

## Management Training:

# Human Performance

This training module will provide an overview of concepts of Human Performance and will be followed by relevant concepts directly related to Human Performance, including:

***Results/Impacts***  
***Understanding***  
***Competencies***  
***Attitude***

This is a theories based training activity.

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**What have you done today to enhance (or at least insure against the decline of) the relative overall useful-skill level of your work force vis-a-vis competitors? - Tom Peters in *Thriving on Chaos***

Performance is focused behavior or purposeful work (Rudman, 1998, p. 205). That is, jobs exist to achieve specific and defined results (outputs) and people are employed so that organizations can achieve those results. This is performed by accomplishing tasks.

Gilbert (1998) said that performance has two aspects -- behavior being the means and its consequence being the end.

Managing performance has the dual purpose of 1) arranging situations (environment) so that employees can do their best and 2) growing the employees by educating, enlightening, and appreciating them. Its purpose is to achieve specific and defined results from people so that the organization can achieve its goals and objectives.

It is much easier to fix situations by making structural changes to the organization, rather than trying to fix or change people. These include

such means as changing reporting relationships, enlarging the job, improving a process, or opening lines of communication.

Once performance barriers have been removed, employees can be educated, enlightened, and appreciated. This assumption is based on the premise that most employees try to do their best. They prefer harmony over conflict, action over inaction, and productivity over delays (Farson, 1996). We often refuse to believe this as most studies on human behavior are performed on people when they are not at their best, such as in school, clinics, or prison. Thus, most studies on human behavior are performed in the process of trying to "reform" people.

The two most noted researchers on studying people when they are at their best are Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow.

Rogers described a healthy person as fully functioning. One of Rogers' theories is the Actualizing Tendency -- the built-in motivation present in every life form to develop its potentials to the fullest extent possible. It is not just about survival, but also that all creatures strive to make the very best of their existence. If they fail to do so, it is not due to lack of desire, but rather of other conflicts. Rogers also introduced Person Centered Therapy, in which all people have the potential to solve their own problems without direct intervention from a therapist (non-directive).

Abraham Maslow felt that the basic human needs were arranged in a hierarchical order. (Bottom to Top: Physiological, Safety & Security, Belonging & Love, Self Esteem, & Self Actualization)

He based his theory on healthy, creative people who use their capabilities to the fullest. First, our basic physiological, psychological, and self-esteem needs must be met. Once these are met, we strive for higher needs (meta needs or growth needs). These include justice, goodness, beauty, order, unity, etc.



## Results/Impacts /Results/Impacts Results/Impacts Results/Impacts

The objective of most performance interventions can be stated in terms of results or impacts, such as reduced turnover, improved efficiency, reduced costs, or better quality.

These impacts or results are achieved by closing performance gaps, developing employees to achieve better results, improving process, and removing performance blocks.

This also has a reverse causality in that not only does great performance cause impacts, but impacts also cause great performance to continue since people tend to continue behaviors that are perceived to be effective. This two-way flow of causality is known as the **zone** or **flow** -- that much talked about state of consciousness where the performers are totally focused, energized, and confident.

Note that it is NOT the impact (reward) that causes the behavior, but rather the behavior is used to control the impact (reward).

### Prove It!

Results are one of the main drivers of innovation. That is, you have to be able to prove that an idea, new process, etc. actually works in order to maintain your credibility. Nothing destroys your credibility faster than a business case full of gaping holes. Thus, trust breeds innovation, communication breeds trust, getting feedback breeds communication, and feedback helps to "bullet proofs" innovation.

In addition, business units that get results are normally seen as an important asset during periods of downward spirals. That is, rather than being seen as a cost center that is seen as "expensive;" you need to be seen as a transformation and strategic center that provides value to the organization.

### Learning Outcomes (Results)

Most often we view results as the final outcome of an intervention that can easily be measured, such as reduced costs, customer satisfaction, improved quality, etc. However, often the results are going to be internal to the targeted individuals. These are known as learning outcomes.

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Understanding  
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Understanding

## The Continuum of Understanding

One gains knowledge through context (experiences) and understanding.

When one has context, one can weave the various relationships of the experiences. The greater the context, the greater the variety of experiences that one is able to pull from.

