

Training Best Practices: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT



Introduction

How efficient our workplaces would be if, after training was provided for staff, all the performance problems in an organization were immediately resolved.

Training is sometimes required, of course. Even so, we know that training alone is not a “cure all” for achieving optimal performance. Having skills is only one aspect of getting a job done. After all, once a team member is trained, any number of unforeseen circumstances might complicate their ability to put new practices into action.

Performance management, on the other hand, starts by assessing the issues that influence workplace behaviors. It requires asking two overarching questions: “What is it that people need to be able to do? What are the factors that influence this?”

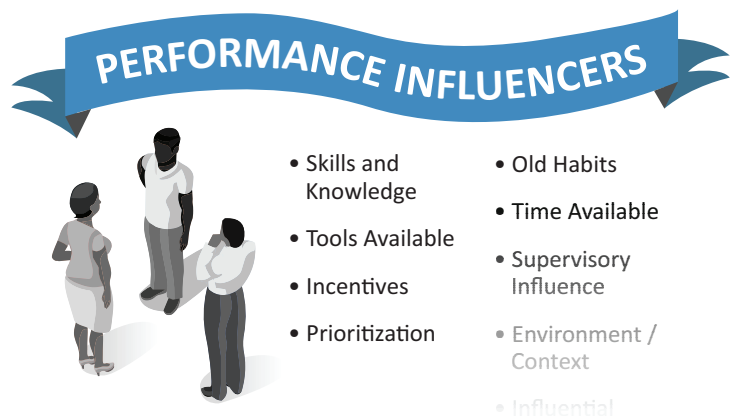
To boil it down even further, the essential task of performance management is determining which factors—which Performance Influencers—might get in the way of skills being implemented. Once those have been identified, effective planning and interventions, which might or might not include training, can be designed.

The figure below shows a few of the many Performance Influencers we can address in this way.

Performance-management models help us consider all the reasons that people might not perform optimally and which tactics—beyond training—might help in addressing performance gaps, such as process improvement, change management, and so on.

Before using any model, you should have a clear vision of the desired behavior or performance change. As you begin planning, some of the questions you might first ask include:

- Whose behavior do you hope to influence?
- What precise, observable workplace behavior do you want to see?
- What observable indicators would suggest the behavior is being or not being done?



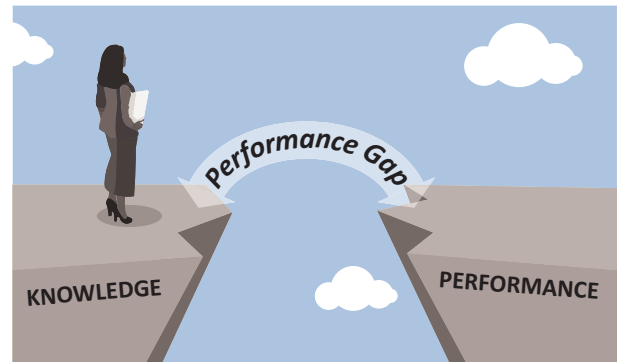
Be sure to also read the Best Practices document on Needs Assessment. There you will find specific ideas on how to define the current state of performance and the desired state you seek.

What is Performance Management?

Performance management is the approach or process used to close the gap between a current knowledge or performance and a future-state performance. This gap, which can apply to both organizations and individuals, is known as the “performance gap.”

Performance management is not simply about providing training and measuring changes in behavior. Rather, it is an ongoing, systematic look at the dynamics and elements that ultimately impact performance and outcomes.

For example, consider this situation:



A new vaccine is introduced for girls who are 9-14 years old. In the past, people did not take their adolescent girls to the clinic for vaccination because their children had already received a full schedule of vaccines. The new vaccine means that facility staff will need to educate caregivers about the vaccine. Caregivers will also need to vaccinate adolescent girls any time the girls are at the clinic, for any reason. Staff may also need to reach this target population in other ways, such as through school visits.

