

UI10 Spotlight Presentation

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi
Claremont Graduate School

THE LIMITS OF ATTENTIONAL CAPACITY

HOW MUCH CAN WE EXPERIENCE?

- About 114 bits of information per second
- 500,000 bits per day
- 168,000,000,000 in an average lifetime

WHERE DOES TIME GO?

Average daily attentional investments

- 150,000 bits per day = Work or Study
- 200,000 bits per day = Maintenance (dressing, eating, cleaning, travelling)
- 150,000 bits per day = Free Time

Flow in Composing Music

Csikszentmihalyi, 1975

You are in an ecstatic state to such a point that you feel as though you almost don't exist. I have experienced this time and again. My hand seems devoid of myself, and I have nothing to do with what is happening. I just sit there watching it in a state of awe and wonderment. And [the music] just flows out of itself.

Flow in Poetry....

S. Perry, 1996

It's like opening a door that's floating in the middle of nowhere and all you have to do is go and turn the handle and open it and let yourself sink into it. You can't particularly force yourself through it. You just have to float. If there's any gravitational pull, it's from the outside world trying to keep you back from the door.

Flow in Figure Skating. . . .

Jackson, 1996

It was just one of those programs that clicked. I mean everything went right, everything felt good... it's just such a rush, like you feel it could go on and on and on, like you don't want it to stop because it's going so well. It's almost as though you don't have to think, it's like everything goes automatically without thinking. . . it's like you're on automatic pilot, so you don't have any thoughts. You hear the music but you're not aware that you're hearing it, because it's a part of it all.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE IN FLOW?

1. **Completely involved in what we are doing – focused, concentrated.**

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE IN FLOW?

2. **A sense of ecstasy—of being outside everyday reality.**

1. **Completely involved in what we are doing – focused, concentrated.**

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE IN FLOW?

3. Great inner clarity—knowing what needs to be done, and how well we are doing.

1. Completely involved in what we are doing – focused, concentrated.
2. A sense of ecstasy—of being outside everyday reality.

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE IN FLOW?

4. Knowing that the activity is doable—that our skills are adequate to the task.

1. Completely involved in what we are doing – focused, concentrated.
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HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE IN FLOW?

5. A sense of serenity—no worries about oneself, and a feeling of growing beyond the boundaries of the ego.

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HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE IN FLOW?

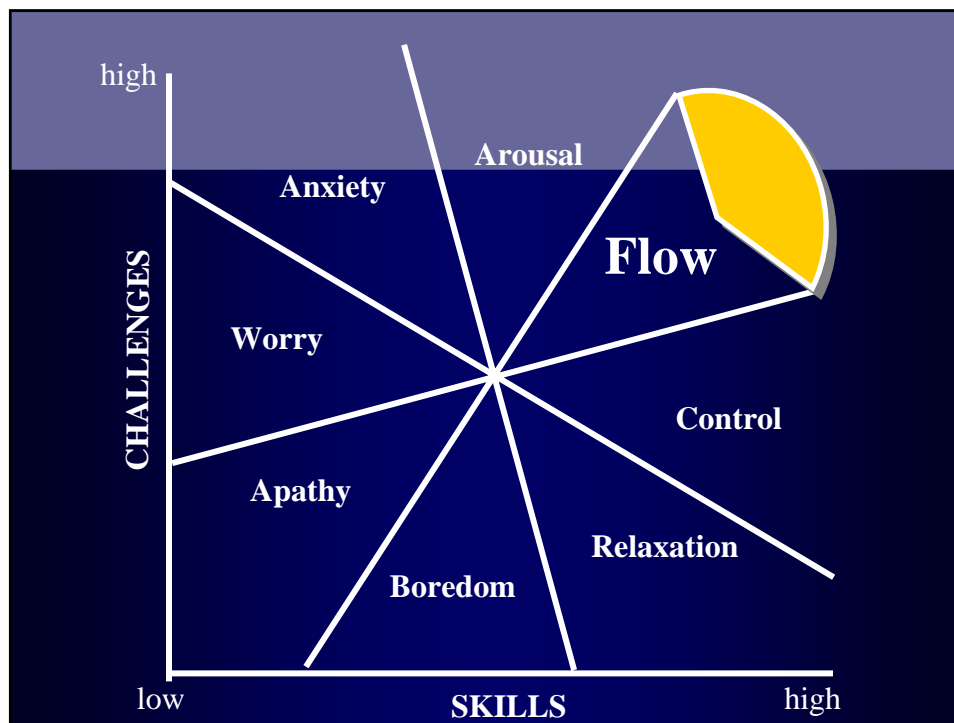
6. Timelessness—thoroughly focused on the present, hours seem to pass by in minutes.

