

# Better leadership starts with sleep: A research-backed playbook

THE WORK INNOVATION LAB

BY  asana





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# What does it take to get to the top?

Many people think you need to prioritize work above all else to become an effective leader, pulling long hours and all-nighters to get the job done. One study found that the more time employees spend at work outside of normal business hours (like in the early mornings or late evenings), the more they are seen as dependable, trustworthy leaders.

Our perception, it turns out, is wrong. The Work Innovation Lab by Asana partnered with Chorus Sleep\* and Dr. Greg Wells to conduct original research on the relationship between sleep, leadership, and work effectiveness. The result of months of research is this playbook, which unpacks the inextricable—yet often overlooked—relationship between leadership and sleep. Learn how the two are deeply connected, and how you can apply the findings to become a better-rested, more effective leader.

In 1986, the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded—a mere 73 seconds into its flight—killing all seven astronauts. Reportedly, some of the astronauts had slept for only two hours before arriving at work at 1 a.m.

A report of the presidential commission investigating the accident reported, “The willingness of NASA employees in general to work excessive hours, while admirable, raises serious questions.”

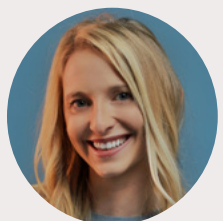
Note how the commission describes NASA employees’ excessive work hours as “admirable.” This is the same attitude that exists in many workplaces today. Sleep deprivation shouldn’t be a badge of honor.

Effective leaders prioritize  
high-quality sleep



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The impact of sleep on the individual is well documented, but because of the one-to-many relationship leaders have with their teams, and because sleep affects every system in your body, sleep is one of the highest-leverage aspects leaders have to promote efficient and effective working environments.



ALI ABRAMOVITZ  
CEO, Chorus Sleep

Research suggests that great leadership stems from quality sleep. In assessing 35,000 leaders and interviewing a small subset, researchers found that the more senior a person's role is, the more they slept. This implies that leaders recognize—either consciously or subconsciously—the value of sleep.

Whether or not leaders value sleep impacts more than just their own individual work. When leaders devalue sleep, their poor sleep patterns can be contagious. One study found that when leaders modeled and encouraged poor sleep habits, their employees got 25 fewer minutes of nightly rest compared to their counterparts with bosses who valued sleep.



# How sleep impacts leadership

Sleep actively impacts the skills and qualities that make leaders more effective in six main ways:

## 1. Better sleep enables leaders to plan long-term amid uncertainty

Today's leaders are navigating a lot of uncertainty. The first instinct during unstable times can be to find quick-fix solutions, putting a band-aid on the most noticeable issue first even if it's not a high priority. But this is short-sighted. To ride the waves of uncertain economic times and come out on top, you need to be able to plan long-term. Better sleep can help by enabling more effective long-term thinking.

Effective leaders need high levels of what's called "executive functioning"—higher-order cognitive processes like problem-solving, planning, organizing, and executing plans. Research has shown that executive functioning happens in the prefrontal cortex, and it influences all leadership behavior. This is why sleep is so crucial to proper executive functioning—while other areas of the brain can cope reasonably well when sleep-deprived, the prefrontal cortex cannot. By prioritizing sleep, you are prioritizing the crucial brain functions that allow you to plan for and succeed during times of greater uncertainty.

## 2. Better sleep drives more rational decision-making

As a leader, you need to stay calm, cool, and collected in the face of countless daily decisions. This is even more important during times of stress and uncertainty. But it's challenging when you're sleep deprived. According to research, people who were naturally more calculated and cautious became more impulsive when sleep deprived.

That's because sleep is essential for emotional regulation. Brain scans show that regions of the brain that generate reactivity and impulse become more active in sleep-deprived people. At the same time, the regions that control rational decision-making decrease in activity. This is why when you're sleep-deprived, you often swing between emotional extremes, and can struggle to make rational, level-headed decisions.

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Research by Dr. Maiken Nedergaard, Co-director of the Center for Translational Neuromedicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center, found that, during sleep, the brain removes metabolic waste from the spaces between the neurons in the brain. This, quite literally, washes the brain and paves the way for more rational decision-making.

### 3. Better sleep enables leaders to navigate change

Leadership requires situational awareness—knowing what’s happening in your environment and what your employees are experiencing.

In a series of studies, Christopher Barnes, a professor of management at the University of Washington’s Foster School of Business, found that sleep-deprived entrepreneurs were less able to identify misalignments between a new technology and the intended market. If you’re trying to develop an effective go-to-market strategy that accounts for complexity, quality sleep is essential.