BEHAVIOR OUTCOME	PROGRAM OUTCOME
After attending formal training on how to administer the new vaccine, a health worker will communicate with caregivers about the vaccine and safely administer the vaccine to girls who are 9-14 years old.	Every person in the target population will be vaccinated, resulting in a minimum coverage rate of 90% in every district.

If successful performance is based on workers’ behavioral outcome, then once health workers have communicated with caregivers and administered the vaccine, they have performed successfully. However, this measure does not take into consideration the total target population, the availability of the vaccines, the eligibility of each person, or the broader effort to communicate with the community. And of course the program outcome is influenced by all of these things. Performance management takes into consideration all of the other factors that ultimately influence work performance.

When to Focus on Performance Management

Managing performance is an ongoing process—it is a continuing cycle rather than a straight line with a start and finish point. This is advantageous for stakeholders. Rather than reacting when team members are not performing well, ideally, managers and facility staff can regularly assess how their team is responding to Performance Influencers and initiate interventions before serious problems arise.

Where to Begin

When there is a need to change performance, ask the question “Why aren’t people performing the way the organization needs them to perform?” It’s a simple question, but the answers can be surprising and informative.

As you examine the factors beyond training that influence performance, ask the following questions:

- Is there something in the work environment that is influencing team members’ behavior?
- Are team members motivated to perform the task or change their behavior?
- Do they have the knowledge or information that allows them to perform as we hope they will?
- Do they know that they are not performing to an acceptable level?

Several performance models can be used to guide the exploration of these factors. By understanding each model, you will be able to select the model or combination of models that best fits your organization’s culture, the performance you are examining, and personal preference.

Three Basic Models to Use

The next sections will explain how to use three basic models when managing a performance issue. Keep in mind—models are a good place to start, but they are not a step-by-step process. Each model is best considered a guide, not as directions set in stone, and each model has its benefits and pitfalls. Typically, stakeholders find that a combination of models will work for different situations.

Model #1: Gilbert’s Behavioral Engineering Model

Stimuli evoke responses, and environmental or motivational factors at work evoke responses from staff and caregivers. When those responses are not aligned with your intentions—when the stimuli do not evoke the desired outcomes—Gilbert’s Behavioral Engineering Model might best suit your needs as you seek to identify the factors playing a role.

In the late 1970s, Thomas Gilbert published *Human Competence: Engineering Worthy Performance*, which introduced the Behavioral Engineering Model (BEM)—an examination of the factors that contribute to work performance and behaviors. The model outlines these factors from the individual and environmental perspectives that should be considered when we manage performance.

All of these contributing factors should be considered equally important when analyzing a performance gap, determining a root cause, and implementing a solution. The chart below maps out these issues. You will notice that if you start at the top left and read through in clockwise fashion, you get the “priority order,” or the sequence in which you should consider each. You will see that environmental factors take precedence while the skills of the individual come at the end.

BEM is often illustrated like this:

	Information	Instruments	Motivation
Environment	Expectations & Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the individual know what is expected of them? Do they know their current performance level? Are they given guidance about their performance? 	Tools & Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the individual have the correct tools to perform? Are the tools designed to match the individual’s current performance level? 	Incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there financial incentive for the individual to perform? Is there nonmonetary incentive available? Are there career development opportunities?
Individual	Skills & Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the individual have the skills and knowledge to perform at their best? Is there well-designed training that matches the performance? 	Capabilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> When do the individuals perform the task? Is the individual capable of performing the skill or behavior? 	Motivation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the individual motivated to perform? Does the incentive match the individual motivation? Is the individual a good match for the role?

Adapted from HPT Toolbox: A Resource for Human Performance Technologist website (http://debwagner.info/hpttoolkit/gilbert_bem_hpt.htm)

The Environment:

The environment can refer to the culture of the workplace, the physical work environment, leadership or management, or department or groups within the organization.

Information: Clear and relevant descriptions of “acceptable performance” must exist; individuals must be provided with adequate feedback.

