ISSUE 07
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HIGHER STATE

THE MAGAZINE FOR HIGH PERFORMERS

SLOW DOWN TO GO FASTER

Carl Honoré educates us about the "delicious paradox of slow" and how to be happier, healthier & more successful by slowing our pace

FITNESS GOALS

Nailing the "why" before you commit to a new regime

EAT TO SUCCEED

What you eat impacts your body and mind, so learn how to instinctively fuel up for top performance

WHAT'S YOUR ONE THING?

As 2019 kicks off, think about what you truly want to master over the next 12 months

www.abigailireland.com

A new year brings new opportunities

Happy New Year! And welcome back to the very first edition of Higher State in 2019.

To set the tone for the year, I've got some fantastic content for you to browse through.

Firstly, I had the honour of speaking with bestselling author and TED Speaker Carl Honoré about how to live and work more successfully.

Secondly, new year wouldn't be the same without some talk of goal-setting and change. It's literally the best time of year to build momentum and start taking action towards our goals. Let's not forget that when February rolls around ;) Enjoy reading the feature articles for more ideas and support...

Abi

HELPING TEAMS TO EXCEL

Edition 7, January / February 2019

Psychology - Physiology - Productivity

CREATE A HIGH PERFORMING TEAM

Is your team focused, productive and getting results?

Are your people energised, forward-thinking and bringing their best selves to work?

Abi helps executives and teams to **build high performance habits** and achieve results with more focus, more energy and less stress.

Abi's unique **High Performance Formula** is a 360-degree system that enables teams to achieve top performance - addressing Business Productivity, Psychological and Physiological factors impacting long-term success.

Combining extensive business and coaching experience with skills as a fitness and nutrition professional, Abi can help you to take your team to the next level.

Speak to Abi about team training, executive performance coaching, consultancy and in-house programme development.

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CLICK HERE for a Productivity 101 Masterclass

WORK WITH ABIGAIL

Ready to raise your team's performance, productivity, engagement and results?

Abi works with organisations to amplify team performance and productivity through workshops, coaching and strategic in-house programme development. She focuses on business productivity strategies whilst also incorporating psychological and physiological drivers of top performance (for example, mindset, attitude, exercise, nutrition and sleep).

Abi's corporate career led her to work internationally in private equity deal origination and acquisitions, banking, strategy and business management for over 13 years. She has also established her own businesses in the wellbeing and education fields, using her skills and experience as a Master Personal Trainer, Nutrition Coach and Pilates Instructor to bring a unique offering to clients that covers all angles.

Abi's 360-degree **High Performance Formula** can be applied to any team to boost productivity, energy, focus, engagement and quality results.

1 WORKSHOPS

- Practical, value-packed workshops that have an immediate impact on productivity and create a lasting, high-performance mindset
- Foundation level workshops focused on Business Productivity, Nutrition, Body and Mindset OR tailored staff/executive workshops that cater for specific business requirements
- **CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE**

2 COACHING

- Tailored coaching sessions for individuals and small groups, typically
- in the weeks and months following workshop sessions - designed to
- promote accountability and embed long-term performance habits
- Opportunity to tackle issues & roadblocks that sabotage
- performance
- **CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE**

3 STRATEGY

- In-house programmes and initiatives tailored to organisational and
- team requirements - research, analysis and strategy development
- Design and development of solutions to increase productivity, lift
- engagement, lift performance and achieve business objectives
- **CLICK HERE TO LEARN MORE**

PRODUCTIVITY: Get more productive in just 10 days

Join the challenge and start 2019 on the right foot

Becoming a more productive person has multiple benefits. By becoming more effective at managing yourself and your time, you'll reap the rewards that come with reclaiming more free time, reducing your stress levels, increasing your energy levels, enjoying your life (and work!) and having more quality time with loved ones.

There are lots of time management techniques and gurus out there, but it really does start with YOU. Productivity isn't just about the latest time-saving hacks - it's about getting your mind and body in the right space first. Do that and the rest will follow.

To truly maximise your performance, a holistic approach must be taken to optimise internal and external factors that influence your productivity.

As it's the start of a new year, what better time to reintroduce the 10 Day Productivity Challenge. First launched in 2017, this challenge gives you some great ways to kickstart a more productive approach to work and life.

Register **here** for the 10 Day Productivity Challenge and set yourself up for success.

Abi has worked closely with and advised senior executives on strategic direction, business improvement, colleague engagement and effective leadership over the years. For help to raise your team's performance and productivity, send a message to ask@abigailireland.com.

MINDSET: What's your one thing?