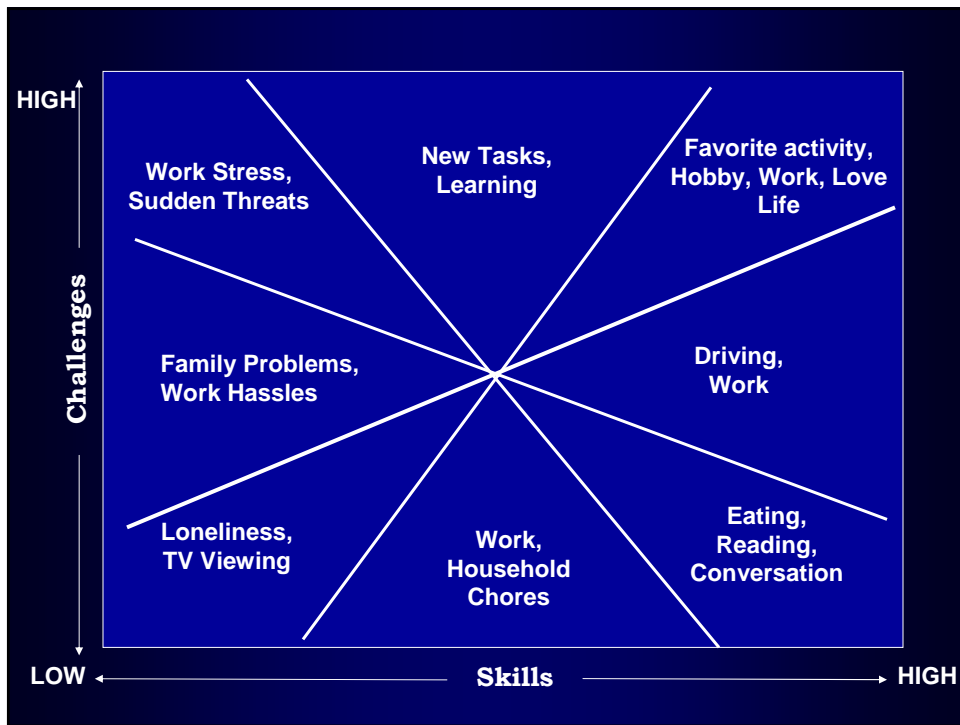
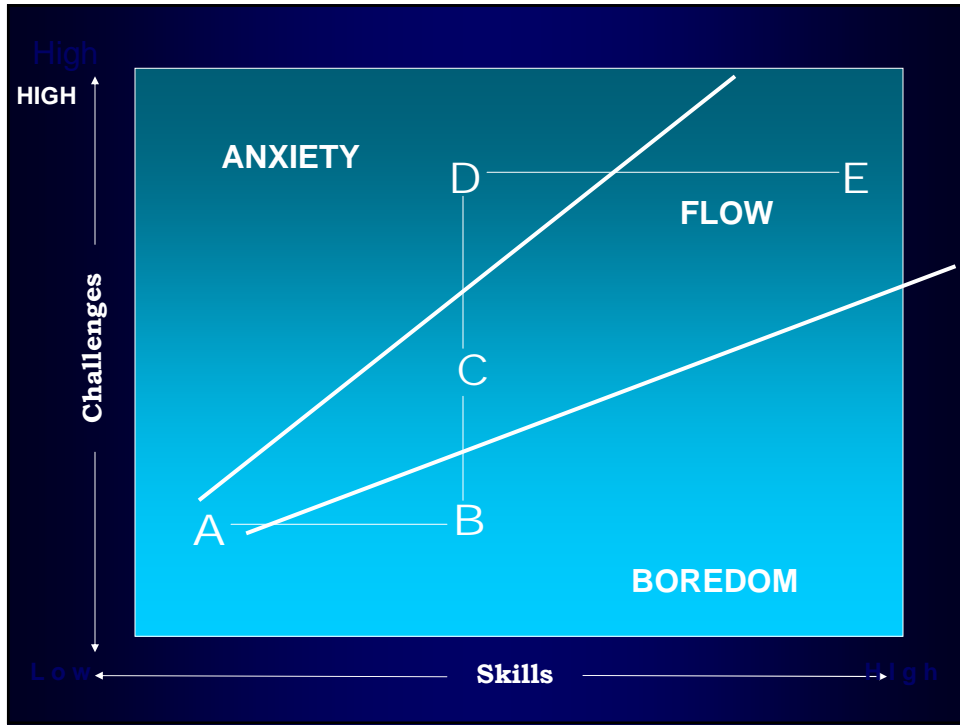
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HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE IN FLOW?

