





+ case study


client

The logo for Ernst & Young, consisting of a stylized 'EY' symbol followed by the text "ERNST & YOUNG" and the tagline "Quality In Everything We Do" below it.+ Ernst & Young was experiencing exhaustion, burnout, and high turnover at the company, specifically resulting from the long hours expected of employees during busy tax season.// "The old adage was that the more hours you put in, the more work you'd be able to do ... it's not about how many hours we spend at work, but how effective we are with the energy we do have."

EY Senior Manager

Ernst & Young approached The Energy Project because they were experiencing the costs of staff members who were expected to work a minimum of 55 hours a week, and often put in as many as 65–75 hours during tax season. Among other major consequences, Ernst & Young was seeing turnover rates of over 40% in some areas during this time. This means not just the loss of employees whose value increases with each year of experience, but also the significant costs of recruiting and training people to replace them each year.

approach

As part of Ernst & Young's broader leadership development efforts, more than 1200 partners went through a modified version of The Energy Project's curriculum between 2007 and 2010, and several hundred more are anticipated to participate in the program in 2012. Our course for partners has consistently been rated among the one or two highest of all the programs offered to EY partners for three consecutive years.

In January, 2007, we also launched a full version of our curriculum with two intact audit teams — some 30 people in all. At the height of busy season, we took them through all four modules at one-month intervals and offered more individualized coaching between each module. Our goal was to test whether, by learning to manage their energy more efficiently and renewing themselves intermittently, they could get more done, in less time, with a higher level of engagement, more sustainably.

client

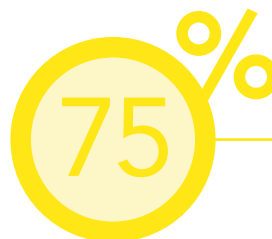
ERNST & YOUNG*Quality In Everything We Do*results

The results were impressive. Rather than feeling compelled to work long hours without interruption, participants were empowered to manage themselves as they saw fit. They began taking intermittent breaks during the day, including midday workouts at a nearby gym. Accustomed to eating big meals once or twice a day, they shifted to eating smaller, healthier meals every three hours as a way to sustain their energy. Distracted from their work by constant emails, they took to turning off their email for selected periods of time each day in order to fully focus on challenging tasks. Rather than blaming others for how they were feeling under stress, they used our strategies to take more control of their emotions.

Participants agreed that, among many other benefits, the program increased their engagement at work, helped them to handle stressful situations more effectively and to focus more fully. Perhaps most convincingly of all, not a single person who went through the curriculum chose to leave the firm in the two months following the program — coincidental with the end of high season when the highest turnover typically occurs.



What I learned will positively influence my engagement



I am more likely to stay here



The content will help me take better care of myself

What I learn will help me manage stressful situations more effectively

I feel better about working here



What I learned will positively influence my mood

The program had a lasting positive impact