

REST BANDIT
STEALING REST IN A LAND OF BUSY

Rest Smart to Work Smarter

Why a greater focus on how you rest may lead to greater focus in your work

We recharge our phones every day but how often are we recharging ourselves?

This is the question that Paul Dickinson poses to business leaders who attend his workshops. His Rest Bandit business is garnering attention amongst business people who value rest and recovery as a key element of healthier, happier and more creative lives. This is a growing trend in a world where people are looking to take back control of their energy and attention.

His workshops have titles including Recharge Your Rest Life, Switch-Off from Work and Busting Busy-ness. It's a far cry from the days of Time Management and Effective Selling.

These workshop titles have attracted businesses including Skybet, Irwin Mitchell and BT, all of whom Paul has worked with in the last 12 months. We caught-up with Paul on the eve of launching his latest campaign Switch-Off Thursday.

Continues overleaf →



Rest Smart to Work Smarter continued



Q. How did Rest Bandit come about?

I spent 20 years working in different HR roles several of which was as HR Director of a Sheffield-based utilities firm. I reached a natural end-point in my last corporate job and I decided to move into consultancy and development work. This gave me a greater degree of flexibility with my work and rest patterns and I experimented with different routines. I came to realise over a period of about 12 months that the amount of rest I took and what I did during this time, had a major bearing on my health and effectiveness. I launched Rest Bandit to support people who are living busy lives with achieving better balance and focus.

Q. Is 2019 a good time to be doing this type of work?

The consequences of a society that devalues rest and recovery are all around us. Mental health is at an all-time low and workplace absence for stress and anxiety is rising every year. And it's not just our health that's suffering. The UK has some of the worst productivity stats in Western Europe, yet we work some of the longest hours as a nation. Our colleagues in Germany could down-tools every week on Thursday lunchtime and still produce more than we do in five days in the UK. Perhaps they know something about rest that we don't!

Q. How do people respond to your workshops?

The response from delegates is overwhelmingly positive, not least because Rest Bandit raises the profile of something that we all know is important but is rarely talked about: our rest life. It's a blind spot for many people. Our rest is seen as something that we squeeze in around work and yet the research shows that resting the mind, getting off technology, spending time with friends and family and switching-off from work are essential for good mental health and effectiveness.

Q. Is there also something here about creating work cultures that allow people to strike an effective work/life balance?

Absolutely! It's not just about health and effectiveness. Talented people are demanding more from their employers in the arena of work-life integration. Work-life balance is almost a thing of the past because the boundaries between work and rest are increasingly blurred. This blurring is a fact of life for many people and they are looking to employers for flexibility, career development but above all, a great life experience. Our work is central to our life experience but it is increasingly being viewed as just one part of a creative and fulfilling life, particularly amongst young people. Employers that can promote and support people with work/life integration will attract and retain the best talent. I run a workshop called Rest Works that helps leaders and HR professionals to explore these subjects.

Q. What are the more progressive companies doing in this area?

A number of businesses in the UK have embraced the 'work less, produce more' ethos. These firms have moved to four-day weeks and they have seen productivity rise and staff absence fall. They are also seeing unprecedented levels of employee engagement which is largely due to involving people in how they can reorganise their work to be more efficient. It's amazing how people can innovate when they are given a carrot of an extra day off each week but on a condition that output must remain the same or increase.

I'm not advocating that we all move to a four-day week but we can certainly take the learning from what these companies are doing with smart work and smart rest.

> "This was a great morning, really inspired me to think about actively resting in my working day as well as not feeling guilty for doing so over the weekend. Would highly recommend attending a workshop to understand the benefits of rest and how it can impact your day."
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> **Amy Wood, Brewster Partners**

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Q. What do you mean by smart work and smart rest?

If we want more and better rest time, we need to work smarter. It's easy to fall into the trap of working 12-hour days simply because we are addicted to the feeling and appearance of being busy. We are increasingly doing what I call 'Junk Rest' and 'Junk Work' i.e. activities that appear restful or productive but have very little productive impact on our effectiveness or recovery.

This is why I also run workshops on collaborative working and how this can fuel better and more efficient problem solving. When we feel the pressure to be constantly on the go and to tick items off of our 'to do' list, we have a tendency to rush key decisions, rehash old solutions and go with our gut. This can lead to unmanageable workloads, disengaged team members and a feeling that we are very busy but achieving very little. Collaborating well is a mindset that embraces our ignorance and removes the pressure to have all the answers, because we know that the most intelligent solutions will come from combining our own talents with those of our colleagues and customers.

Q. What's your Switch-Off Thursday Campaign all about?

I run regular campaigns to raise awareness of rest and recovery. In January this year several businesses in Sheffield and Leeds participated in Switch-Off Thursday. This was a day where businesses promoted the importance of switching-off from work with activities such as lunchtime walks and tech-free zones in offices. The level of engagement was so high that I have organised a follow-up campaign that will take place on Thursday 20th June. If you want to participate I am using #SwitchOffThursday on social media to connect people and businesses and to share ideas.

Q. So, what can we do to recharge our rest lives? We asked Paul for a few tips.

Don't use your smart phone as your alarm clock. This pulls you into the chaos of emails, social media and newsfeeds as soon as your head leaves the pillow. Create opportunities for distraction-free connection with yourself and others as part of your morning routine.

Conscious breathing is a great mood enhancer, stress reliever and can boost your energy levels. Try using your email time as a cue to do some deeper breathing (think BREATHEMAIL). Try relaxing your jaw and shoulders, breathing into your belly and extending your out-breath.

Increase the distance or the time that you spend walking to and from meetings and do so without checking your smart phone. Studies have shown that walking boosts creativity. You will also give yourself distraction-free time to focus, prepare and reflect.

Avoid constantly dipping into your email and social media. This will interfere with your focus and creativity as well as making you feel more restless and agitated. Set aside two or three times in the day to deal with emails.

We often 'wobble' between work and rest which decreases the quality of both activities. Better to allocate specific time to things that recharge you and avoid work distractions during these time slots.



It's easy to prioritise feeling and looking busy over high impact activities. Apps and devices are intentionally designed to make everything appear urgent and important. It's worth recalibrating our thinking with regards to certain activities asking ourselves, "What will happen if I don't do this now or not at all?"

About Rest Bandit

When we rest well we work better. But resting and recharging is challenging in today's busy world. What does 'resting well' look like and how do we ensure that high quality rest is a regular feature in our lives?

Our workshops support people and businesses to rest smart in order to work smarter.

We create high energy, interactive workshops based around the concepts of resting and recharging and how these link to smarter working practices. Our creative ideas and approach has attracted the attention of publications such as Personnel Today.



About Paul

Paul Dickinson has combined several years' experience as a HR Director with the latest thinking on human performance to create Rest Bandit.

His unique perspective challenges conventional thinking on how we work and how we rest. His approach has attracted the attention of publications such as Personnel Today as well as companies who are seeking a more progressive approach to people development.

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