7. Intrinsic motivation—whatever produces flow becomes its own reward

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APPLICATIONS OF FLOW

BUSINESS



Go With The Flow
This is easier said than done in today's hectic workplace, but the ultra-absorbing state of flow will do wonders for your performance.

One day Randy Eisenman, CEO of mobile-device software developer Handango, was sitting at his desk, absorbed in reading a competitive market analysis. Suddenly, he heard a man's voice. He looked up, surprised, to see a coworker standing just inches away. "I've been standing here two minutes," the coworker said. "You didn't even see me."

Eisenman was in flow, a state of mind that creates electric connectivity between us and our work. "You get so absorbed in the task. It feels great!" Eisenman says. "[Flow is] a state of calm intensity. I have moments of flow just about every day — and my goal is to have more of them."

We're accustomed to hearing about flow in relation to sports and creative pursuits like writing or composing music. But at the average office, flow can sound like mumbo-jumbo spouted by chanters and crystal carriers. Increasingly, though, workplace-dwellers are realizing that flow just may be the secret to significant gains in both performance and enjoyment on the job. The bad news is that, for many of us, today's workplace seems designed to banish flow, says Marilyn Paul, a Massachusetts-based organizational development consultant. That's because complete absorption in our work is *sine qua non* for flow, and our days are filled with an erratic, irregular, and voluminous avalanche of e-mail, pager beeps, instant messages, phone calls, and demands for instant action sent by bosses on high. Interruption, not absorption, is the rule. "In many organizations, I see the opposite of flow," relates Paul. "I see epidemic distraction."


Despite the obstacles, there are concrete steps you can take to get into the flow. No job is immune to it. "You can do anything with flow," says Ken Christian, a New York-based psychologist and author of *Your Own Worst Enemy: Breaking the Habit of Adult Underachievement*. "You can clean a window and go into flow. Flow is there when you want it."

The concept of flow grew out of "positive psychology," a discipline that aims to define happiness and trace its roots in people's lives. In researching happiness, psychologist and scholar Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi discovered that, contrary to popular belief, happiness doesn't result from relaxation or completely stress-free living, but from meeting challenges with intense activity and interest.