Situational awareness is especially important during challenging times when employees may be hesitant to voice opinions or contrary viewpoints. As a leader, you need to be able to “read the room” and interpret non-verbal cues.

When sleep-deprived, you’re more likely to overreact to events and express feelings in a negative way. You’re also more likely to come to a decision based on emotion rather than facts. As a leader who relies on healthy negotiations, compromise, and effective discussion to build trust with your teams, this type of emotional decision-making can be problematic. Better sleep allows you to retain more awareness of what’s actually happening in your workplace, so you can have more appropriate and measured responses during challenging times.

### 4. Better sleep fosters trust and more ethical behaviors

Effective leadership is founded on trust. But research shows that when you’re sleep deprived, your brain becomes less trusting of others. In a sleep-deprived state, the brain is more likely to misinterpret subtle cues like body language and even facial expressions in a more negative light. In this frame of mind, a helpful teammate can deceptively feel like a competitor.

Research has also shown that poor sleep can lead to unethical behaviors. One study found that when leaders devalued sleep, they rated their employees as less likely to do the right thing—possibly because employees were more likely to behave in less ethical ways due to their own sleep deprivation.

On the other hand, when you are well-rested, you are more likely to behave ethically and follow your moral compass. Your team, in turn, is more likely to trust you. This trust becomes even more important during times of change, when employees more often look to leadership to guide and support them.



## 5. Better sleep fuels creativity

The best leaders are creative. In particular, evidence shows that during crises and challenging times, leaders who refrain from making excuses and focus on the “art of the possible” come out on top.

Studies have found that sleep increases your ability to think creatively and solve problems. This is especially true for rapid eye movement (REM) sleep—the stage of sleep where dreams typically appear. During REM sleep—which accounts for about 25% of your sleep—your brain is thought to establish new connections between neurons. This increases your cognitive flexibility and, in turn, boosts your ability to adapt to new or dynamic events.

Remarkably, you are more creative when sleeping than when you’re awake. In 2009, a group of researchers at the University of California, San Diego, found that REM sleep directly enhances creative processing more than any other sleep or awake state. As a leader, increased cognitive flexibility and creativity can lead to “aha”s about what’s not working and how to get back on track.

## 6. Better sleep makes leaders more inspiring

By the very nature of your position as a leader, your teams are depending on you to inspire them. During times of uncertainty, this inspiration becomes even more important. Inspiring your team can make all the difference in whether your employees respond to challenging times with a sense of defeat or resilience. By remaining steadfast and optimistic (without sugarcoating), you can help keep your employees engaged with your organization’s mission.

If you’re sleep-deprived, you’re likely to come across as less inspiring to your team. As Barnes writes in Harvard Business Review, “Sleep-deprived leaders are less likely to show positive emotion to their teams, and sleep-deprived team members will be less likely to experience positive emotion. In other words, sleep-deprived leaders are less inspiring, and sleep-deprived team members are harder to inspire.”

TIP

When sleep deprived, hold off on the creative thinking and instead focus on tasks that require planning and rule-based reasoning.

Despite our best efforts, bad nights of sleep happen sometimes. When you haven't slept well, don't try to be creative. Instead, focus on planning and rule-based activities like getting your calendar organized or establishing schedules and milestones for projects. The reason? Being sleep-deprived impacts your creativity and brain functioning like alertness, attention, and memory. Meanwhile, other tasks like planning and rule-based activities are not as impacted.

# What is sleep leadership?

It's not enough for a leader to prioritize their own quality sleep—they also need to do the same for their employees. Research by Johns Hopkins University shows that as a leader, you can drive better business outcomes by promoting better sleep habits and behaviors for your workers.

That's where sleep leadership comes in. Sleep leadership is the set of leader behaviors that encourages and enables high-quality sleep for you and your employees.

THERE ARE TWO MAIN COMPONENTS OF SLEEP LEADERSHIP:

## Encouraging sleep



Sleep leadership depends on you encouraging your employees to get more and better quality sleep. As a leader, you need to emphasize the critical role that sleep plays in driving work effectiveness. You can do this by talking about the benefits of sleep with your employees and your own healthy sleep habits if you are comfortable sharing.

## Enabling sleep



As a leader, encouraging great sleep is important, but it's not enough to drive long-lasting behavior change for your employees. You also need to enable your employees to get high-quality sleep by designing your organization in intentional ways that promote sleep. This can range from removing early or late-night meetings, all the way to equipping your office with naps rooms or sleep pods.



# Why sleep leadership matters

Research has shown that good managers are intentional about sleep leadership. We often think of sleep as part of our personal life, divorced from work. But sleep has a direct impact on employee performance, and as a leader, it's important to recognize this.

