

# Myths or Facts: Which Are You Choosing?

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*Most people live in a very restricted circle of their potential being.*

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**We all have reservoirs of energy and genius to draw upon of which we do not dream.**

**- William James, 1899**

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**O**ne of the biggest challenges we all face is finding the facts we need to know for best energy and performance and getting rid of the myths and fads that seem to be everywhere. We all want a practical, effective way to unlock our unique hidden capacity. I began to learn the foundation and framework for **The Other 90%** from my grandfather. I've spent most of my adult life exploring the leading edge of this field in detail and helping to advance it.

**The Other 90%** offers advanced strategies for closing the gap between where you are and where you most want to be. We are all entitled to know the scientific facts necessary for us to excel in a world of stress, change, and unprecedented opportunities. But here's the key question: Are you ready to act on those facts? If yes, then I have written **The Other 90%** for you.



At this moment, how many popular myths are taking their toll on your energy and performance, or your health and potential for success, and that of your family, and your business? Here's a sample of the common misconceptions that may be limiting you right now:

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**MYTH:** In this pressure-packed world, everyone has to work longer, harder, and faster.

**FACT:** If you do, you're on a straight track to burnout and regret. Besides, pushing nonstop causes you to lose at least 15% of your time every day to costly mental space-outs. Star performers know they must pull back to get ahead. They use what researchers call

strategic pauses that take less than a minute anywhere, anytime to revitalize mind, mood, and body. (See Chapter 7)

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**MYTH:** It's hard to have as much energy as you want.

**FACT:** Nationwide surveys indicate that the number one thing people want is more energy. But even those who think they have plenty of vitality would be surprised to know they're probably using a damaging kind of energy known as tense energy caused by tight muscles, stress hormones, rushing, or caffeine resulting in poor performance and strained relationships. People who best handle pressure and who are happiest and most successful rely on calm energy a state of low tension and high energy. It's rare but not so hard to build. (See Chapter 7)

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**MYTH:** It takes a lot of effort to significantly improve mental or physical performance.

**FACT:** The opposite is true. According to scientists, small changes can produce big results. As just one example out of many, consider your shoulders: there is medical evidence that even a slight slumping of the shoulders cuts blood and oxygen to the brain and senses by as much as 30%. How are you sitting right this moment? Learn to make one small change in your shoulders and observe what happens. Then dig into the other small changes that produce big results. (See Chapters 7 and 15)

**MYTH:** The brain is the source of all human intelligence.

**FACT:** Your highest intelligence comes from at least three different brains, and you need them all working together. Neuroscientists have found a second true brain in the gut (the "enteric nervous system," with more than 100 million neurons) and another one inside the heart, which radiates feelings up to 10 feet away and is the primary source of motivation, trust, and loyalty. By the way, 40 to 50 percent of the fluctuations in an organization's profit margin are predictable based on people's feelings and opinions — so these other brains also have huge financial implications. (See Chapter 2)

**MYTH:** Competition is a great thing. It promotes excellence.

**FACT:** Competition wastes up to 40 percent of our time and energy and has never promoted excellence. Competition forces us to endlessly compare ourselves to others, and we end up trapped in the minutiae of mediocrity or trying to tear down others so we look better. Competitive thoughts also block best performance and hurt health. In every field and industry, star performers have learned that no one has to lose for them to win, and they focus all their attention, strengths, and talents on excelling, going beyond the best they have ever given before. (See Chapter 3)

**MYTH:** There's no way to relax when you're hit with problem after problem all day, forced to meet deadlines, prevent mistakes, and keep performing at your best.

**FACT:** You can learn a five-step instant calming sequence (ICS) that requires less than

one second to neutralize stress and help keep you in command of your thoughts, energy, and emotions whenever you're under pressure. (See Chapter 21)

**MYTH:** We are getting more and more tired because we don't sleep long enough at night.

**FACT:** Sleep debt is common but not inevitable. Great sleep depends as much on the quality of rest as the quantity. The Mayo Clinic has found that there is a simple way to measurably increase evening energy and also deepen sleep every night even in limited time. It takes five minutes of light activity at precisely the correct time each evening. (See Chapter 12)

**MYTH:** Shared vision, purpose, and values are the most important sources of commitment.

**FACT:** We've got it backwards. No matter how great a vision or purpose may be, individual people must make it come true. Studies show that the most powerful factor in individual commitment is not group vision or values; it's clearly knowing individual values and then linking those values to the purpose of the group or organization. What are five values that best describe or define who you are and what you stand for? What are the distinctive values of other individuals you count on? (See Chapter 4)

**MYTH:** E-mail saves time and improves organizational effectiveness.

**FACT:** E-mail is one of the biggest sources of misunderstandings and a top destroyer of trust. There are three crucial yet little-known keys for making e-mail effective. Do you know them?

**MYTH:** Most people know how to listen well if they want to.

**FACT:** There is a huge difference between hearing someone else's words and what is called "exceptional attentiveness", which requires some simple, little-known ways to turn on the brain's "alertness switches." (See Chapter 7)

**MYTH:** Good posture is easy: just sit up and think tall.

**FACT:** No one is born knowing how to have great posture and you can't get it by willpower. Only five of the body's 684 muscles are

designed to hold you upright with ease and energy, yet most people tense dozens—sometimes hundreds—of the wrong muscles when they sit, stand, and move. This results in fatigue, headaches, tension, and diminished productivity. It's simple to change. (See Chapter 15)

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**MYTH:** There's little point in doing much creative thinking about the future. It's hard enough to get through each day.

