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A Silicon Valley tech CEO shares his daily routine, how he avoids Zoom burnout, and why he's calmer than ever: 'It's a Zen feeling I've never had before'

Robin Madell

2 hours ago





Patrick Harr. Patrick Harr

Patrick Harr is the CEO of the cybersecurity startup [SlashNext](#). He was previously an executive at HP and VMware and the CEO of a handful of fast-growing startups.

Harr shared with Business Insider his daily routine and how working from home has been beneficial for his business and personal life.

He starts off his day with a 4- to 6-mile hike for introspection before spending hours in calls and meetings with partners, customers, board members, and employees.

Harr says he has to be careful about becoming "Zoomified" — which is why he strives to take small mental breaks between every two to three calls and fully disconnect at the end of the day to spend time with his family.

This is his story, as told to freelance writer Robin Madell.

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I'm an early riser, something I made a habit of during the pandemic after realizing it's when I get my 'me' time and can calibrate my thoughts.

I'm woken by my iPhone about 6:00 a.m. I'm tied to it because of my sight disability — I have X-linked retinoschisis (XLRS) and am legally blind in one eye — and do everything with it, short of Zoom calls. After a quick bite of eggs or sliced avocado, I pull on my sneakers, grab Oakley — one of my two Aussie doodles — and head out to the hiking trails.

I typically hike 4 to 6 miles a day through the Los Gatos, California, mountains. It's not a hike for the faint of heart, as the elevation can reach a couple thousand feet. This hour to an hour and a half is my time for introspection. I don't take calls unless they're with the SlashNext leadership team. When I'm not on a call, I listen to my Amazon playlist, which plays everything from classic rock to Aretha Franklin to the occasional country music.

Read more: *Inside the daily routine of BarkBox cofounder Henrik Werdelin, who starts his day with the '8 plus 1*

method' and doesn't check email until lunchtime



Harr. Patrick Harr

Daily hikes give me the ability to focus clearly throughout the day. And over the summer, they helped me drop the 30 pounds I'd gained while working at a prior startup.

My days are all different, but I do map them around tasks.

I assign tasks each night for the following day after

reviewing my calendar. I then put all of these tasks in the [Cozi](#) app. As an example, this list will typically include things like four to five customer calls, time to dedicate to reviewing the website, creating time to look at how we can advance the product, and time to ensure we're securing financing for the business. The list itself sticks to about six to 10 items — but things do change, and I would say I complete about 90% of them in a day.

We also kick off each week with a full-hour team meeting — now on Zoom — where we define the work for the week and what needs to be accomplished. Again, this helps define specific tasks we want to complete in the week, and each person has a clear picture of what they need to achieve.

A typical day is made up of 60 to 70% of calls with partners and customers. Ten percent is budgeted for general business housekeeping and finance matters, and the remainder is spent on go-to-market and product-planning activities. The latter is a combination of working with our marketing and product teams, which ensures there's product alignment with our customers.

After the team meeting, I'll move from one customer,

partner, investor/board member, or employee meeting to the next.

But it's not the quantity of meetings that is correlated with success. That's why I focus on meaningful outcomes or defined next steps, like securing sales, increasing partner value, advancing our service, driving operations, and providing mentorship and guidance to the leadership team.

When I conclude a meeting, I round it off by creating a defined list of the outcomes or promises made — for example, assigning who's going to send around the information requested or deciding who's going to execute on the changes that need to be made to a contract. On the mentorship side, this could be defining the steps the person I'm working with needs to take and setting targets they need to achieve, so by the next meeting we can go through them and I can evaluate the success of each of these actions.

Read more: [*The CTO of a \\$4 billion driverless tech company shares her daily routine*](#)

I have to be careful about becoming

'Zoomified' — turning into a zombie or being overly consumed in the back-to-back life of Zoom, both physically and mentally.

It's really important that I take a five- to 10-minute break between every two to three calls. I find that if I don't take a break, I become too ingrained in what I'm doing and my body becomes achy from sitting too much. A stretch break usually consists of walking onto my patio to get some fresh air and clear my head or grabbing a quick snack.

On the positive side, we've seen sales pick up over this time, in part because the business climate set in motion by the COVID-19 pandemic has seen a **3,000% increase** in phishing attacks since March 15 as people are working from home, and we're directly positioned to help companies and people stop these attacks.

Every Monday, I wrap up the day with a 6 p.m. advisory or mentoring meeting with a few small companies and entrepreneurs I'm connected with.

I like to disconnect about 6:30 p.m.

to spend time with my family.

With four kids, two at home and two in college, my wife has been amazing and taken on the home-schooling coordinator's role — but I've had to brush up on my math skills to help my son on seventh-grade algebra.

Coaching basketball for my kids' teams is something I do twice a week, though COVID-19 has taken



Patrick Harr and his daughter.

Patrick Harr

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about two to three hours a week on my charity for those with XLRS, often chatting with parents and kids and helping allay fears around losing their vision.

From 9:00 to 11:00 p.m., I review and wrap up the day's tasks — for example, by finishing up emails or a presentation — and write my tasks for the next day. As

needed, I help my son with his homework (I've been up with him until 1 a.m. a few times). We've also started watching more shows together, such as "Lost" and "Glee."

The hiking, the family time, and the focus on business growth and spending more time mentoring my team have all been significant steps in reclaiming myself. It's a Zen feeling I've never had before.

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