Get focused and see things through

One thing you can guarantee is that it's inefficient to spread yourself too thinly. Whilst you may have multiple projects and tasks to get through, it's important to think wisely about how you want to approach these.

We often start many things we never finish. People get excited about the latest trend or initiative, without really closing off existing projects or seeing them through to the end. This is largely driven by modern society, where novelty and change are now a normal part of life. Boredom sets in quickly and this mentality flows through to feed our short attention span at work.

We no longer have the patience to focus with intention on the one thing that is truly going to make a difference. Often, this one thing will give us the biggest return if we just dedicate the time and attention to it without getting distracted by every new shiny object.

So, as 2019 kicks off, have a think about the one thing that is going to make the single biggest difference to your work (or personal life) over the course of this year. Write this down today and focus on the steps you need to take to get this done well.

Mindset is just one aspect of high performance. If you want to be more productive and achieve more in less time, register for ***the FREE 10 Day Productivity Challenge that kicks off every Monday. One quick & easy challenge each day for 10 days to help you get on track.***

FITNESS: Nailing your "why"

If you want to succeed, understand why you want it

Ah, New Year Resolutions...who has recently joined the gym or started back this January with a hardcore exercise regime?

Over the last few years, I've worked with numerous people who want to reach a certain fitness goal - the most common being to lose weight or get more energy. The interesting thing is that, when questioned further, many people aren't entirely sure why they want these results.

And...as a result....nothing changes. At least, not in the long term. People make progress, feel good, and then slowly revert to old habits and behaviours. The trick here isn't to purely focus on the result but to spend more time understanding WHY you want it.

For example, having more energy throughout the day is going to make you feel good - but the best thing about it is that you'll also be more focused and productive, which in turn will enable you to get things done more quickly, more creatively and more enthusiastically. All of this leads to results such as better profits, a higher chance of promotion, more leisure time and better health.

Why do you want to lift your fitness game in 2019? Drill down and clarify this if you want to see a real change in your performance this year.

Abigail is a qualified Master Personal Trainer, Pilates Instructor and certified Precision Nutrition coach. She integrates Physiology into client performance strategies and workshops.
To learn how physical wellbeing impacts performance, email abi@abigailireland.com.

NUTRITION: Long-term success vs Quick wins

Make healthy eating an effortless way of life

One of the most common topics of discussion as a new year begins is usually based around food - dry January, new diet plans, best of intentions to eat better.

However, what if you could learn how to make smart food choices at work without putting in the effort?

What if you could be the best version of yourself, - healthier, more energised, more focused and more productive each and every day without even thinking about it?

This is where habits come in. Whilst most people try to improve their diet or health with an "all or nothing" approach, the secret to eating well for success is to focus on a little progress every day.

Everyone wants a quick win but this doesn't lead to long-lasting results. A slow, consistent approach serves to embed those high performance eating habits and give you confidence that you can succeed.

In 2019, get your eating habits in check whether you're working in the office or at home, travelling or fitting food around a busy schedule. Food is your fuel so it's time to master how to use this to your advantage to perform, look and feel better at work and beyond.

Find out more about Abigail's nutrition and fitness programme, to support your health goals and boost your performance in 2019:

bit.ly/nutrition-fitness-coaching-programme

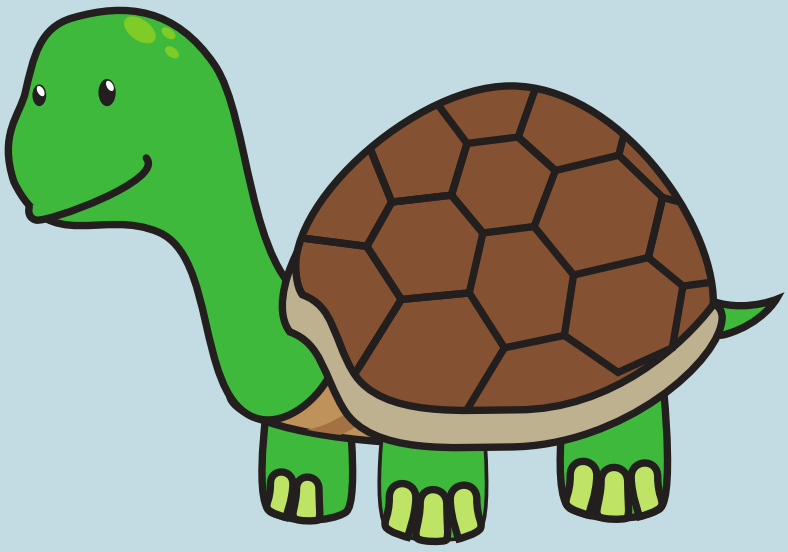
Make food choices that sharpen your mind. *Find out more about workshops, coaching and programmes for your team: abi@abigailireland.com.*

SLOW DOWN, I JUST WANT TO GET TO KNOW YOU...

