FATIGUE

When energy is depleted, good performance becomes harder to sustain

Fatigue emerged in our study as a powerful but often underestimated contributor to preventable business mistakes.

Most entrepreneurs didn't describe themselves as burned out. Instead, they reported operating while *a bit tired, stretched thin, or pushing longer than usual*. That state feels manageable — even normal. But in our data, fatigue showed up as more than slower thinking. It affected **how work got done**.

When energy runs low, execution suffers. Details are easier to miss. Steps get skipped. Tasks take longer — or get finished with less care. Follow-ups slip. Small rework becomes more common. Over time, fatigue quietly converts competence into inconsistency.

What makes fatigue risky is that it rarely announces itself. You're still capable. You're still experienced. But tired brains rely more on habit and memory, pause less often, and push through work that would normally get a second look. The result isn't one big failure — it's a pattern of small degradations that raise mistake risk across both decisions *and* actions.

The goal isn't to eliminate fatigue or reduce workload. It's recognizing when energy is becoming a constraint — and adjusting how you work so quality, judgment, and follow-through don't erode under load.

Below are three practical tools entrepreneurs use to protect performance when energy isn't at its best.

1. Schedule judgment-heavy work when energy is strongest

Fatigue doesn't affect all hours equally.

One effective way to reduce risk is to notice when your energy is naturally *highest* — and protect that time for work that requires judgment, accuracy, or careful thinking.

Lower-energy periods can still be useful. Just reserve them for routine or low-consequence tasks.

This isn't about doing less or working fewer hours. It's about matching the *right work* to the *right energy*, so fatigue doesn't distort important decisions.

2. Write down critical steps when energy is low

Fatigue makes memory unreliable — even for tasks you know well.

Identify one or two activities where fatigue-related slips would be costly (for example: pricing, approvals, customer commitments, handoffs). Then write down the few critical steps that must not be missed.

Keep the list short. Use it consistently, especially on long or demanding days.

This isn't bureaucracy. It's a way to protect quality when energy is uneven.

3. Define stopping points to avoid end-of-day errors

Many fatigue-driven mistakes don't happen early. They happen *late* — when attention is thin and patience is gone.

A simple preventive habit is to decide in advance what "done for today" means. Clarify which tasks must be completed — and which can safely wait — before fatigue fully takes over.

Stopping a little earlier often prevents cleanup, rework, or customer issues tomorrow.

This isn't about discipline. It's about preventing low-energy decisions from creating high-effort fixes later.

A final note

Fatigue isn't a personal failing. It's a predictable condition of demanding work.

The point of these tools isn't to slow you down or lower standards. It's to help you work *with* your energy — so judgment stays dependable and competence doesn't quietly erode under load.

Questions or reflections? If you have questions, comments, or want to share how the Quiz or these tools helped you, feel free to email me at: **author@williamholsten.com**