Instrumentation: Are the tools and materials needed to achieve the desired performance available to the individual? It can be impossible to perform a task if the needed materials are not available.

Motivation: Look at the incentives being offered by the organization and determine if these inducements offer the right motivation for the individual. Incentives might include financial or nonmonetary rewards, career development opportunities, or negative consequences for poor performance.

The Individual:

The individual is the person doing the work or performing the behavior.

Information: This is the knowledge needed to perform the behavior, and where formal and informal training can be provided. However, the chart above does a good job of demonstrating that training is only one of six boxes of options, each with valuable strategies for improving performance.

Instrumentation: This involves considering how to structure and schedule the environment in order to help improve performance. For example, asking someone to perform a labor-intensive task at the end of an eight-hour shift might not yield effective performance. Instrumentation also includes any on-the-job support, such as job aids, that assists the individual. “Is the individual capable of performing the appropriate behavior?” is the essential question here.

Motivation: If an individual is not sufficiently motivated, poor performance on the job is a likely outcome. However, not everyone is motivated by the same responses, and this is what managers on the ground are uniquely qualified to address. For example, one individual might feel motivated by simple recognition from leadership, while another might be motivated by a small bonus. Inquiring into how satisfied someone is with the work they do and how well-matched they are for their job position are also crucial motivation factors?



ADDITIONAL READING: Daniel Pink discusses the three factors that motivate people in *Drive: The Surprising Truth of What Motivates Us*.

Autonomy—the desire to direct our own lives.

Mastery—the urge to get better and better at something that matters.

Purpose—the yearning to perform in the service of something larger than ourselves.



KEY POINT: We cannot assume that training is the solution for every performance issue. Training tends to be the most expensive and time-consuming solution. Sometimes it is not the right solution for addressing the existing performance gap. However, when it is paired with the right performance issue, training can result in outstanding business results. It is worth considering the other factors in the Behavioral Engineering Model.

Model #2: Whole Person Learning Model

The Whole Person Learning Model considers three primary factors in performance management: the brain, the body, and the backdrop.

The Brain

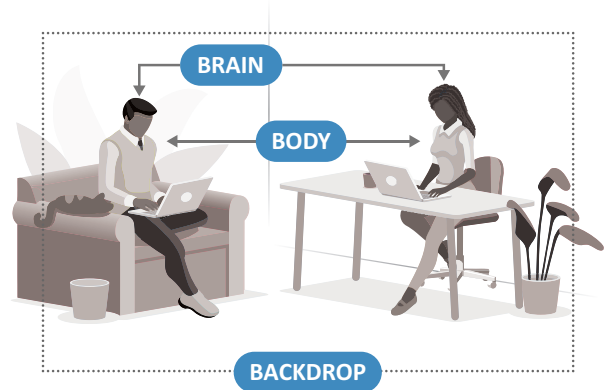
The mental and psychological elements impacting performance. A comprehensive solution needs to address the knowledge, skills, and attitude required of the individual who must perform the behaviors.

The Body

The physical environment and the moment in which an individual performs the job. A comprehensive solution needs to take into consideration where and when a person performs the behaviors.

The Backdrop

The social and organizational environment in which the performance takes place. Comprehensive performance management addresses the social and organizational context. This includes influences from peers, supervisors or other authority figures, political structures, incentive structures, and resources related to the performance.