Csikszentmihalyi began to study the state of mind that arises when people are so interested and absorbed in a challenging task that they lose all sense of time and place — a state we now know as "flow" — and found it contributed to people's happiness. He's since written six books on the subject, and the concept entered the vernacular so completely

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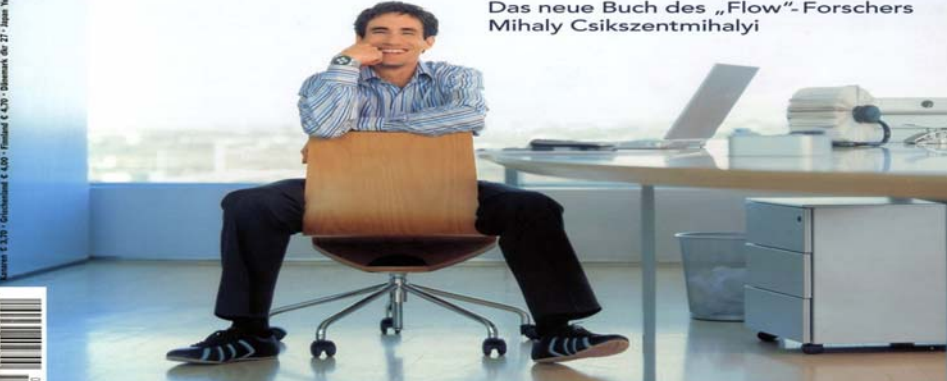
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Das neue Buch des „Flow“-Forschers Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi



Distraction and Flow

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Distraction and Flow

A kissing cousin, so to speak, to both guided imagery and focusing, is distraction, a way of altering the experience of pain by thinking of, or doing, something else — a technique people through the ages have used to 'get their mind off their pain.' At its simplest, it's a form of escapism.

A good way to start is to go through the relaxation approach described above — getting comfortable, tensing and relaxing muscles until you begin to feel that loose, warm feeling — then take yourself to some idyllic spot in your mind. Imagine an overwhelmingly pleasant scene — a leafy dell beside a mountain stream, a sun-drenched beach on a tropical island — a place you've been to before or somewhere completely imaginary. It doesn't matter, the point is that it's the kind of environment that will make you feel most warm, cosy and relaxed.

Try to feel the sun on your skin, warming you all over. Perhaps a gentle breeze is blowing, and the waves are lapping at the shore or the water tumbling down the stream bed. The air is fresh and invigorating, and the fragrance of the nearby plants and trees is subtly aromatic. You may even hear soft music, melodious and low, playing in the distance. You have no cares, no worries, no responsibilities, and, pretty soon, if you concentrate on this oasis of calm and peace with enough willful abandon, even your pain will slowly fade away.

That time-honoured technique was given a sophisticated new spin in the late '80s, when American psychology professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (pronounced Chick-sent-me-hi) published 'Flow, The Psychology of Optimal Experience.' The book was based on two decades of study Csikszentmihalyi had done into states of 'optimal experience,' those moments people call their most intensely concentrated and enjoyable. What his research revealed was a state of consciousness he dubbed 'flow,' concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity.

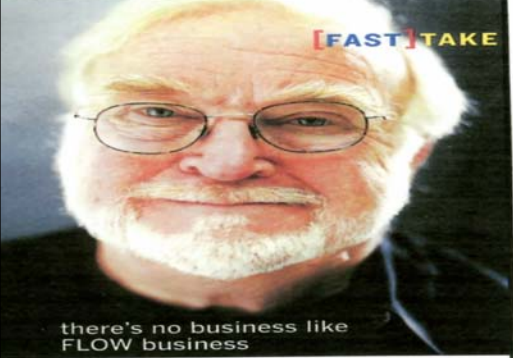
Most of us have experienced the feeling at one time or another. It's that blissfully extended moment during a favorite activity when time seems to stand still, when all our thoughts or actions flow effortlessly from impulse, when our activity swallows every other thought, even our sense of self.

Artists, athletes, writers and musicians all report the sensation, but what Csikszentmihalyi did was decipher the components of the experience to reveal how it can be attained and controlled by anyone. The concept, he says, can be applied to almost any activity, from home cooking to nuclear physics, that involves a degree of skill and

- Acupuncture
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- Distraction and Flow
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- Sleep
- Supplements
- TENS

<http://www.arthritis.ca/tips%20for%20living/complementary%20therapies/types/distraction/default.asp?e=1>

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[FAST] TAKE

there's no business like
FLOW business

Time becomes irrelevant, the water in the teakettle boils away, you forget where you are, so focused are you on the work you're doing. Sound familiar? If not, try taking a look at how some companies are using Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's ideas to improve the productivity and satisfaction of their employees.

