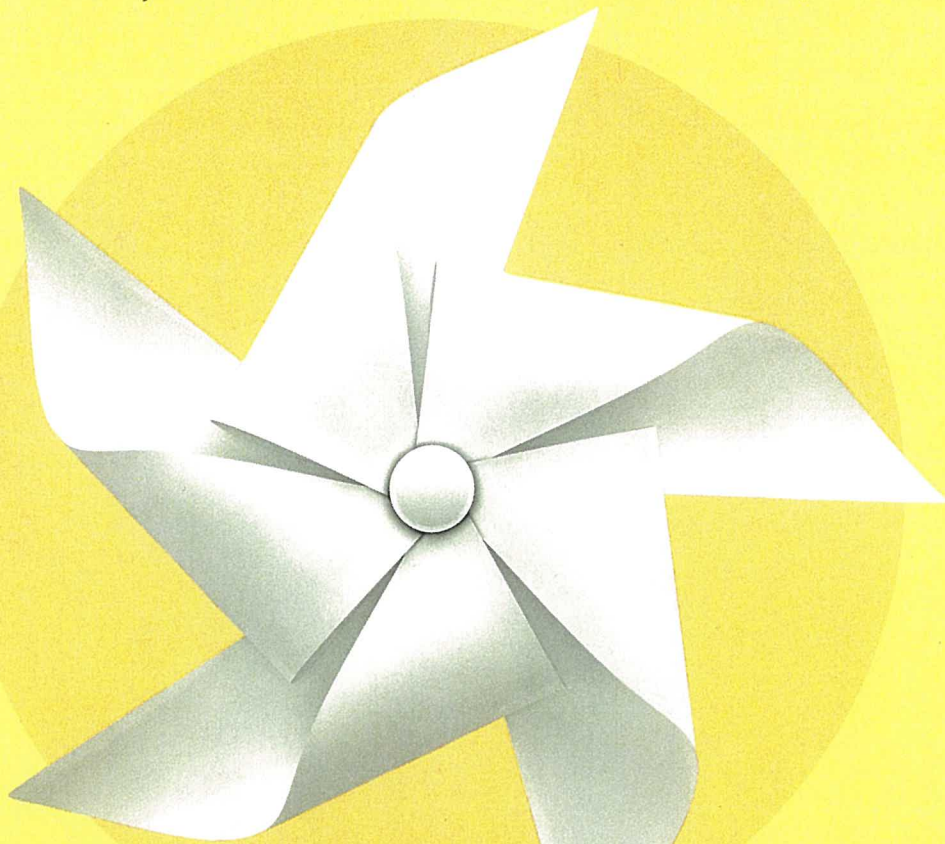


“... a gift of discovery that can lead to a more joyful life.”

Kevin Johnson, CEO, Starbucks Coffee Company



# Reinvent *the* Wheel

HOW TOP LEADERS  
LEVERAGE WELL-BEING  
FOR SUCCESS

MEGAN McNEALY

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## INCREDIBLE WELL-BEING CUSTOMIZATIONS FROM AN EXCEPTIONAL EXECUTIVE

John Worden, Trial Lawyer, Partner, and Head of San Francisco Litigation Group, Schiff Hardin LLP

After a busy day in court, John Worden usually fits in an hour workout at the gym. He sets the treadmill to the highest incline and holds weights in each of his hands. Headset on, he cranks up his favorite motivating workout music, often a hardcore album by thrash metal band *Megadeth*. He admits that maybe no one else wants to hear it, but says, "I love it in my own little world; it motivates me."

This workout used to take two hours, but he explains that he's cut the time in half by doubling the intensity to make it more efficient. A no-excuses kind of person, John says, "My work hours are long, and so I have to be efficient at the things I do."

After his treadmill, he moves to doing floor work, holding planks for three or four minutes and then completing core exercises on a weight bench, where he puts 35-pound weights in each hand and does crunches that involve pulling his legs up straight, making his body into a V shape. He doesn't do anything halfway. Laughing, he admits that a favorite saying of his is "Nothing in moderation."

John says he swears by "intense workouts" and "competitive events." He explains, "Slow and steady is not going to get me in the shape that I want to be in." He's incredibly focused.

A few days later, on a Saturday afternoon, he's at the martial arts studio in Alamo, California, teaching his popular Double Nunchucks seminar to a packed class of adults and teens. A second-degree black belt in Bok Fu Do, a form of Kung Fu, John, who emits such physical power and personal excellence that it causes a hush of reverence in the room, begins to demonstrate the tournament sequence or form he's teaching everyone. It's a series of 30 to 40 orchestrated moves that shows a person's speed, skill, and control. At the front of the dojo mat, he takes both his nunchucks, and stretching them out in both hands at

eye level, he snaps out the slack and instructs, "First, you show your opponent the weapon."

John started in martial arts at age 26, earned his first-degree black belt at 36, and earned his second-degree black belt three years later. When Bok Fu Do students earn their first-degree black belt, they are honored with a carefully chosen spirit animal that represents their essence and characteristics. John's black belt animal is the rhinoceros, and when you consider this animal's massive power, territorial behavior, thick protective skin, and iconic, defensive fighting horn, you see the perfection in the choice.