There are many ways that sleep impacts your teams' performance:

## **Poor sleep takes a toll on productivity**

As a leader, you depend on your employees to be productive on the job. But poor sleep is a blocker to productivity. One study found that fatigue-related productivity losses were estimated to cost \$1,967 per employee each year, assuming an average salary of \$50,000 USD. In a workforce of 2,000 people, that's nearly \$4 million! The cost would be double that if your employees' salaries average \$100,000 USD. All in all, your employees' poor sleep takes a toll on your bottom line.

## **Poor sleep degrades cognitive performance**

Sleep is fuel for your brain. And when you run out of this critical fuel, your employees' cognitive performance plummets. Research has found a staggering 400% degradation in cognitive performance as a result of insufficient sleep.

# 400%

Research has found a staggering 400% degradation in cognitive performance as a result of insufficient sleep.



DR. GREG WELLS

Scientist, Performance physiologist,  
and four-time best-selling author

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Contrary to popular belief, your brain doesn't 'shut down' during sleep. Instead, the cortex reduces its activity levels by up to 40%—so there's still a lot going on. In reality, sleep is an active metabolic process that helps you optimize your brain function.

### Poor sleep leads to burnout and churn

Your ability to retain top talent depends on workers getting quality sleep. When sleep-deprived, employees are at higher risk of burnout. One study of 1,300 financial professionals found that when workers experienced stress they were able to ward off burnout—but only when well-rested. When workers experience sleep disturbances, job stress leads to burnout.

One study found that 15% of HR leaders at organizations with more than 2,500 employees said burnout causes an eye-popping 50% or more of their annual turnover—a phenomenon called “burn and churn.”

### Poor sleep leads to plummeting job satisfaction

Research has shown that when your workers don’t get enough quality sleep, their perceptions of work become distorted. They can start to feel as though they have more demanding workloads, less control, less social support, and, in turn, lower job satisfaction levels than their well-rested colleagues. Research has also shown that people who are dissatisfied with their jobs leave organizations at higher rates than those who are happy with their jobs, furthering the risk of churn.

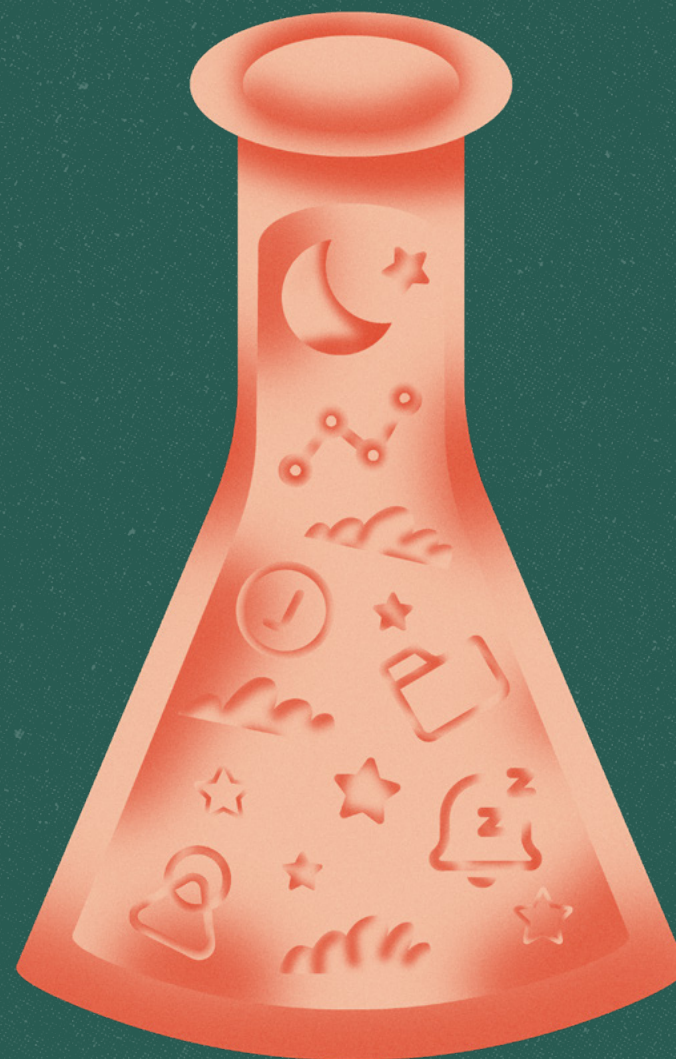
### Poor sleep increases absenteeism

Your workers’ sleep effectiveness packs a punch to your bottom line. Research has shown that poor sleep quality leads to greater levels of absenteeism and, in many cases, your organization pays the cost. The same research found that, in France, 88% of work absenteeism is shouldered by the employer.