- **Track Happiness Obsessively**
At the Gallup Organization, CEO Jim Clifton monitors flow by sending an email to more than 1,000 employees every single day, asking them to rank their positive energy level on a scale of one to five. "When someone hits a five, I assume they are in flow," Clifton says. He can sort the results geographically by office to catch patches of entropy quickly.
- **Focus on the Personal**
Csikszentmihalyi's research has shown that to achieve flow, you need consistent feedback. The best way to do that, simply put, is to care about your coworkers. The best way to measure flow, says Gallup's Clifton, is to ask employees if they have a manager who loves them.
- **Set Clear Expectations**
One of Csikszentmihalyi's preconditions for flow is to set goals that employees can actually achieve. To do that, Stockholm-based Green Cargo has each manager work with each employee to create performance contracts. Then the two schedule lengthy, one-on-one meetings once a month to go over those goals in great detail. "I know what management is expecting from me, and I have the support of management," says Carsten Julin, director of corporate purchasing and real estate.
- **Don't Interrupt**
Particularly with creative types, such as programmers or writers, there's nothing worse than a sudden disruption. It's best to stay away when they are deep into a project, says Joe Kratz, a flow devotee who cofounded Excite and now runs the startup JotSpot. "I never IM [instant message] a programmer. They are at their best when they can focus."

called Experience Sampling Method, in which his study subjects carried pagers for a week at a time. Beeped randomly eight times throughout the day, they wrote down what they were doing and feeling right at that moment.

Csikszentmihalyi, who with his white hair and beard resembles a tall and reticent Santa Claus, discovered that the times when people were most happy and often most productive were not necessarily when they expected they would be. Passive leisure activities such as TV-watching consistently ranked low on participants' scales of satisfaction—even though they often sought out these experiences. Instead, people reported the greatest sense of well-being while pursuing challenging activities, sometimes even at work, and often while immersed in a hobby.

In the flow state, Csikszentmihalyi found, people engage completely in what they are doing that they lose track of time. Hours pass in minutes. All sense of self recedes. At the same time, they are pushing beyond their limits and developing new abilities. Indeed, the best moments usually occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to capacity. People emerge from each flow experience more complex, Csikszentmihalyi found. They become more self-confident, capable, and sensitive. The experience becomes "autotelic," meaning that the activity actually becomes its own reward. "To improve life, we must improve the quality of experience," he says. One of the chief advantages of flow is that it enables people to escape the state of "psychic entropy," the distraction, depression, and dispiritedness that constantly threaten them.

Csikszentmihalyi, a classic academic, has resisted many overt attempts to commercialize flow, particularly in the business world. "I'm not claiming that flow is like a magic pill," he says. "I'm always a little worried that if you ramp it up to a large company without knowing the culture and the context, it might not work." Don't bother looking for "7 Habits of Flow Work" here: Csikszentmihalyi is the anti-Stephen Covey.

Yet plenty of others see the flow of dollar signs, either in their own company's performance or in bringing the concept to the corporate masses. Back in 2002, Stefan Falk, then the vice president of strategic business innovation at Ericsson, was given the task of integrating the merger of two huge business units worth \$16 billion. Layoffs were coming, and Ericsson hoped Falk could find a way to make the remaining workers more productive. A former McKinsey & Co. consultant, Falk read Csikszentmihalyi's book, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention* (HarperCollins, 1996), while conducting a multi-year study at McKinsey on human development and motivation. "I was mesmerized when I read it," Falk says. "I had a vital piece of the puzzle. I said to my friend, 'I think we should contact this guy whose name I cannot pronounce.'"

