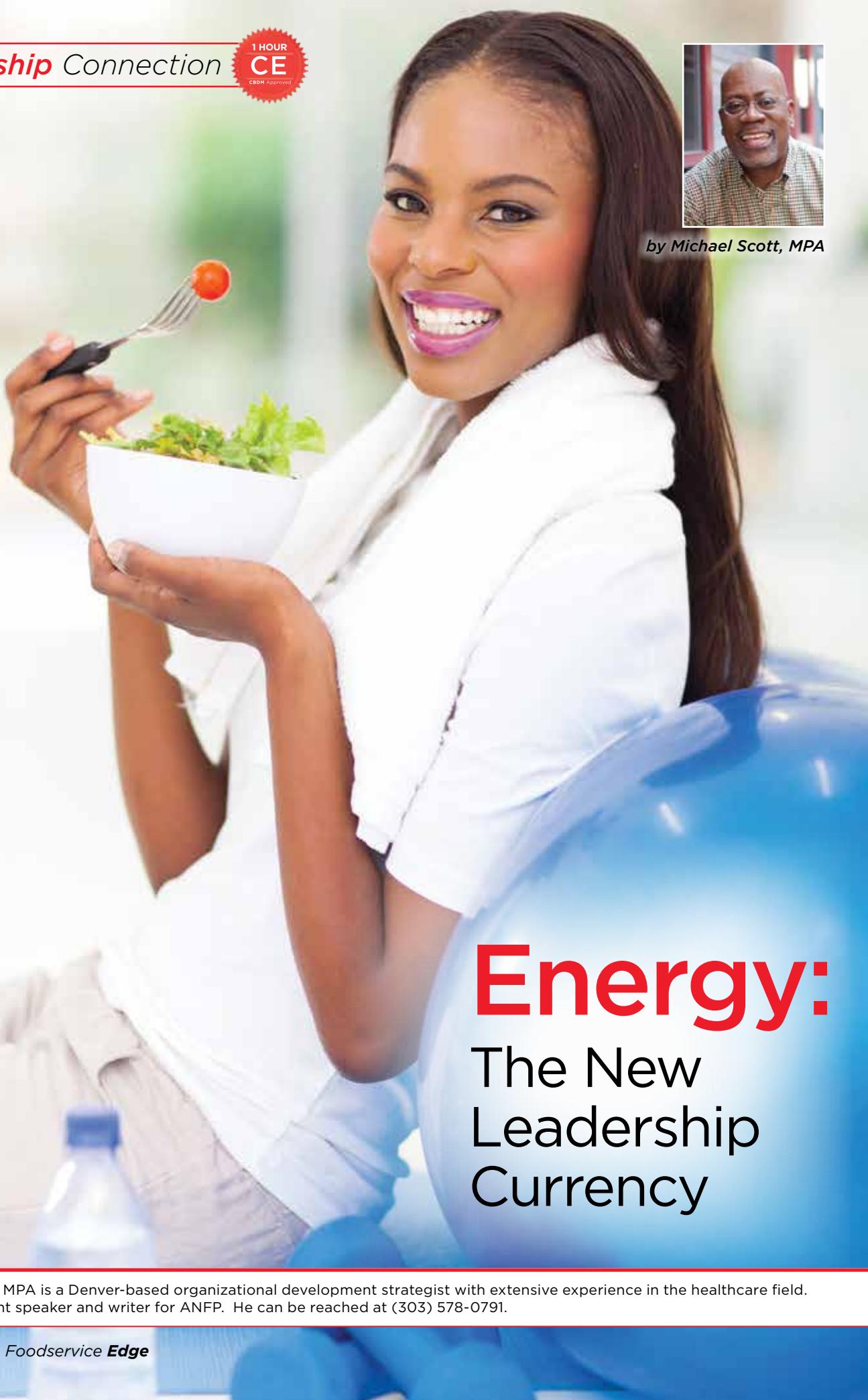




by Michael Scott, MPA



Energy:

The New Leadership Currency

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Answers to LC Review Questions

CDMs who answer the LC Review Questions on page 17 of this issue can check their responses against the answer key found on page 39. This "self check" allows you to confirm your understanding of the test questions.

The year was 2007. And I'll never forget the words uttered to me by a first-time attendee at the DMA Annual Meeting in San Diego (now the ANFP National Leadership Conference). She said something like this:

"It's shocking to see so many attendees at this conference who appear lethargic and don't look well. And this is a group of food and nutrition professionals." *Whoa!*

The importance of setting a good example for your team in terms of displaying productive energy levels cannot be overstated. Unfortunately, too many of us fall prey to poor diets, lack of exercise, and other bad habits that diminish our capacity as a leader. Peak performance requires us to be attentive to a number of key elements that often get pushed to the side amidst our busy lives. Left unaddressed, the consequences can be profound not only in terms of our credibility with the people we lead, but with our own individual health and well-being.

A book that I highly recommend if you find this column already speaking to you is titled *The Power of Full Engagement: Managing Energy, Not Time, Is the Key to High Performance and Personal Renewal* (Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, 2005). I read it years ago and just recently decided that it's worth a revisit. This quote from the authors sums up the book's essential message:

"The number of hours in a day is fixed, but the quantity and quality of energy to us is not."