**FACT:** Extensive data show that people with a short time horizon — those who for the most part only focus on today or the next few weeks or months — are the most rigid, resistant to change, and least successful. People who have the longest time horizon — those who devote at least a brief period each day imagining five to twenty-five years into the future — handle change best and are more innovative, resilient, and successful. (See Chapter 14)

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**MYTH:** It's not possible to have a great life off the job after working hard for such long hours.

**FACT:** Half of all the most damaging arguments at home are started or magnified within 15 minutes of people greeting each other at the end of the day. If you make one simple, specific change in how you walk through the door when arriving home, it can dramatically improve your personal and family life. (See Chapter 12)

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**MYTH:** Company-wide quality programs and similar "top-down" initiatives are the keys to growth and profit.

**FACT:** Not even close. Quality and technology are just business prerequisites these days, not an added advantage. The effects of mistrust waste up to half of all time at work, according to estimates by the Deming Center for Quality Management. By far the greatest gains in effectiveness, innovation, teamwork, and profitability come when individuals and groups effectively build highest-trust relationships, one person at a time. (See Chapters 4 - 6)

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**MYTH:** Giving feedback or criticism to others is vital to an organization's success.

**FACT:** Most feedback is irrelevant, manipulative, political, inappropriate, and the fastest way to doom an individual, team, or organization. There are some key

requirements for effective feedback and nearly all leaders and organizations disregard them. If we don't change how we give feedback, it will continue to wreck families and organizations. (See Chapter 23)

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**MYTH:** When a team makes a great effort, the key to success is to sincerely thank the whole group.

**FACT:** Group recognition always fails. Here's why: Whenever you work with others on a project, you all bring your own distinctive perspectives and contributions. So when a leader thanks the whole group, individuals are (inadvertently) made to feel devalued and invisible. Individualized recognition is vital and it's the only kind that really works. (See Chapters 4 - 6)

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**MYTH:** Don't sweat the small stuff and it's all small stuff.

**FACT:** Some little things irritations and pet peeves are worth sweating in work and life because they turn into huge problems if we try to ignore them. (See Chapter 11)

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**MYTH:** Taking time off is a sure way to lose your performance edge or fall behind.

**FACT:** The opposite is true: Without time off, you will lose your edge and fall behind. To be more effective, you have to be able to completely forget about your work and to-do lists. Creative intelligence increases only when you stop rushing and think less, not more. If you want to access your full brilliance in life or work you must devote some time to doing nothing, guilt-free. In the Caribbean this is called "liming." How good are you at it? (See Chapter 19)

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**MYTH:** Intuition is a dependable way to read the motives and intentions of others.

**FACT:** When it comes to reading other people, intuition fails. So, bury your crystal ball; they're all defective. Studies show that if you try to guess another person's motives or intentions, over 90 percent of the time you'll be wrong. Don't assume; ask and observe. (See Chapter 22)

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**MYTH:** Adversity is something you just have to tolerate or endure until things get back to normal.

**FACT:** First, things are not going to get “back to normal,” so stop waiting. Adversity isn’t just something to endure, it’s one of the greatest opportunities to grow your strengths and become far more successful later. The key is learning to make adversity your ally is to toughen the mind, body, and emotions so you’re more resilient and creative to face whatever life brings. (See Chapters 20 and 21)

**MYTH:** When you catch up, then you can be innovative and do what you’ve always wanted.

**FACT:** None of us is ever going to catch up – we are each going to have an average of at least 35 hours of unfinished work in front of us at all times. Knowing this, it’s up to us to step aside from the hubbub and focus more clearly each day on what matters most. (See Chapters 11 and 25)

**MYTH:** Exceptional work depends on visionary leadership.

**FACT:** Having a vision is a good thing but no matter what your goal or purpose, it either becomes a reality or fails based on the efforts of people, not the words. A simple “Friday Milestone Meeting” can dramatically change how well you turn vision into results and, at the same time, notice more of the hidden strengths in others and opportunities all around you. (See Chapter 1)

**MYTH:** Accepting that things aren’t always going to be fun is part of growing up.

**FACT:** Making a bit more time each day to do a few more of the things you love keeps you young at heart and makes you far more valuable to those around you. Doing this may be far easier than you think, even if you don’t love your present job. (See Chapter 8)

**MYTH:** If you want success, you have to focus on small goals.

**FACT:** If you want small success, focus on small goals. If you want to unlock your potential for bigger successes, you have to align your life with your biggest dreams. This generates energy, motivation, ingenuity, and resilience to let you make the greatest difference in the world and to enjoy more success on your own terms. (See Chapter 13)

**MYTH:** To get ahead, the best thing to do is to use “role models” who are successful.

**FACT:** You were born an original, and you were meant to live as one. Role models can help us appreciate our own hidden potential, but we must each learn how to apply it in our one-of-a-kind way. In all the millions of years on earth, there has never been another person like you, and there never will be again. This is your time. This is your chance. No one else can live it in your place. That’s what *The Other 90%* is about. (See Chapter 26)

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*Robert K. Cooper is Chairman of Advanced Excellence Systems LLC, a leadership consulting firm in Ann Arbor, MI. He is a faculty member in the Lessons in Leadership Distinguished Speaker Series sponsored by business schools from coast to coast. He is widely known for his work on how exceptional leaders and teams liberate untapped human capacity and excel under pressure. His books include “The Other 90%™: How to Unlock Your Vast Untapped Potential for Leadership and Life” (Crown Business Books, 2001).*