So he did (like many others, Falk calls Csikszentmihalyi "Mike" for the sake of simplicity). The two discussed Mike's belief that flow has several necessary preconditions. These include having clear goals and a reasonable expectation of

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UK News

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Teachers are happy in their job says survey

Wednesday, 14th September 2005, 08:31
Category: Business

LIFE STYLE EXTRA (UK) - Teachers go into school with a spring in their step and a song in their heart because of the immense joy they get from their job, a survey shows today.

Any perceptions that they face a daily grind have been truly overturned by psychologists sent into classrooms who found they break into a smile on average 10 times every half an hour.

They also enjoy two way banter with children five times and laugh out loud four times during the same period, according to the report commissioned by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA).

Twice as many teachers find their work extremely enjoyable compared to professionals with careers in marketing, IT and accountancy.

The survey of more than 1,000 teachers and 300 comparison careers also explored which jobs are most likely to cause 'optimal flow experience', a concept identified by academic Professor Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi at the University of Chicago and increasingly recognised by psychologists and management experts, which measures the enjoyment, concentration and absorption in a task.

The research showed teachers are more likely to experience these enjoyable 'highs' than people working in comparable careers.

Almost half (44 per cent) of teachers said they experience this regularly, in contrast to 34 per cent of people working in other professions.

This is confirmed by the 63 per cent of teachers who reported that they often or always find themselves totally immersed in their work. One in five said that they never think about anything else other than the job in hand.

As part of the study, teachers were asked to keep diaries assessing their levels of 'flow' during lessons, and their mood afterwards, revealing high levels of alertness and happiness during the day.

According to the teachers interviewed and surveyed, many factors make their job enjoyable. They cited the buzz around the corridors, working with young people, the satisfaction gained from feedback from pupils and the nature of the school year as contributing to their happiness.

Interaction with pupils featured high on the list of reasons why teaching is enjoyable, with 80 per cent saying the best aspect of their job was engaging with young people. Ninety three per cent cited the sense of achievement which working with pupils offers.

TDA executive director Graham Holley said: "We have known for some time that the enjoyment of working with young people is the main reason teachers like their jobs.

"Understanding more about what specifically makes the job enjoyable is crucial to our recruitment drive. We need to ensure that teaching remains the top career

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http://www.lse.co.uk/ShowStory.asp?story=IF1317552A&news_headline=teachers_are_happy_in_their_job_says_survey
Page 1

[Explore] Tumi

GOING WITH THE FLOW TUMI Introduces its New Collection

What's in the bag you carry? If the answer includes an iPod, wireless phone, PDA, reading material, grooming items, gym gear, a laptop, computer, and other daily carry-alongs, you don't travel light. But what you tote them in can be.

Tumi, known for luggage that combines performance, organization, and innovative design, recently launched its Flow collection of urban lifestyle bags. All are made from lightweight, water-resistant nylon and feature handy pockets, multiple compartments, and exterior cord ports that ear buds can snake through.

"Flow was designed as a group of soft day bags, backpacks, sports bags, totes, and messenger bags with the modern tech-savvy individual in mind," explains Tumi vice president of product management Alan Krantzler. The collection features ten styles with clean, asymmetrical lines. All have an interior lining in a contrasting color. Each item also contains Tumi's exclusive Tracer product identification system, which may facilitate the return of a lost or stolen bag to its owner.



Toting a Best-Seller Under Your Arm

The fashion-forward Flap bag has been the line's best-seller. Designed to be worn across the body, the slim (12" x 12" x 2.5") bag features an easy access zippered pocket in front and an open rear pocket.

Under an asymmetrical front flap that shuts with a magnetic closure, there's an organizational panel with small compartments and slots for a key ring, pens, and business cards. A zippered mesh pocket inside the bag further helps organize and secure valuables. A bag from Tumi Flow is in tune with your lifestyle.

To readers and students of psychology, the name of this collection evokes Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's landmark book, "Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience." It contends that people who experience a state of "flow"—i.e., who participate in an activity that completely absorbs their attention—are inevitably happier. Those who carry a Tumi Flow bag might agree. *—L.S.*

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