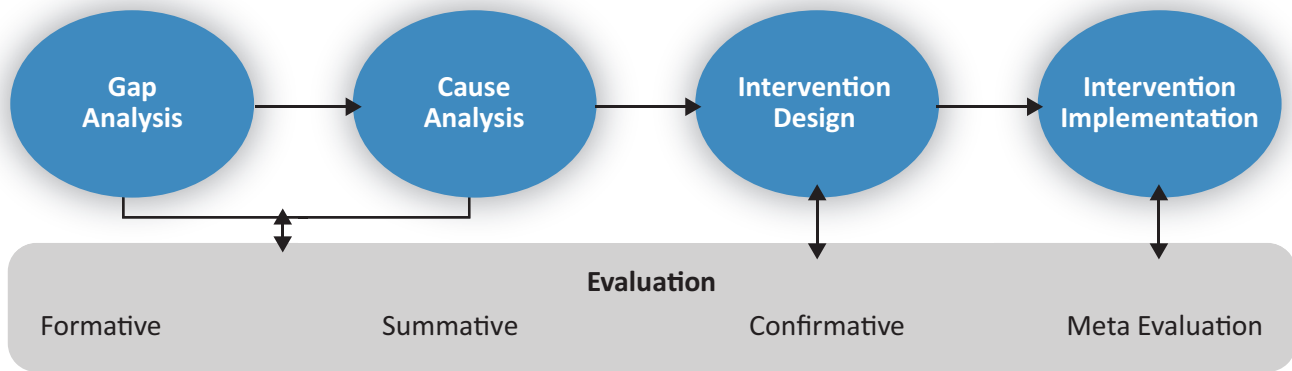


Here are a few questions to ask for each component:

Component	Consideration
Brain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do people already know how to do? What do they not know how to do? What are their attitudes about the behavior?
Body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where does the performance take place? When, or in what situations, do people typically perform the tasks you are focused on?
Backdrop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are individuals currently supervised? How is their work evaluated? What incentives already exist?

Model #3: Human Performance/HPT Model

The Human Performance Technologist Model (HPT) begins with a gap analysis of the desired behavior or performance. (Here, the term “technologist” refers to someone who studies science and applies sound scientific processes to solve a problem, not necessarily someone who works with technology.)



Performance Analysis of Need or Opportunity

We define our desired performance by examining our organizational values, strategies, and critical issues. Once that desired performance is determined, the technologist observes and analyzes behavior to determine any existing gaps and the root cause of those gaps. The intervention will need to address the root cause of the issue and not the symptoms of the problem.

The same root-cause analysis done as part of Six Sigma or Lean can be applied to the HPT model. Finding the cause of both environmental and individual factors is the end goal of a root-cause analysis.

Environmental factors	Individual factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback • Support (Training, Job aids) • Resources and tools • Consequences (Positive and Negative) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge (Training) • Capacity • Motivation • Expectation

Intervention

Once we understand the gap and its cause, we can then select, design, and develop an intervention. As we will see, the necessary intervention is not always a training solution.

A very simple example will help illustrate this idea. A small clinic is concerned with the number of people that get turned away each day. The manager determines that the clinic needs to change the clinic set-up, so the

flow of people is more efficient. He spends the next week rearranging the clinic and training the staff on new procedures. After three months of using the new processes, the clinic is still turning away the same number of people. While the flow of people and the environment did improve, the paperwork and interaction time required to meet the needs of patients did not change. The flow was not causing people to be turned away, instead it was the internal processes. A better root-cause analysis would have led to a more effective intervention.

Evaluation

Along with the intervention, an evaluation of the performance should also be conducted. Without an evaluation, we cannot measure if the intervention improved the performance. There are three types of evaluations: formative, summative, and confirmative.

Formative	Summative	Confirmative
Evaluation of the inputs-process-outputs of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performance analysis • Selection design and development • Implementation 	Evaluation of immediate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaction • Knowledge, skills, or attitude change • Application 	Evaluation of sustainable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness • Efficiency • Impact • Value

By putting all three together, a meta evaluation can be created that also includes success stories and lessons learned. Once the meta evaluation is gathered, it should be acted on. This can include adjusting the learning intervention, changing elements of the environment, or re-evaluating the expectations of the individual. Poor performance is not always tied to a lack of or inadequate training.

Becoming a Performance-Based Trainer

Most people default to the notion that training is the solution to organizational challenges. However, once we begin to think in terms of behaviors that need to improve, the benefits of performance-based management become apparent. Looking for the disruptive factors in your organization's environment and in individuals' motivations will soon become second nature. Training might be part of the solution for closing the performance gaps found between intended outcomes and actual outcomes, but other interventions are likely to be more effective.