The greater one understands the subject matter, the more one is able to weave past experiences (context) into new knowledge by absorbing, doing, interacting, and reflecting.

Thus, understanding is a continuum (Cleveland, 1982):

**Data** comes about through research, creation, gathering, and discovery.

**Information** has context. Data is turned into information by organizing it so that we can easily draw conclusions. Data is also turned into information by "presenting" it, such as making it visual or auditory.

**Knowledge** has the complexity of experience, which come about by seeing it from different perspectives. This is why training and education is difficult - one cannot count on one person's knowledge transferring to another. Knowledge is built from scratch by the learner through experience. Information is static, but knowledge is dynamic as it lives within us.

**Wisdom** is the ultimate level of understanding. As with knowledge, wisdom operates within us. We can share our experiences that create the building blocks for wisdom, however, it need to be communicated with even more understanding of

the personal contexts of our audience than with knowledge sharing.

Often, the distinctions between data, information, knowledge, and wisdom continuum are not very discrete, thus the distinctions between each term often seem more like shades of gray, rather than black and white (Shedroff, 2001).

Data and information deal with the past. They are based on the gathering of facts and adding context. Knowledge deals with the present. It becomes a part of us and enables to perform. However, when we gain wisdom, we start dealing with the future as we are now able to vision and design for what will be, rather than for what is or was.

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**Competencies**  
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The state or quality of being adequately or well qualified to perform a task. A person gains competency through education, training, experience, or natural abilities. While there are many definitions of competency, most of them have two common components:

The competencies are observable or measurable skills, knowledge, and abilities.

These SKAs (skills, knowledge, attitude) must distinguish between superior and other performers.

The major difference between traditional job based models and competency based model lies in their approach in identifying the SKA needed for successful performance. The dominant approach in performance management has focused on designing organizations around job structures. This traditional job based approach starts with a job analysis to identify job-related tasks, which are then used to identify a list of SKA that are required for successful job performance.

On the other side of the coin are competency-based models. These start with the performance indicators of expert performers to produce a list of grouped competencies, related to effective or superior performance. The question is not which SKAs do we believe are required to perform a job, but which SKAs do superior performers in a job possess and use? Organizational success greatly improves upon hiring individuals who fit the organization, rather than the job. A person-to-organization match provides an organization with the core competencies needed to maintain a competitive advantage by meeting the demands of a rapidly changing environment brought on by corporate restructuring and change initiatives.

Knowles (1975) uses the following typology for competencies:

- Knowledge
- Understanding
- Skill
- Attitude
- Value

For example, to have an understanding of adult learning theories; to have a skill in setting objectives; to respect (value) the uniqueness of all people.

Thus, Knowles adds the vaguer terms of understanding, values and attitudes. The main reason is that what makes expert performers "experts," is that they have a love for what they are doing, which can only be captured through values and attitudes. As far as "understanding" I believe this is more of a term that fits in with today's knowledge workers.

So in the end, when assessing the expert performers with such tools as interviews, observation, and self-assessments, you are going to get a lot of skills and knowledge indicators. However, you are also going to pick up some of these other "milder" indicators of what makes them successful. Thus, do not dwell on "observable behaviors," but rather on what makes an "expert performer" so desirable to the organization. This is what competencies are all about.

A hierarchy of standards would be:

- Competent** - Satisfactory, able to perform the competency.
- Proficient** - Above average, able to perform the competency well (expert).

**Excellent** - Extraordinary, able to perform the competency superbly (guru).

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Attitude      **Attitude**      Attitude  
**Attitude**

Although there are a variety of definitions, most seem to center around the notion that it involves measuring people, issues, objects, etc. along a dimension ranging from positive to negative. This "measurement" has two components: 1) cognitive and 2) affective (values & beliefs).

Our beliefs and values are combined with our cognitive component; thus, two components (affective and cognitive) give us our long range or persistent measurements for dealing with the world (Bootzin, 1983). While a person may have the competency to perform a task, that does not mean he or she will have the desire (attitude) to do so correctly. In other words, competencies give us the ability to perform, while attitudes give us the desire to perform. Attitudes change with various events in a person's life. These emotional changes also vary in length of time.