Carl Honoré's TED talk, "In Praise of Slowness" has accumulated nearly 3m views to date and its core message is more significant now than ever

In this month's Higher State interview, we explore the thinking behind slow living and why this is the key to a happier, healthier and more productive life.

As we head into 2019, let's commit to slowing down. Read on to understand why this is important and how we can get started today.



"PEOPLE SAY WE CAN'T AFFORD TO SLOW DOWN. WE ACTUALLY CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO."

CARL HONORÉ

Carl Honoré is a TED Speaker, best-selling author, journalist and the voice of the slow movement. He believes that our fixation with speed has a detrimental effect on health, productivity and quality of life. Since his TED Talk back in 2005, the world has only got faster. Technology, social media and constant change have led to more and more accelerated living - to the extent that the world is starting to push back and yearn for slowness.

Read about Carl's latest book, Bolder **here.**

Abi's Observation: *I had the honour of speaking with Carl Honoré (no pun intended) about his pursuit of slow living over the years - and what an eye-opening and insightful interview it was! Truly focusing on slowing down is probably the most crucial step in creating excellence in all parts of your life. Whilst this mentality is seriously missing from the corporate world, Carl shows that the "fast living" lifestyle is not sustainable or effective. Carl's research, insights and observations prove there is a better way to live and work.*

Key Takeaway: When we talk about being more productive, we often think about going faster and getting more done. The reality is, this couldn't be further from the truth. In order to reach new levels of high performance, it pays to slow down, be present and take that extra care.

HERE'S CARL

Could you give a brief overview of your career path to where you are today?

I didn't know what I wanted to be until I was 16 or 17, when I suddenly decided I wanted to save the world in one way or another and become a human rights lawyer fighting for the downtrodden! When on exchange in Brazil, I came face to face with extreme poverty and injustice for the first time - but afterwards, at university, I took a course in jurisprudence and realised the law wasn't for me.

My way to do something about injustice was going to be writing about it, so I became a freelance journalist, writing in the British and Canadian media. I moved with my rucksack and a one-way ticket to Buenos Aires, staying there for three years and covering South America for The Economist, Observer, Miami Herald and Time magazine. I then moved to London where I covered Europe for American and Canadian papers – and then made the jump to writing books and writing about "slow".

Your first book, In Praise of Slow, was an international bestseller – what inspired you to write about this?

My move from journalism didn't happen overnight but it did happen quickly. I had my moment of epiphany when I caught myself speed-reading bedtime stories to my son - it was almost like an out of body experience where I realised I was racing through life rather than living it.

I think when people get stuck in fast forward they often have a wake up call, like an illness or a broken relationship, but for me it was noticing that I was trying to fob off my son with a sound bite instead of a story. I realised something was wrong and I needed to change things.

Journalism was already changing – the media was accelerating to the point where I was starting to feel disillusioned with the profession. The final articles I wrote for the paper were all about the slow movement so that got the ball rolling. A publisher got in touch. I had already thought about writing a book. It all just slotted together.

Your 2005 TED Talk was all about the world speeding up. Do you think the world has sped up even more since then?

I think it definitely has sped up. Back in 2005, we were just at the beginning of social media. I love technology and I use social media platforms, but you have to use them wisely and know how to fit them into a life that moves at your pace. Many people don't do that.

We're always "on" in this society. I recently read that the average smart phone user touches his or her gadget around 2600 times a day. The top 10% do this 5400 times! We've reached addiction levels of instant gratification; constant distraction and everything being immediately on tap.

The good news is that the slow movement has grown immensely since then. Now, in every field, people are bringing a slow lens to what they are doing - education, business, sex, medicine – and saying, "how can I do this better by slowing down and doing this as well as possible rather than as fast as possible?".

This idea is closer to the centre of cultural discussion than ever before. BBC3 even has a dedicated slot for "slow radio" to encourage people to slow down.

As the world gets faster, our need for slowness grows more acute. It's not about demonising technology – the paradox is that technology can actually help us to slow down if we use it sensibly. You can get that little bit of work done on the train

"It's an example of what I call the delicious paradox of slow."

- CARL HONORÉ

on the way home, and then put your phone away and be with your children to do a puzzle or read a story. The trouble is we do that bit of work on the commute and we don't put the phone away when home. We carry on reading messages that pop up whilst we're trying to be with family.

Multitasking is the perfect metaphor for where we go wrong with this fast culture. Human beings cannot multitask. When we "multitask", we're essentially toggling back and forth. Task one gets 5 seconds, task two gets 5 seconds.