Putting Principles into Action

How best to put performance-management principles into action?

- **Clearly define the behavior:** Know which behaviors you want to see. Be precise. For example, consider these two options: “A health care worker needs to provide services correctly,” which leaves open the question of which services are being referred to and what “correctly” means in this context, versus “Health care workers must hand a questionnaire to each treated girl’s teacher at her school.” Remember that when the specified behavior is too general, it will be difficult to identify factors that influence that behavior.
- **Use models as a guide:** Models are a good place to start, but it is not uncommon to find a combination of models that work for different situations. Experiment, use trial-and-error, and remember that each model has its benefits and pitfalls—they are not step-by-step processes.
- **Discuss “outcomes” when talking with your partners:** Talk to leaders about program and performance outcomes instead of behavioral objectives or outcomes. Avoid using terms that only have meaning for those involved in training and development.
- **Start small and build credibility:** If performance management is not being well received, start small with just part of the model until you have a chance to build your credibility. Refer to the Best Practices on Learning Strategies for additional ideas.
- **Do not rush to judgment:** Look at all six elements of Gilbert’s BEM, do a gap analysis, or understand the brain, body, and backdrop of the individual before jumping to the intervention. The time spent doing the analysis will help you bring the change the organization is looking for.

Think of Intervention as a Cycle

- **Be proactive, not reactive:** Finding systematic challenges before there is a performance issue is better than reacting to a full-blown problem. Being proactive will allow more time to correct a behavior or change the situation before it causes negative results in the business.
- **Say “no” if training is not the answer:** Training is not always the answer to a performance issue. Do not be afraid to say “no” to creating training solutions if the performance can be better changed by focusing on a different factor.
- **Become a partner and advisor:** Be a partner who helps improve performance, not just a training order-taker. Listen to your team and be confident that you have more than one intervention option at your disposal. Working together to find solutions will increase buy-in from your people.

Evaluation

- **Select the right measurement:** Measuring whether the intervention changed the on-the-job behaviors is important, but measuring whether or not the new behaviors have led to the desired program outcomes is even more important. Remember the program outcome we saw on page 3? “Every person in the target population will be vaccinated, resulting in a minimum coverage rate of 90% in every district.”
- **Read the Evaluation Best Practices guide:** You will find a number of ideas about how best to evaluate training and its ongoing effects (after the training), along with suggestions about what to evaluate for and what to do with evaluation results.

Conclusion

Once we specify what exactly we want our people to do, we can get on with examining the factors that inhibit the desired behaviors so that our interventions will be targeted and relevant. These new capabilities will reliably enhance team members’ effectiveness long before the next skills training is required and long after that training is finished.

Annex 1: Whole Person Learning Model Template

Whole Person Learning Canvas

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Whole Person Learning created by Bull City Learning

Annex 2: Resources

Explore these resources for more information about performance management.



HPT Toolkit

Gilbert's Behavior Engineering Model (BEM)

HPT Toolbox: A Resource for Human Performance Technologist website, by Diane Gayeski
http://debwagner.info/hpttoolkit/gilbert_bem_hpt.htm



Drive:

The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, by Daniel H. Pink
River Head Books, New York



Performance Management Basic (Second Edition)

By Joe Willmore
ASTD DBA The Association of for Talent Development



Performance Consulting Tips: Finding Solutions When Learning Is Not the Answer

ATD Insight Website, by Chris Adams
<https://www.td.org/insights/performance-consulting-tips-finding-solutions-when-learning-is-not-the-answer>



The Seven (actually nine) Deadly Sins of New Performance Consultants

ATD Insight Website, by Joe Willmore
<https://www.td.org/magazines/td-archive/2003/the-seven-actually-nine-deadly-sins-of-new-performance-consultants>