

NAP YOUR WAY TO INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

He was an engineer, sociologist and even dabbled in philosophy, but it was his economic theory that brought him fame. Vilfredo Pareto was born on July 15th, 1848 in Paris, France and though he died in 1923, his ideologies are still being studied today. His most famous economic theory, commonly referred to as Pareto's Principle was the mathematical formula he created based upon his research into Italy's wealth distribution. Pareto asserted that 80% of the land in Italy was owned by 20% of the people. As such, 80% of the people occupied only 20% of the land. This equation, which has also become known as the *80/20 Rule* is so highly esteemed that it has been applied to economics, management, sales and numerous other disciplines.

Many time management experts will leverage Pareto's Principle and contend that 20% of the activities one does accounts for 80% of the results that person produces. However, the point of Pareto's Principle is not to assert that exactly 80% of your activities produce precisely 20% of your results. These numbers are merely estimates. The value of Pareto's Principle is that it reminds you to evaluate whether or not your activities and behaviors are increasing your productivity and effectiveness. Frequently, people fall into the trap of confusing activity with achievement. Yet, often the busiest people are the least productive.

Surprisingly, one activity that science has proven will make you more productive is napping. When one thinks of napping it usually evokes mental images associated with laziness. Although, recent findings in neuroscience have conclusively proven that naps actually boost productivity.

The reason that neuroscientists recommend napping is because it alters your brain waves. Neuroscientists study brain waves through a machine called an electroencephalogram (EEG). An EEG records the electrical activity in the brain and alerts scientists when the brain is producing brain waves.

Neuroscientists have identified four types of brain waves that are rippling throughout your brain at any given time. When you are awake and your mind is alert and fully aroused Beta waves occur in your brain.¹ Another type of brain waves are Alpha waves. Your brain produces Alpha waves when you are in a calm, relaxed state with your eyes closed. Alpha brain waves can occur while awake or in the initial phase of sleep. A third type of brain waves are Theta waves which are associated with light sleep. Finally, Delta waves are what the brain generates when in a deep, restful sleep.²

The reason that napping can increase your productivity is that when taking a nap your brain shifts from Beta to Alpha waves.³ This is significant because Alpha waves are associated with enriched brain function, such as heightened levels of cognition and creativity. Due to this change in the brain, napping has also been shown to enhance one's mood and ability to perform at peak levels.⁴ For example, a research experiment conducted by NASA identified that when pilots took a 26 minute nap their performance improved by 34 percent.⁵ Furthermore, regular napping is even linked to a higher life expectancy and a decreased rate of heart disease.⁶

Before you run to off to take a nap, understand that all naps are not created equal. Dr. David Dinges, Professor at the *University of Pennsylvania Medical School* writes that the ideal time to nap is 12 hours from the midpoint of the previous night's sleep.⁷ The goal of a nap is not to fall into a deep sleep, but to move from Beta to Alpha brain waves.⁸ This is why the recommended length of time for a nap is between 20 - 30 minutes. Longer than 30 minutes of napping will induce Theta waves, which will prompt feelings of grogginess upon waking. In fact, for napping to be beneficial you do not even need to fall asleep. All that is necessary to rejuvenate your brain is lay down, close your eyes for 20 - 30 minutes and allow your mind to quiet down. You will find that when you rise, your brain's capacity to comprehend and retain information will be improved and likewise so will your productivity.

About the Author

David Hoffeld is CEO of the Hoffeld Group, a research based sales training, coaching and consulting firm that is the leader in the integration of proven science and sales. The Hoffeld Group takes the repeatable and predictable principles, which science has proven to create and enable influence, out of the laboratory and academic journals and apply them to selling. For a deeper look at the Hoffeld Group's groundbreaking research and innovative sales strategies visit HoffeldGroup.com.

Notes

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3. Pierce J. Howard. *The Owner's Manual for The Brain*. (Austin: Bard Press. 2006). p. 210.
4. Lydia Dotto. *Losing Sleep: How Your Sleeping Habits Affect Your Life*. (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1990).
5. John Medina. *Brain Rules*. (Seattle: Pear Press, 2008). p. 167.
6. Pierce J. Howard. *The Owner's Manual for The Brain*. (Austin: Bard Press. 2006). p. 211.
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