Map your productive organizational energy

Are your energy levels flagging? Use this tool to monitor energy patterns in your organization, giving employees a boost to achieve shared goals.



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Consider a hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first wave, healthcare workers were successful in rallying their energetic resources and using them to good effect. But as time wore on, delivering the same quality of care became more difficult to sustain, because

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energy and resources were depleted, and adequate recovery had not taken place. This illustrates that more is not always better when it comes to teams expending energy to achieve collective goals.

With this in mind, how attuned are you to your firm's energy levels? Anneloes Raes, professor of Managing People in Organizations and holder of the Puig Chair of Global Leadership Development at IESE, together with Bernd Vogel, of Henley Business School, and Heike Bruch, of the University of St. Gallen, considered the dynamics of energetic resources and developed a practical framework to manage them well.

Given the positive link between collective energy and organizational performance, managers should be monitoring their own Productive Organizational Energy (POE), mapping the highs and making timely interventions before hitting the lows.

The following four-step Energy Pattern Explorer tool can help...

Decide the firm aspects you will map, which team(s) will be involved, the timeframe, and the context. So, maybe you will analyze a strategic unit, collecting data once a month from senior executives, but also external stakeholders, to measure the impact of an industry-wide development on the firm.

The choice of starting point is key, because it shapes your interpretation of trajectories. Looking at **Step 1 in the example map below**, if your starting point were **May 2022 (5/22)**, you would be observing a decrease; **Sept. 2022 (9/22)**, an increase; and **Jan.-April 2023 (1/23-4/23)**, a "bathtub." Each moment indicates something different, requiring a bespoke intervention. By mapping POE over time, these ambiguities disappear.

Assess Productive Organizational Energy (POE) levels via:

- Surveys such as the **Productive energy measure** (pictured)
- Data on sick days and turnover
- Interviews and focus groups on job satisfaction, wellbeing, commitment and burnout

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Once you have measured your productive energy, map the findings on a chart over time to detect patterns, compare histories, and project future trajectories.

Example map: Here’s how yours might look...

Which key drivers, factors and events help explain changes in the POE pattern?

- Internally: culture, structure, processes, strategy, leadership
- Externally: competition, market, technology, global economy

What conclusions can you draw for desired POE evolution?

When managers see large discrepancies between their expected and desired trajectories, the authors suggest the following leadership activities to regulate their Productive Organizational Energy (POE). Each is deployed according to the circumstances, context and need.

1. Mobilize

- Model positivity
- Communicate shared purpose

2. Cool

- Support employees to protect their energetic resources
- Decelerate or stop some activities
- Refocus and prioritize

3. Revitalize

- Intervene to break downward spirals and rejuvenate teams with targeted actions

4. Maintain

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- Offer learning opportunities
- Engage in activities that build relationships and positive emotions
- Consciously design work practices that are energy-preserving
- Celebrate successes

“This tool can help teams, units and organizations to assess their past, current and future POE within the business context in which they operate,” state the authors. By empowering managers to identify patterns of POE and compare them with prototypical trajectories, they are then in a good position to deploy appropriate leadership activities in response to identified strategic energy needs. In this way, the authors see **energy management as a key responsibility for leaders**.

SOURCE: “Mapping and managing productive organizational energy over time: The Energy Pattern Explorer tool,” by Bernd Vogel (Henley Business School), Anneloes Raes (IESE) and Heike Bruch (University of St. Gallen), is published in *Long Range Planning* (2022).

An infographic of this article is published in IESE Business School Insight #164.

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