

## ***Economic Value Can Be Found in The Sleep Business***

**David W. Sparks Ph.D.**

While researchers have yet to identify the exact purpose for sleep, most believe it does something important for the continuation of life. It has a rejuvenating effect on the mind and body. Every living thing requires sleep. Without it, our mind and nervous system begin to break down. If we stay awake too long, we become irritable and even psychotic. Sleep clinics and sleep labs are all too familiar with this information and have capitalized upon it.

When we sleep we are said to be resting, which may be a misnomer, since rest implies being idle. The internal processes going on while we sleep are anything but idle. During sleep our bodies and brains are highly active, performing an organized series of events that allow our body and brain to rejuvenate, revitalize, refresh, renew and recharge the batteries. We need a prescribed amount of sleep in order for our systems to adequately detoxify and self-repair, as well as manufacture and release hormones, which make our organs and glands function properly.

To give you a few examples, sleep is when the immune system replenishes itself after fighting off colds and flues, as well as certain types of cancers. During sleep and only during sleep, muscle tissue rebuilds and repairs itself after the wear-and-tear of the day's activities. We manufacture hormones that control our moods, keep our weight in check, give us the energy and drive to produce happy love lives and, in the process, if we choose, happy children. We completely re-tool, re-organize, refresh...rejuvenate while we sleep. And, speaking of rejuvenation, did you know that the mind also gets refreshed and renewed when we sleep. That's what dreams are for, and dreams occur in a very special part of sleep.

Ahh yes, most of us have an intuitive appreciation for the sacred benefits of sleep. This is why the sleep business is taking off in this country and it's riding a corporate jet headed

for the stratosphere. The reasons? There are almost too many to list but for starters, we are a nation that is being plagued by an epidemic known as sleep deprivation. What does that mean? Sleep deprivation occurs in humans when any of the following conditions occur. People are not getting the 7-8 hours of sleep that the American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends due to the frenetic world we are living in. Computers, internet, at-home offices, 24-hour shopping, virtual offices that enable us to work at all hours of the day and night, 24-hour television programming, more and more grave shift employment, and the list continues. People in modern times are living frenetic lifestyles where they refuse to follow nature's rules of sleep...the sun goes down and that means we should all go to bed. Make note that this is only one variety of sleep deprivation.

The ironic thing about not going to bed thus depriving ourselves of enough sleep is the fact that we believe we can throw money at the problem. That is to say, even though I might not be getting enough sleep, when I do go to bed I'm going to make sure that I sleep the very best I can...on expensive sleeping products. The following article found on [msnbc.msn.com](http://msnbc.msn.com) testifies to this observation.

## **Building a business on a good night's rest** **Entrepreneurs find success in variety of sleep-related avenues** **By Nichole L. Torres**

Sleep awareness is everywhere these days. From studies documenting how we don't get enough sleep, to new luxury amenities designed to help us sleep better, to the multitude of books and other products dealing with the dynamics of sleep, it's clear sleep is on a lot of people's minds--entrepreneurs included. What's going on?

"We are seeing a lot of movement in sleep products and services," says Reinier Evers, founder of [Trendwatching.com](http://Trendwatching.com) an

industry-trend forecaster. It all fits into the trend of "massclusivity," says Evers--that is, more people wanting more luxury products and more exclusive products in general. "Category by category . . . room by room, it's all succumbing to consumers' insatiable appetite for the best of the best. Next: the bedroom," he says.

Evers also cites the growing number of aging boomers who have cash in their wallets and a desire for a good night's sleep. They're looking for comfortable, health-conscious and professional-grade beds, and are often willing to pay the hefty price tag. According to the International Sleep Products Association, U.S. mattress and foundation wholesale shipments grew from \$4.76 billion in 2002 to \$5.04 billion in 2003, a 5.8 percent increase.

Rest assured, entrepreneurs are finding success in a variety of sleep-related avenues. Case in point: husband-and-wife team Adam Boyce, 44, and Trina Greenbury, 35. In 2002, they launched DreamEssentials.com an online retailer for sleep and relaxation products, as a way to make extra money so Greenbury could be a stay-at-home mom. After a successful holiday season selling products made by local Rainier and Yelm, Washington, artisans, they decided to grow their idea by branding their own line of sleep masks and selling other sleep products, such as body pillows, alarm clocks and soothing sound machines. Sales have more than doubled every year since, with 2005 sales expected to exceed \$1 million. "The biggest challenge we face is the inability of our customers to try things on," says Boyce. However, he adds that while many people initially shop the site for a single item, once they see all the other products available, they return again and again to purchase.