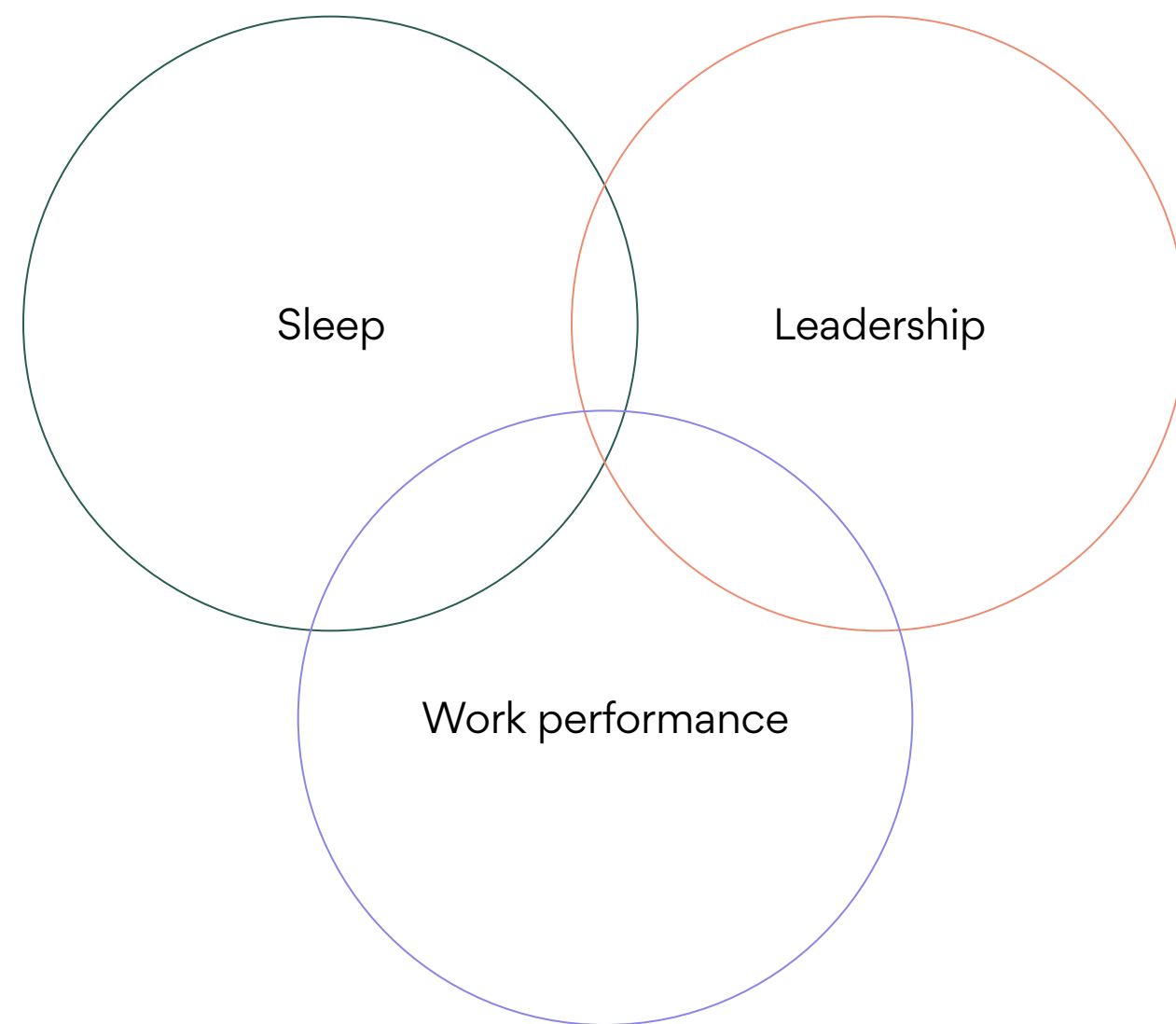
These science-backed benefits of better sleep suggest that, as a leader, prioritizing better sleep for you and your employees matters—perhaps more than we’re inclined to think.



# Insights on the future of sleep and work



At The Work Innovation Lab, we set out to explore the relationship between sleep, leadership, and work performance. We partnered with Chorus Sleep, a mobile app and coaching program that leverages the latest sleep research to help people fall asleep faster and stay asleep longer.



