

Can the Wim Hof method really help you to thrive in business?

2 years ago



The answer is a resounding “yes” from Richard Carr, who has taken on not just one, but two, gruelling Wim Hof challenges on his journey to becoming a better leader. Here he shares his experiences, lessons learned, and how the method is helping him power the future of one of the fastest-growing electrical compliance businesses in Yorkshire.

Do I recommend the Wim Hof Method to other business leaders? Absolutely. Is it tough. Yes. Is it worth it? 100 per cent.

A couple of months ago, I trekked up a mountain in minus six degrees, wearing just a pair of shorts. Then I jumped into a below-freezing ice pool and walked barefoot through snow. And I wasn't thinking about how insane it all was. Instead, I felt calm, grounded, and motivated. Right in the middle of an experience that challenged me physically and mentally more than anything I'd experienced before.

Getting out of your comfort zone

Many people will be familiar with the Wim Hof Method from the 2022 BBC show [Freeze the Fear with Wim Hof](#). Wim, also known as The Iceman, is an extreme athlete from the Netherlands who developed a method that combines cold exposure, breathing techniques and meditation, to help people reconnect with the natural environment and realise their full potential.

I did my first Wim Hof excursion in the Lake District in 2021 with my friend and business owner Andrew Mason. It was the toughest thing ever. But it changed my life, helping to reboot my cardiovascular system, improve my fitness and focus, and it gave me invaluable techniques for dealing with the demands of running a high-growth business and raising a family.

The benefits were so tangible that Andrew and I decided to do it again, this time taking part in the [Wim Hof Winter Expedition](#) in Poland. Five days trekking in the hills of Poland focusing on mastering the method's three pillars – cold exposure, breathing and commitment. All we knew beforehand was that we'd be ascending Mount Śnieżka. Travelling to a remote part of Poland with no idea of what we were letting ourselves in for was a bit daunting, but mostly exciting.

The first lesson took me right out of my comfort zone. At work, I always have a plan and know exactly what I'm doing. Here no one knew the plan. I kept asking, but after a day and a half, I learned to just go with it. And I think that it's healthy for business leaders to experience discomfort like this. Although it took a bit of getting used to it was kind of 'cleansing' not checking my phone all the time.

Wim was with us every step, teaching us how to do the cold and breathing therapy multiple times a day. We'd sit in freezing cold ice pools, jump off a cliff, and hike in bare feet. It sounds like torture but, trust me, we had a good time! The cold therapy was certainly stressful but, combined with the breathing, you learn how to deal with stress, which you can then transfer back into your working life.

Becoming a better leader

I also discovered how motivating it can be to meet other like-minded people from all corners of the world and walks of life in an extreme situation. As entrepreneurs, we're self-motivated people already. But we don't always have another person around to push us further. I don't have a mentor or coach, but we all motivated each other and held each other accountable and that's a skill I've brought back into business.

When you're walking around in the snow barefoot, and trying to stay positive, you get to know how to motivate yourself and others quickly.

Another really valuable lesson was around fight or flight, which happens when you're in danger or perceive a threat. Being immersed in freezing water triggers fight or flight, the same response you have when you have a confrontation or crisis at work. Using Wim's breathing techniques helps you to reverse that response. So now, when I'd typically go into a fight or flight response, my breathing techniques kick in and I take a step back and make a more informed judgement on how to deal with the situation.

At one point, we had to gaze into another person's eyes without looking away for three minutes and say everything we like about them. That made you get in touch with your own emotions and helped build a deep emotional connection with the other person. As business leaders, it's important that we connect and empathise with our teams. And this exercise has helped me to connect better and take into consideration another person's feelings more than I would have done before.

I would highly recommend the Wim Hoff Method to other business leaders. The experience and lessons learned have helped to power Volta's success since that first trip in 2021, and the most recent experience will certainly add to it.

It would be beneficial if you want to avoid burnout, learn different stress-coping strategies, and build deep connections with your teams. I've once again returned with more energy, a fresh perspective, and a clearer understanding of the link between my body and mind.

Will I do it again? Definitely. In fact, I'll soon be attending another Wim Hoff weekend – this time, at the Ice Man's home in Amsterdam.

Last year Volta Compliance had its most successful year in business, receiving the Armed Forces Covenant, Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award, it was shortlisted in two categories at the first ever Connect Yorkshire Business Awards, expanded its team and received 100% customer satisfaction survey scores, and was named a Digital Enterprise Top 100 company for the second year in a row.

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