All that juggling is cognitively wasteful. Studies show that if you get people to do a series of tasks, on average the fast multitasker will take up to twice as long and make twice as many mistakes as the slow monotasker.

It's an example of what I call the "delicious paradox of slow". By slowing things down and giving them the time and attention deserved, not only do you do them better and enjoy them more, but you do them faster. Sometimes slow is fast! Things need time or quality eventually falls off a cliff edge.

Why are we getting faster and what are the consequences?

We live in a world of hyperconsumerism – the world has become this enormous smorgasbord of things to do, eat and experience. Natural human instinct boils down to feast and famine.

We live in a world of plenty and people don't know when to stop. We have obesity because people don't know when to stop eating. We have Internet addition because people don't know when to stop going for that dopamine squirt we get from social connection.

"We live in a world of plenty and people don't know when to stop."

We live in this world where it's all there – there are no boundaries on time - it's 24/7. We haven't yet evolved the discipline, social norms or protocols to deal with that kind of world. And when you don't have that structure, you just GO. You put your head down and you go – our faces are in the collective trough, whether we're gobbling up social media or consumer goods. We can't stop. This becomes a parody of the human condition.

It's now that people are trying to figure out what the strategies are to stop.

Yeah, and with technology we see it all over the place these days, with companies having email-free moments or days for example. We need speed limits on the information superhighway.

No matter how fast your Broadband connection is, you can't forge team spirit more quickly by downloading an app. These things have a natural rhythm and take time to build up. Wise companies are starting to realise that.

Outside the workplace, "stacking" is a thing. At dinner, everyone piles up their phone and whoever grabs their phone first pays the bill for everyone else. It's a way of saying "let's be here and slow down!". Digital natives are coming up with these ideas, not the baby boomers. Young people say it's too much. I was at a school recently where the kids couldn't focus on their homework because of FOMO (fear of missing out), so they banded together and blocked off 90 minutes for homework in the evening. Everyone was off social media and then, at the end of 90 mins, they would get back on SnapChat.

There's also a metaphysical dimension. Speed and busyness are often instruments of denial - a way of avoiding the bigger questions and deeper problems. Am I ok, is my relationship solid, are my family well, am I living the life I've always wanted to live, is this where I want to be working for the next 10 years? It's easier to focus on the small stuff - where are my keys?

Think of those little moments we used to have if we didn't have a paper on the Tube. We were left to our own devices and had to sit there with ourselves. This could be uncomfortable but it was also very important to have that kind of space.

You live in London, which has a fast paced culture – how do you successfully live slowly?

I think a key word here is “no” – my book could very easily be called “in Praise of No”. We’re brought up to say yes and not let people down or miss out. But saying yes to everything turns life into a race against the clock. We’re chronically trying to do too much stuff. If you don’t master the art of saying no, you become a headless chicken chasing your tail.

For me, a big part of slowing down involves pushing pause each time something comes in and asking myself if it’s really important to me to do it now. That triage means that I do less but I enjoy the things I do choose to do way more than before. I have more time, I’m not rushing around and I don’t ever feel like I’m missing out.

That’s the paradox. We have a terrible fear that if we slow down, life will pass us by. I think the opposite is true. Life is what’s happening right here, right now – and the only way to live that fully is to slow down, be in the moment and give it your full attention. I used to be that person who saw everything and said yeah, sign me up for that!

Now.....I love London, the arts, exhibitions...I go out with friends and play sports. What’s slow to me might seem fast to others and vice versa. Everyone has their own natural rhythm and that’s what the slow revolution is all about. Live as close to your own tempo as possible. What matters is what I feel. I know I’m not rushed and I’m getting the most out of what I do – and out of London.

What made you realise you were going too fast?

When going too fast, you skim the surface and just survive, treading water. I felt like I was juggling a lot of things but not enjoying them that much or experiencing them fully. Doing fewer things means that I have time to recharge in between - and that means that I have way more energy than when I was living fast.

Pleasure is one of the key wins when you slow down – and we all love a bit of pleasure! How you move through a meal, conduct a conversation, walk or write – everything

"Life is what's happening right here, right now – and the only way to live that fully is to slow down, be in the moment and give it your full attention."

becomes more pleasurable when you stop rushing.

I don't have a watch anymore – I used to be a clock-watcher. I had a neurotic and unhealthy relationship with time. Part of my shift to slow was to look less at the clock.

Studies show that people get more anxious and speed up when exposed to clocks. That's why shopping malls and casinos never have clocks – they want you to slow down, forget the passage of time and spend more money!