WE HAD TWO GOALS FOR THIS RESEARCH:

- <sup>01</sup> Understand how sleep impacts work effectiveness, including productivity, collaboration, and goal setting
- <sup>02</sup> Model and develop insights for how leaders can employ sleep leadership



DR. GREG WELLS

Scientist, Performance physiologist,  
and four-time best-selling author

# What's different about sleep today?

For most of history, humans have woken up and gone to sleep based on the sun's cycle. But times have changed. Many of us work indoors, exposed to bright lights for more hours a day. In the evenings, we bathe in the bright lights of TV, computer, tablet, or mobile phone screens. Our internal physiology is no longer matched to the rhythm of the sun. As a result, we're not sleeping enough and our health and performance are suffering.



Our study ran for eight weeks in the fall and winter of 2022. The 34 participants who completed all eight weeks were Asana employees who volunteered to use the Chorus Sleep app daily. Each day, participants performed a mix of activities that supported their sleep including verifying their sleep data from the night before, listening to a relaxing audio session before bed, and reading short, interactive content about how to

improve their sleep. They performed these activities a minimum of three times per week.

The results of our study show just how much impact sleep leadership can have. In a span of mere months, participants saw significant improvements in how they worked and slept.

# The study

# Better sleep means more collaboration

As measured by a 55%  
increase in the number of  
collaborative actions

To our knowledge, ours is the first study to look at the relationship between sleep and collaboration. In some ways, this is understandable. Sleep is a very individual activity and it's not intuitive to think that it would impact our collaboration with others.

But our study found that better sleep fueled more collaboration at work. Our participants began to collaborate more with their colleagues as their sleep improved. Remarkably, participants showed a 55% increase in the number of collaborative actions they performed each day (a staggering 37 more actions) than they performed before the study.

Moreover, better sleep didn't just fuel any type of collaboration—it also fueled more cross-functional team collaboration. In today's distributed work environment, cross-functional collaboration is mission-critical for your business, yet so difficult to achieve. Ultimately, we found that participants collaborated with (a statistically significant) 7% more teams during the study as compared to before.

How can we explain the positive impact of sleep on collaboration? One likely explanation is this: Research shows that sleep deprivation prevents us from connecting emotionally with others—in other words, our emotional intelligence (EQ) suffers. With greater EQ, we're more likely to recognize the importance of sharing information, connecting, and collaborating at work. Additionally, you're more likely to recognize the importance of collaborating with cross-functional collaborators who may otherwise be “out of sight, out of mind” if your EQ is drained.

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We intuitively thought that with more sleep, our desire and ability to collaborate would be higher—likely due to the impacts of sleep on motivation and social and emotional connection. So, it's exciting to see this empirically borne out in the study.

**ALI ABRAMOVITZ**

Chorus Sleep CEO

Our participants reflected on how improved sleep changed the ways in which they collaborated with their colleagues, increasing their awareness of others’ collaborative workflows. One participant even reflected on a potential direct link between better sleep and collaboration:

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I think better sleep directly translates to more collaboration, because I had more energy to think about, ‘Oh, who do I pull in here like? Who do I need to talk to in order to figure this out?’ It helped push me to think more creatively rather than spinning the wheels by myself

**JESSICA SHI**  
Insights Analyst at Asana

At The Work Innovation Lab, a big focus of our research is what we call Collaborative Intelligence—understanding how you and your workers are collaborating. Our results suggest that sleep can be a key contributor to Collaborative Intelligence. By understanding how sleep deprived or well-rested your employees are, you can begin to predict how extensively they’re likely to collaborate with their peers.





DR. REBECCA HINDS

Head of The Work Innovation Lab  
by Asana

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At The Work Innovation Lab, we believe that Collaborative Intelligence is the future of work. This study shows that effective sleep can be an important input to effective collaboration. As a leader, if you want to fuel better collaboration in your workplace, you need to consider how well-rested or sleep-deprived your employees are.

# Better sleep means healthier collaboration

As measured by no statistically-  
significant change in the  
number of notifications sent

Our participants did not just begin to collaborate more with their colleagues as the study unfolded; they began to collaborate in more “healthy” ways. We found that, despite the fact that participants began to collaborate more with others in a well-rested state, the number of notifications they triggered for others remained unchanged.

This suggests that our participants became more intentional about how they were collaborating with others. They began to be more selective about how many people they sent status updates to, they began to “batch” their work updates so that their colleagues weren’t overwhelmed by updates, and they became more strategic about who they needed to share information with.

These findings are likely also a reflection of greater EQ. Individuals with higher EQ are more likely to be attuned to small, subtle nuances of the emotions and behaviors of others. And this leads to them making more effective judgments. A cornerstone of Collaborative Intelligence is the belief that more collaboration is not better collaboration. Today’s workers are collaboratively overloaded. Our results suggest that as our participants clocked better sleep, they began to become more cognizant about harmful behaviors that trigger collaborative overload for others, which was reflected in healthier collaboration overall.

