

Yahoo CEO tells how to avoid burnout



As one of the most well-known women in technology, Yahoo President and CEO Marissa Mayer turned a few heads when she announced that she doesn't believe in burnout.

How can the woman who was hired in 1999 as Google's 20th employee, who once worked 130 hours per week, now say that she doesn't really believe in burnout?

Avoiding burnout isn't about sitting down for three meals a day, getting home at a decent hour, or getting eight hours of sleep, she says. (Indeed, Mayer pulled her share of all-nighters in her early Google days.)

"I have a theory that burnout is about resentment," the tech maven says. "And you beat it by knowing what it is you're giving up that makes you resentful. I tell people: Find your rhythm. Your rhythm is what matters to you so much that when you miss it you're resentful of your work."

For some, the thing that's important might be a vacation, for others it's movie night, and some people may just want eight hours of sleep per night.

When it comes to leading, Mayer deploys her theory regularly. After noticing signs of burnout in one recent college grad, she approached him and asked about his "rhythm."

He replied that he had a standing dinner night with friends on Tuesdays. When he missed it, he spent the rest of the week feeling resentful.

So now, she knew that he couldn't miss a Tuesday dinner again. She knew he'd be more productive for the entire week, if he could make it to that Tuesday dinner. It was that simple.

Another employee, who was running Google Finance and had a team in India, seemed stretched thin. The employee, Katie, had been running conference calls at 1 a.m.

But when Mayer expressed her concern, Katie said, "Don't worry about the 1 a.m. calls to Bangalore. I love my team. It doesn't bother me a bit. What bothers me is missing soccer games or having my child see me walk in late to the recital."

From then on, Mayer made sure Katie was empowered to leave for the things she loved.

What matters to Mayer? A one-week vacation she takes every four to six months. If she has to cancel a trip or postpone it, she starts to feel resentful.

Lesson: Find your rhythm, understand what makes you resentful, and protect it.

— Adapted from ["Marissa Mayer Offers Five Tips for Young Women Entering Tech,"](#) Matt Rosoff, Business Insider; ["How to Avoid Burnout,"](#) Marissa Mayer, *Bloomberg Businessweek*.