From throwing grown-up pajama parties to purchasing high-end pj's, consumers are embracing their comfort zones. Just ask Brandon Evans, 27, the founder of Threadcountzzz Corp., a New York City manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer of high-thread-count pajamas. His luxury sleepwear, designed to feel like sleeping in high-thread-count sheets, garnered an immediate

following--after his 2003 startup holiday season, he had more than 1,500 people on his waiting list. "The reception has been unbelievable," says Evans, who adds that 2005 sales will push \$2 million.

Though it's hard to predict where the trend might go next, Evers notes that some large hotel chains are adding high-end beds to their rooms to entice guests. "Once most consumers have updated their sleep products," he says, "the hotels will have to offer quality bedding just to keep demanding guests happy." So if you're dreaming of a sleep-related business, think beds, comforters, duvets, pillows, alarm clocks, pj's, sleep masks--the list is endless. Just think sleep.

There is a second source of deprived sleep and it is found through sleep disorders. Although there are approximately 70 recognized sleep disorders, the most recognized among them are heavy snoring and obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), insomnia, and restless leg syndrome. People suffering from disordered sleep may get to bed on-time and remain in bed for eight hours per night, but some physiological or psychological disorder impinges on the quality of their sleep.

There are two main categories of sleep.

- Non Rapid Eye Movement Sleep (NREM)
- Rapid Eye Movement (REM)

NREM sleep has four stages or depth levels. Stage One is characterized by high frequency (fast), low amplitude (small) brain waves. As we move to Stages Two, Three and Four, the brainwaves get slower and slower (lower frequency), and bigger and bigger (larger amplitude), signaling that we are getting deeper and deeper into sleep.

Each stage of sleep delivers a specific renewal, rejuvenation, and recharging function for specific systems of the body.

We mentioned that most hormones are generated during sleep. One such hormone is known as human growth hormone. Scientists know that this hormone plays a major role in the way we grow, age and metabolize food. Thus this hormone has a role in helping to keep our weight under control. Are you beginning to see just how important it is to realize these deep levels of sleep?

REM sleep, on the other hand, is a period in which the eyes move rapidly and erratically underneath the eyelids. While this appears as though it is lighter sleep since the brainwaves are similar to Stage One of NREM sleep, we are almost completely paralyzed during REM. For one of every 20 people, 'sleep paralysis' causes serious problems, giving them the uncomfortable sensation of falling or waking up with a start. In extreme cases, there are drugs to inhibit REM sleep.

However, REM sleep is associated with dreaming, and dreaming plays a major role in our mental health. There is a lot of evidence that shows dreaming is a time when the brain is processing information that has recently been gathered. There appears to be a transferring of information gained while we're awake from short-term memory to long-term memory. There's also some thought that dreams help us to resolve conflicts or chaos in our lives. While dreaming, we often deal with things that fascinate or terrify us.

During normal sleep, you cycle through these various stages approximately every 90 minutes to 2 hours. However, if your sleep is repeatedly interrupted because of a chronic sleep disorder, thus not allowing natural deep sleep to occur, there is a very good chance that you will feel tired, fatigued or sleepy and may have trouble concentrating or paying attention while awake. Also, sleepy individuals are at far greater risk for driving accidents, get sick more often and have trouble maintaining their weight.

Consider this list of scientific observations regarding poor sleep:

- A shortened life span
- Greater risk of cardiovascular disease

- Gastrointestinal problems
- Decreased work performance
- Memory lapses
- Marital strife
- Irritability
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Stress
- Problems with weight control
- Explosive Outbursts
- Mood swings
- Greater risk of high speed highway crashes
- Road rage
- Accident prone
- Body aches
- Decreased sex drive; impotency
- Premature aging

As mentioned early in this article, organic sleep disorders are diagnosed and treated in sleep clinics and sleep centers throughout America and if these facilities are properly run, it can be a very nice source of revenue for those who have the vision and capability to put them up and operate them.