The notion of "time is money" is so unhealthy. I've moved away from that and I think you forget the clock when you're moving at the right pace for you. People talk about flow – slow state, flow state - it rhymes for a reason! When in a flow state, you forget the time and inhabit the moment fully.

At the same time, I still preserve an internal clock. I'm very punctual – I'm not late for things and I have a pretty good idea of what time it is. You form this different way of being with time and I think that's a key part of slowing down.

Memory is something else – when we move too quickly through things, they don't stick. We get to the end of the year and can't remember anything. There are warning signs that we're going too fast. A big gain from slowing down is that you remember things. When I was living fast, I couldn't remember stuff well – nothing was sticking.

Now it's about the quality of the experience, the depth, the texture of experiences.

Sometimes things are out of our control but the key is to move at the right speed most of the time, so you can handle those accelerated bumps that arise – the trick is to stop excessive speed from becoming the norm.

"Mastering the clock of business is about choosing when to be fast and when to be slow."

What advice would you share with someone who wants to slow down but doesn't know where to start?

1. Start with technology. Use the off button and slow the flow. Step away from fire hose of distraction, even for just five minutes on the train or 20 minutes at home. Then build up from there.

2. Integrate some kind of slow practice or ritual into your life. Meditation, knitting,reading poetry, sketching, breathing, yoga...just build it into your schedule like a vaccine against the virus of hurry. It's ring-fenced off – you know it's there. These things can get blown away if we don't create sacred space for them.

3. Do less. Look at your to do list and prioritise from least to most important. Then start cutting from the bottom. Sometimes we fill our schedule with fluff or things we are doing for the wrong reasons. Look in the cold light of day and see what you can remove. Put together a "not to do" list of these things. Come back to that list a month later. When you look back, it's fine. It takes the edge off the panic.

Can we still keep speeding up or is there a limit?

I think we'll get this right – we'll find a way to embrace the speed that's coming. Some things are going to get faster, some things can't get faster than they already are.

There was a survey in the Economist about the pace of business in the modern workplace. The conclusion was perfectly aligned to the slow philosophy: "Forget frantic acceleration. Mastering the clock of business is about choosing when to be fast and when to be slow." That shows the tectonic plates are moving and we are inching towards understanding that the future lies in understanding that magical dance between speeds.

We missed a big trick with the financial crisis. I think the urgency of change is getting to the point where minds that would have looked the other way in the past are starting to look up.

There's also a pincer movement of people wanting the same thing. People who sacrificed so much in their younger years want to know what they can do to put this right.

On the other hand, the younger generation coming into workplace wants to do well but also wants to do good (CSR, social enterprise). It's a very different generation coming in now. They look at the older generation and don't want to be them. They want to be successful but without becoming crazy, selfish roadrunners who burn out at 43. They want to take time off and be at home. They are much more conscious about health, relationships and family – a sense of "this is my time now".

Do you have a good balance between working and personal life?

I don't have a fixed schedule but I don't usually work in the evening. I have supper with my family and almost never do anything workwise after 6pm. I don't work on weekends either unless I'm doing something like writing a book. That's not the norm though. I certainly don't work on holiday.

I cycle into the office, I do a lot of rollerblading...I was in high school when rollerblades first hit the market in the 80s and they road-tested rollerblades in my school (we all grew up skating in Canada). It's one of my favourite workouts so I sprint skate and always with a hockey stick because it just feels more natural! I play ball hockey for the London Jets and I do a lot of swimming and running.

You're obviously very good at being present in the moment – when you're working on something, how do you stay focused?

I pay attention to my body and mind – I get into my flow/slow state and that has a natural end to it. It's unlikely you can stay like that for 3 hours. Often it can be just 10-15 minutes and, when I feel myself coming out of it, I go for a walk or check emails - or do whatever I want to, depending on what is happening with my day. I don't get freaked out about needing a clock – I just roll with it. It becomes second nature. I know when I'm starting to fade and when it makes sense to stop.

People say we can't afford to slow down. We actually can't afford not to.

>> Watch Carl's TED Talk here <<

>> Visit Carl's website here <<

Get in touch to learn more about the superstars we feature in Higher State.

Know someone who lives and breathes high performance?
Send your thoughts and suggestions to abi@abigailireland.com.

"PRODUCTIVITY ISN'T ABOUT HOW MUCH YOU GET DONE. IT'S ABOUT HOW MUCH YOU ACCOMPLISH."

ANONYMOUS

Thanks for reading Higher State! Look out for Issue 08 in March 2019.

What aspects of performance and productivity would you like to hear about next?

Send me your ideas so I can bring you even more quality content in the future.

In the meantime, stay productive!

Abi

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