# Better sleep means higher engagement

As measured by a 15% increase  
in the frequency of “likes” on  
tasks, messages, notifications,  
and comments

We also found that as our volunteers participated in the study, they started to like tasks, messages, notifications, and comments in Asana with greater frequency—15% more often than before the study. One explanation for this is that as participants were clocking better—and more—sleep, their mood was boosted (which we also saw reflected in an 11% decrease in irritability ratings). And this mood boost resulted in them being more likely to acknowledge and celebrate others’ work.

We also saw a boost in engagement reflected in feedback from our volunteers. Participants generally enjoyed being part of the study. It triggered engagement and was a positive experience in itself. One participant said, “This [study] has been SO much fun to be a part of!”

But just as much as participants found the study fun, they also found it informative. They saw it as a learning experience and told us that they were discovering new details about their sleeping habits, which further fueled engagement. Another participant told us, “I’ve been learning quite a bit about my sleeping habits! It’s been fun!”



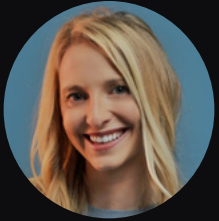
## Better sleep means shorter time to fall asleep

As measured by a 36%+ drop  
in the time to fall asleep

We found that during the course of the sleep study, our volunteers began to fall asleep faster. Throughout the study, on average, all participants' time to fall asleep dropped by 36% from 34 minutes at the start to 22 minutes by the end of the study. We also found that those who had the most trouble falling asleep saw the most benefit. For these participants, their time to fall asleep plummeted from 60 minutes to 26 minutes (a 57% improvement)—more than 30 minutes in time savings each day.

Throughout the study, on average, all participants' time to fall asleep dropped by 36% from 34 minutes at the start to 22 minutes by the end of the study.





ALI ABRAMOVITZ  
CEO, Chorus Sleep

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While meditation can be a superior technique for building daytime focus, specific breathwork techniques, like in the Chorus Sleep Sessions, have been shown to be more effective for calming the nervous system, which is critical for sleep. So, while it may seem counterintuitive to do active breathwork before bed, it can help to calm you significantly within a few minutes.

# Better sleep means fewer awakenings

As measured by a 30%  
decrease in the number of  
times participants woke up  
each night

We also found that the sleep quality of our volunteers improved during the study. As the study went on, participants began to wake up less often throughout the night. The number of times they woke up during sleep decreased from approximately 3 down to 2, or an approximate 30% decrease in the number of awakenings. Given that workers are faced with endless distractions and disturbances in the office; sleeping should be as disturbance-free as possible.

Additionally, our participants clocked more hours of sleep as the study went on. But this did take some investment on their part. In particular, we found that completing a written morning journal entry predicted an increase in weekly sleep duration by 164 minutes (or 23 more minutes per night). We also saw a strong, and statistically significant, correlation between reading lesson content and sleep duration—meaning people who read more lessons, slept more each night.

# Better sleep means increased progress at work

As measured by a 15% boost in  
daily progress

Finally, we found that our participants reported a 15% increase in self-reported daytime functioning, or the amount of progress they made throughout the day.

We included this specific language for measurement because of a phenomenon often called the “hangover effect.” Research has shown even once a person begins to sleep better, they continue to report feeling bad for a period even after their sleep improves. This is because it’s difficult for them to develop an objective view of

their new sleep patterns. By measuring “progress”, as opposed to “feeling,” we primed our participants to more objectively assess changes they experienced throughout the study.

This 15% increase translates into big gains in productivity. Considering a 40-hour week, our participants gained back 6 hours in work progress each week—nearly an entire business day’s work each week through participating in the study.

\*All of the calculated metrics that we report in this playbook are statistically significant. We also accounted for changes across the calculated metrics for the broader employee population.



# Actionable steps to improve your sleep leadership





The data is clear—sleep is a catalyst for a more efficient, happier workforce.

Sleep leadership is achieved when you play a leading role in promoting and supporting sleep, company-wide. But fighting against an embedded culture of hustle and grind isn't easy. As a leader, you can implement best practices, techniques, and actionable tasks to help others naturally learn to embrace and utilize the benefits of better sleep.

Developing sleep leadership comes down to two key elements: encouraging and enabling sleep. Here are research-backed ways to put these elements into action at your company.



By facilitating workers' ability to adopt healthier sleep habits, you're opening up the conversation about how and why you prioritize sleep within your company walls. Here are concrete ways you can encourage your team to prioritize high-quality sleep.