John has won multiple gold medals at the National Kung Fu Championships, including his light-contact fighter division when he was 50. He used to fight or compete in tournaments every month, and he's won more than 50 trophies, including overall tournament grand champion three times, several gold medals from the National Kung Fu Championships in Baltimore, and a silver medal at the 2003 World Kung Fu Championships in Sao Paolo, Brazil.

He attends some intense workouts with his fellow black belts in the Bok Fu Do system, where he has somewhat of an elder status, and since there are only about 18 of them at this high level of achievement, it's a close group. Although he doesn't do full-contact fighting anymore (the age limit in competition is 35), he does about 12 full-contact practice matches for his fellow black belts every July. Last summer, at age 52, he felt he was in the best shape of his life, and he's committed to working to maintain it.

The following week, he is playing defense (no surprise there) with his indoor soccer team. Played in a walled, indoor area, this version can be even more intense than traditional soccer, as balls can be played off the walls without stopping.

John Worden is a top trial lawyer who has tried dozens of cases, mostly for defendants, in state and federal courts, in front of judges, juries, and binding arbitration panels. In fact, he has won 25 of his last 27 cases. A partner for more than 20 years at Schiff Hardin LLP, a highly reputable mega firm of 300 lawyers, John helps lead the litigation

practice group in San Francisco and heads the firm's Nevada practice. He is one of the youngest elected members of the American Board of Trial Advocates (ABOTA), an invite-only organization comprising the nation's most experienced and respected trial lawyers. Because he enjoys teaching, he's also an adjunct professor at the University of California Hastings School of Law.

John explains that in particular, his martial arts training has helped him become a superior attorney. "The focus is never limited to learning how to fight, but rather on the overall development of the mind, body, and spirit. Although higher-ranking students are unparalleled in their physical development, without exception they have each improved their lives and the lives of those around them in ways seemingly unrelated to the physical arts. As a lawyer who handles high-stakes trials all over the US, I know I need to be able to stand up to almost any challenge. The intense training and extreme pressures I experienced and underwent working toward and receiving my black belt prepared me to withstand the challenges I face in the courtroom."

It takes a very high level of stamina to be at the top of your career game like this. John, who is also a vegan, credits his commitment to exercise, which overall is his top well-being strategy, to his high level of energy. Years and years ago when he wasn't in such good shape, he used to be tired and unproductive after a certain time of day. "Now," he says, "it's easy for me to stay awake."

This stamina fosters his inherent extra-mile attitude, whether it's in the number of weight-lifting reps he does or in his commitment to clients. It supports his overarching, unique generosity of spirit, where he wants to "always help people." He comments, "Successful people are accessible, and I will respond to clients at all hours, day or night, and they know I will solve their problem." For his friends, people he cares about, the martial arts studio, or the community, he's willing to give. For two years in a row, Worden won the San Francisco Bar Association's Volunteer of the Year award for his pro-bono and diversity work.

In November 2018, Worden chose to help someone in a remarkable way: he donated a kidney to someone he's never met. Inspired

by his wife, who donated her kidney to save the life of a friend of their daughter, he learned about the process, and because of his extraordinary level of physical fitness, he sailed through the pre-donation physical checkups. He's a bit embarrassed by the publicity within the law community, where the story gained instant momentum. He says, "It really wasn't that tough all things considered, and most things I do, others could do if they tried. They just may not believe (yet) that they can."

John is the perfect Exceptional Executive and role model for the *Do Enlivening Exercise* spoke because he takes exercise to the highest peak. Without a doubt, John is at a professional athlete level. Here's his advice for someone who is just beginning to exercise, who is starting to revive an exercise regiment, or who is trying to get in a few really good workouts a week.

For those who currently do nothing, he echoes ultra-athlete Rich Roll's quote from the start of the chapter and encourages you "to do *something*. You don't need to work out two hours a day. You can get a decent workout in 20 minutes, and even if it is at midnight or four a.m., it can be done."

For someone with just 20 minutes, he recommends his personal favorite, the P90X series,<sup>6</sup> which are "dummied down" so that almost anyone can do them at home. He explains that they come with a booklet with all the exercises, and there's a helpful DVD. There is even a P90X 10-minute workout, which is an absolute upgrade over doing nothing. He suggests that you could do 10 minutes a day and build up.

What about traveling? Since John says he travels "all the time," he has another suggestion: google "Hotel Room Workouts," which identifies at least 20 options ranging from 15 to 20 minutes long. Easy as that.

Finally, John really advocates having a workout buddy, because the peer pressure is truly effective. He mentions that almost every evening, his wife joins him at the gym, and it really helps motivate him to treat it as an appointment that would be unfortunate to break. With his black belt colleagues, his presence provides a formidable sparring partner,



which helps secure future national and world wins. With his soccer team, they rely on his ability and the comradery, and he knows that, if he didn't turn up, they would all miss him.

This critical *Do Enlivening Exercise* spoke should inspire you to up-level your well-being—body, mind, spirit—with the tireless determination of the great rhino, galloping with force, unstoppable.