Applied to leadership, this book clearly asserts that the biggest challenge for any leader is building enough sustained energy to stay engaged and focused with what's important on a daily basis. According to the authors, this requires an ongoing commitment to aligning our daily energy expenditure with daily renewal. The authors go on to say that building positive energy rituals in four quadrants of our life—mental, emotional, spiritual and physical—are paramount to boosting our energy capacity.

All right, enough about this book. If you want to study it more in-depth, I encourage you to pick up a copy at your local bookstore.

In the meantime, let me say this: During my days as a healthcare human resources director, I came to the conclusion that the number one contributing factor to poor leadership was not one's background, qualifications, or competency. Rather, what

I discerned is that leaders often don't perform well because they DON'T FEEL WELL. In other words, they make errors in judgment or are simply unable to keep up because their energy levels are extremely low or depleted.

So here are a few common-sense strategies to consider if you find yourself in this boat:

- **Drink more water.** Good old H₂O is the most undervalued key to boosting energy. So make sure you are setting a good example for your staff by drinking copious amounts of water.
- **Keep moving.** Engaging in short movements and exercises throughout your workday can also go a long way towards building your energy capacity. I practiced this regularly during my stint as a healthcare leader. Believe me, staff members appreciate when you circulate around the workplace to talk with them, or take them on a short walk at lunch. It's good for the body and for building esprit de corps.
- **Get proper rest.** A study conducted by Harvard Business School Professor Charles Czeisler found that, for the majority of Americans, a week of sleeping only four or five hours a night induces an impairment equivalent to a blood alcohol level of 0.1 percent. Enough said, particularly if you want to be viewed as a leader who's awake at the wheel.
- **Give yourself mental downtime.** I hear leaders all the time boast of working 50, 60, even 70 hour work weeks as though it's some badge of honor. My advice? Relinquish the Protestant ethic and take that vacation time you've been storing up like nuts for the winter.
- **Get proper nutrition.** Last but not least, make sure you're eating properly and getting a nutritionally-balanced diet. As you are well aware, food is fuel! (You likely know far more about this last point than I do.)

The overriding message here is that in order to achieve leadership greatness, you must sustain high levels of energy over the course of your day. This requires a willingness to set high wellness standards for yourself as well as the team you're accountable for overseeing. A storehouse of energy to devote towards

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your work will go a long way toward increasing the likelihood of high outcomes for your work in the food and nutrition field.

As a high performance leader, you must create and build rituals into your day, week, and year to keep your physical energy at a high level. To this point, I encourage you to establish goals relative to your health and wellness regimen, including the amount of sleep you desire to have, as well as any extra pounds you want to relinquish.

Most importantly, solicit the support of friends that will serve as supportive accountability partners for you on this journey. Also, take the time to establish some energy rituals such as those listed above. Displaying vigor and vitality allows you to set a positive example for those around you, enhancing your leadership credibility and repute.

So I challenge you to pay more attention to the deposits and withdrawals you make in terms of your energy reserves. For if

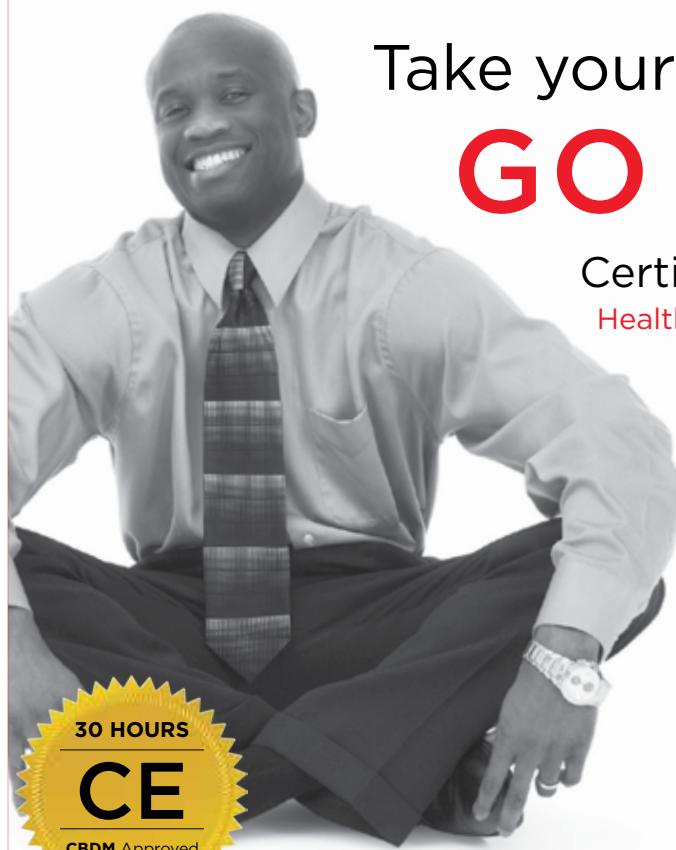


Establish goals relative to your health and wellness regimen, including the amount of sleep you desire to have, as well as any extra pounds you want to lose.

you're not taking care of yourself properly, you're setting a poor example for the profession, your team, and—most importantly—yourself. Besides, you never know who's watching. ☺

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