# Encouraging sleep

1. Lead by example

Instructing your teams to get more sleep won't mean much if you're regularly pinging them after midnight. To encourage healthier sleep habits, you need to lead by example. When Jeff Bezos mentioned that he prioritizes getting eight hours of sleep a night, the quote went viral. As a leader among leaders, his example set the tone, not just for his employees at Amazon, but for other executives around the world.

2. Inject sleep into conversations

Develop a habit of mentioning your sleep in day-to-day communications. From regular 1:1's with direct reports, to company-wide messaging, start discussing your own sleep habits in routine meetings. Go above and beyond touting the benefits. Simple directives like asking employees not to respond to notifications after or before working hours and scheduling meetings during their most wakeful hours can have a huge impact on how they prioritize their sleep habits.

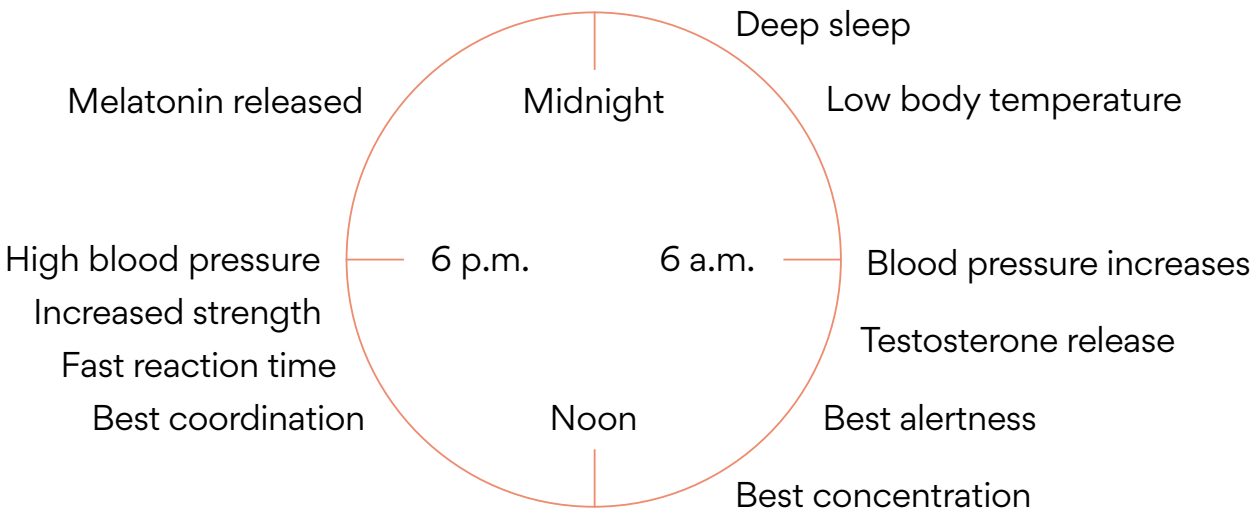
Example prompts:

“Hi (employee), I saw your name pop up in my notifications last night well after working hours. I just wanted to remind you that you are never under any obligation to respond to work messaging once you’ve logged off for the day. Is there anything I can do to help prevent this in the future? If you’re feeling a bit overwhelmed with work right now, I’m happy to troubleshoot ways we can get a better handle on your current workload.”

“(Employee), do you mind if we check in tomorrow instead of this evening? I didn’t get enough sleep last night, so I’m going to log off early today to make sure I can prioritize that.”

3. Understand the science of circadian rhythms

As a leader, you’ll also benefit from understanding how the average employee’s energy and performance patterns fluctuate during the course of a day. For instance, employees typically achieve their best concentration before noon and their best coordination after noon. Encouraging more “heads-down” work before noon, and more “heads-up” coordination and collaboration after noon can help your employees maximize their performance.



4. Trust the data

Sleep is frequently associated with your personal life, but we know it greatly impacts your professional life as well. This is why it’s important to rely on data when building sleep leadership. A big component of sleep leadership is tracking and understanding the relationship between sleep and work—and then using that information to better help your employees.

5. Build sleep into your company culture

To truly encourage employees to embrace better sleep habits, it has to be part of the company culture. There are a number of ways to do this, including:

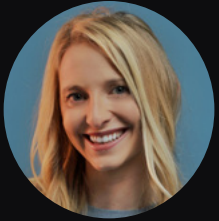
- Discouraging early or late-night meetings.
- Allowing for flexible start times part of the week.
- Establishing new norms that the team all agrees on. For example, deciding that there is no need to respond to chat messages and emails after a certain time to promote adequate circadian rhythm syncing and winding down.
- Promoting asynchronous work during at least part of the workweek, letting team members work (and sleep) whenever is best for them.