**"Each human emotion mobilizes the mind and body to meet one of the challenges of living and reproducing in the cognitive niche. Some challenges are posed by physical things, and the emotions that deal with them, like disgust, fear, and appreciation of natural beauty work in straightforward ways. Others are posed by people. The problem in dealing with people is that people can deal back. The emotions that evolved in response to other people's emotions, like anger, gratitude, shame, and romantic love, are played on a complicated chessboard, and they spawn the passion and intrigue that misleads the Romantic" Steven Pinker - *How the Mind Works* (1997) p.374).**

There are four main methods used for changing attitudes in performance interventions:

1. **Exposure Effect:** This technique uses simple "experiences" to start the attitude formation by exposing a person to a concept, object, or person a number of times. And normally this is done through "positive" experiences as "negative" experiences require disgust, pain, or fear. For example, if we want a person to display a smile, then the employee's peers, supervisors, and leaders, need to consistently display real smiles.
2. **Reinforcement:** This concept is based upon "classical conditioning" and "operant conditioning." Classical conditioning are involuntary reflexes, while operant conditioning is based upon voluntary behavior. For example, we use classical conditioning by making classrooms attractive and non-threatening. While operant conditional is based upon the premise that people repeat a behavior that has desirable results, for example, when a learner produces a genuine smile, then a compliment, prize, grade, etc. is given.
3. **Persuasive Communication:** The advertisement industry is based upon this technique. For example, Camel cigarettes used information, such as how they use a superior tobacco blend, in combination with "Joe Camel," to show how "cool" they are, to persuade people through both their cognitive and emotional sides to buy their product. This technique is based upon three main characteristics: source, message, and audience. E.g, the source - how believable and likable you are, the message - content and style, and audience - educational level, other attitudes. To go back to our smile example, we might show pictures of employees using their smiles in the course of their duties. We might also include some real experiences in how their "genuine interest" produces a memorable experience.
4. **Changing Viewpoints:** Although discussions mainly work through our cognitive side, we have to remember that almost everything we do is based upon our emotions. Epictetus wrote, "Men are disturbed not by things but by the views which they take of them." So you might start a discussion by asking how their feeling are linked to their thoughts. A simple example for training customer service might be to ask them what feelings and thoughts produce a smile? How are these feelings and thoughts interconnected? Next, ask them to take the viewpoint that they are happy when working with customers. Ask them what their feelings and thoughts would be. Finally, have them do a role play of working with a customer with this new viewpoint.

**NOTE:** In certain organizations or circles, the word "attitude" seems almost mystical and reverent. Often it is almost "taboo" to discuss.



This is because we are often discussing much more than "attitudes." That is, we are really discussing a variety of "self concepts," such as values, feelings, emotions, motivations, etc. So instead of discussing skills, knowledge, and "attitudes," it might be more appropriate to use the term "self-system" in the place of attitude -- an interrelated system of beliefs and processes that produce goals that are executed by the metacognitive system. Specifically, the self-system determines whether an individual will engage in or disengage in a given task (Marzan, 1998).



**All the materials in this programmed learning module are taken from the "Concepts of Leadership" materials of Donald Clark and we are using them with his permission.**

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**Test Questions:**

1.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	The author of this training would agree that it is typically easier to fix situations by fixing or changing people than to make structural changes to the organization.
2.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	Results are achieved by closing performance gaps, developing employees to achieve better results, improving process, and removing performance blocks.
3.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	Data and information are essentially the same thing.
4.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	It would be an accurate perspective to say that data and information deals with the past, knowledge deals with the present and wisdom deals with the future.

5.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	Traditionally competency is defined in terms of measurable and anticipated skills, knowledge, and abilities.
6.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	For the highest level of performance according to <i>competency-based models</i> it would be accurate to say that it is better to hire individuals who fit the organization rather than individuals who fit the job.
7.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	It would be accurate to say that competency gives us the ability to do the job and attitude gives us the desire to do the job.
8.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	To change attitudes using the <i>Exposure Effect</i> would mean that you would offer the individual a lot of training to the information or outcome you want.
9.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>True</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>False</b>	To change attitudes using the Changing Viewpoints approach would mean concentrating more on a logical base of information rather than an emotional base of interactions.