When it comes to sleep leadership, enabling sleep is the actionable partner to your encouragement. Enabling employees to get more sleep means making it as easy as possible for them to get the rest they need, based on their unique sleep patterns.

# Enabling sleep



ALI ABRAMOVITZ  
CEO, Chorus Sleep

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It's critical for company leaders to not just think about, but implement practices that support emotional wellbeing for themselves and their employees. We know that emotional wellbeing impacts not just how people work, but how they interact with colleagues, which has cascading impacts across the organization.

1. Run a voluntary, opt-in sleep competition

Much like a fitness competition, a sleep competition can help motivate employees to incorporate better sleep patterns into their daily lives.

2. Incorporate sleep into wellness programs

Wellness programs are a full-package employee morale booster. Studies show that 70% of employees who enroll view such programs as an indication that they’re valued by their organization. Employees participating in employer health programs report higher job satisfaction and lower churn rates. Plus, it’s another tool to help employees clock the sleep they need to enjoy their work.

3. Implement sleep improvement apps for your employees

There are lots of sleep trackers out there, but you’ll want to look for specific features to get the most out of your investment. Research has shown that when apps merely track your sleep and don’t offer areas for improvement, they don’t actually improve sleep. Instead, offer your employees sleep improvement apps that both track their sleep patterns and let them know how they can improve their sleep. Data without direction has limited value.

One of our participants reflected on how participation in the study was particularly valuable as a new employee:

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I started Asana very close to when the study actually started. Before, I was still finding my feet and trying to figure things out at Asana... During and after the study, better sleep helped me think more creatively about how to work with my team and other cross-functional collaborators because I have that extra energy.

JESSICA  
Insights Analyst, Asana

4. Invest in nap rooms

Even 20-minute naps have been shown to boost learning and information retention. The restorative nature of naps can help when learning new things at work or when tackling a particularly challenging problem that warrants creative thinking. Consider installing or creating nap rooms in your workplace. But don’t stop there. Educate yourself and your employees on which types of naps are best for which purposes. Dr. Greg Wells’ research has shown that not all naps are created equal (hint: 30-minute naps can do more harm than good):

		TYPE OF NAP	DURATION	HELPS TO...	
		Micro-nap	2-5 minutes	Decrease sleepiness and improve cognitive performance.	
		Mini-nap	10 minutes	Improve mental and physical performance, decrease fatigue	
		Power nap	20 minutes	Improve alertness, energy, and memory.	
		I-feel-like-crap nap	30 minutes	Make you feel groggy and foggy. Just go back to sleep.	
		Full-cycle nap	90 minutes	Improve memory and creativity.	



## 5. Support varying chronotypes

As a leader, you should seek to understand your employees' chronotypes (their natural propensities to be an early bird, a night owl, or somewhere in between). For example, if one employee functions better at night, you can consider scheduling more creative or higher-cognitive meetings later in the day. Investing in asynchronous communication technology can also allow your employees to collaborate in line with their energy levels.

## 6. Invest in sleep education

Employees might need to learn about the benefits of sleep from different sources before they can fully understand them. Providing reading materials, or even playbooks like this one, can help employees to educate themselves on why sleep matters.

As our own study came to a close, our participants told us that the study had enabled them to develop better sleep habits and practices for the future. One participant reflected on the benefits of journaling about her sleep:

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As I began journaling about my sleep during the study, I recognized how much of my own times of overwhelm—which I tend to overlook vs those of my team—impacted my sleep and how I showed up for myself and others. I recognized a lot about paying better attention on a day to day basis.

DIDI

Global Lead for Customer Marketing and Advocacy, Asana

# Sleep leadership is important always, but now more than ever.

As Stanford Professor and Work Innovation Lab research partner, Bob Sutton, wrote in a piece for McKinsey Quarterly with co-author Huggy Rao, “When people believe that a leader cares about their well-being, commitment, and success, it helps them move from that room called fear to that room called hope.”

Sleep has traditionally been confined to the “private” sphere. But we can no longer think of our professional life as completely separate from our personal life, especially when it comes to sleep. The connection is inextricably linked. As a leader, there’s never been a more important time to build sleep leadership into your toolkit as your organization navigates uncertain times.

The Work Innovation Lab is a think tank by Asana that develops human-centric, cutting-edge research to help businesses evolve today to meet the growing changes and challenges of the future of work. To learn more about The Work Innovation Lab and get our other research-backed insights, visit [workinnovationlab.com](https://workinnovationlab.com).