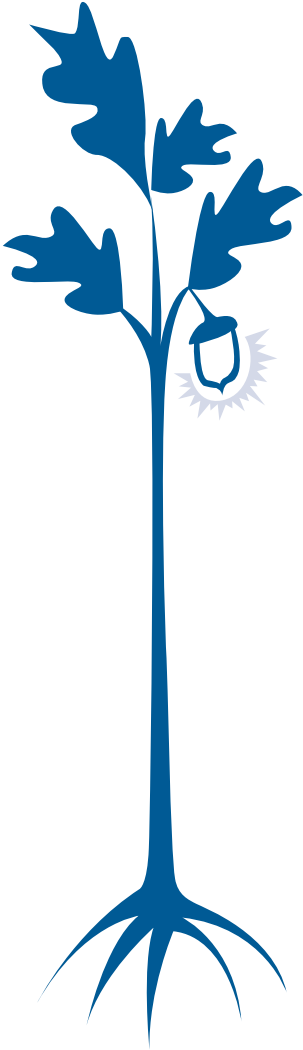


Performance Architecture

A Performance Improvement Model

by Roger M. Addison, EdD, CPT



Human performance technology (HPT) is a set of principles and applications focused on helping to achieve valued and lasting results through human activities within an organization. Performance improvement is the desired outcome of applying HPT. Four fundamental principles provide the ground floor for using HPT (ISPI, 2002):

- Focus on results, start with the end in mind.
- Take a systems point of view, think and work systematically.
- Add value to the client and focus on the business.
- Establish partnerships with experts and clients.

Figure 1 illustrates the integration of various aspects of the performance technology landscape, each of which will be discussed below.

Aligning the Three Levels: Workplace, Workflow, Worker

Workplace. Any organization has a structure that establishes its way of setting strategy and goals, communicating, decision making, reporting, and managing. In looking at the whole organization or at its subunits, some sort of structure will always be found.

Workflow. Organizations are created to do things: produce goods and/or provide services. The process by which these things get done is what we call workflow. An organizational workflow lays out how goods and services are transported through the organization and how value is added at each step. When we analyze the workflow, we are interested in the timeliness and quality of the work as it progresses through the value chain until it finally reaches the customer.

Worker. To do things, any organization needs people. Human beings manage, decide, handle, sell, operate machines, answer phone calls, and do all other possible activities required to actually achieve results.

Performance architecture is the design of the “organizational house” where all three levels are integrated to smoothly support the *raison d’être* of the entity, be it a business, a civil service unit, or a nongovernmental organization. This integration is what we call alignment: the management of the organization on all three levels, such as establishing appropriate goals and monitoring performance through internal and external feedback, taking corrective action if needed and communicating appropriately, allocating resources to support efficient achievement of the goals, or making sure that all parts or units of the whole organization cooperate effectively to achieve the organization’s overall purpose.

This process of alignment is permanent and recurring. Any change in any component within the “house” or any outside influence may affect the organization in its capacity for sustainable performance. In other words, aligning the three levels of an organization requires a constant balancing act.

From a system's perspective, the organizational house is placed into a larger landscape: the society wherein it operates.

An organization itself is not a closed system; it depends on and interacts with its environment. It may be part of a town or a country, or it may work on an international level. Whatever their reach, organizations will always be influenced by societal factors: legal, political, educational, availability of resources, transportation, technological, and so forth. In return, organizations or groups of organizations can influence entire societies, as can be seen in today's global world, where societies compete with each other for the value (in terms of jobs, etc.) that multinational companies might create for their citizens.

HPT: A Systematic Approach

HPT provides the tools for building a well-aligned performance architecture for an organization. Based on the fundamental principles mentioned above, HPT practitioners follow a systematic approach to add value for their clients in a cost-effective way. The six essential phases of this systematic approach are as follows:

- **Need:** Clarify the problem, business issue, or opportunity.
- **Results:** Specify the requirements to close the gap between existing and desired outcome.
- **Cause:** Identify the factors in the performance system that can influence outcomes and choose from a range of possible HPT applications those that best meet the requirements.
- **Design:** Prepare for implementing the solution and include a wide range of options for cost effectiveness and cultural match.
- **Implementation:** Carry out the solution and manage change (see sidebar for a detailed list of implementation tactics).
- **Evaluation:** Measure intervention process, outcomes, and results to determine how well they meet requirements and evaluate requirements to further improve results.

Improving Performance: Culture, Confidence, Competence

Following the notion that HPT achieves sustainable results through focusing on human activities within an organization, typical areas for performance improvement opportunities are culture, confidence, and competence—that is, those domains that reflect the human characteristics of an organization.

Culture is defined in this context as the way people solve problems and interact with time, each other, and the environment.

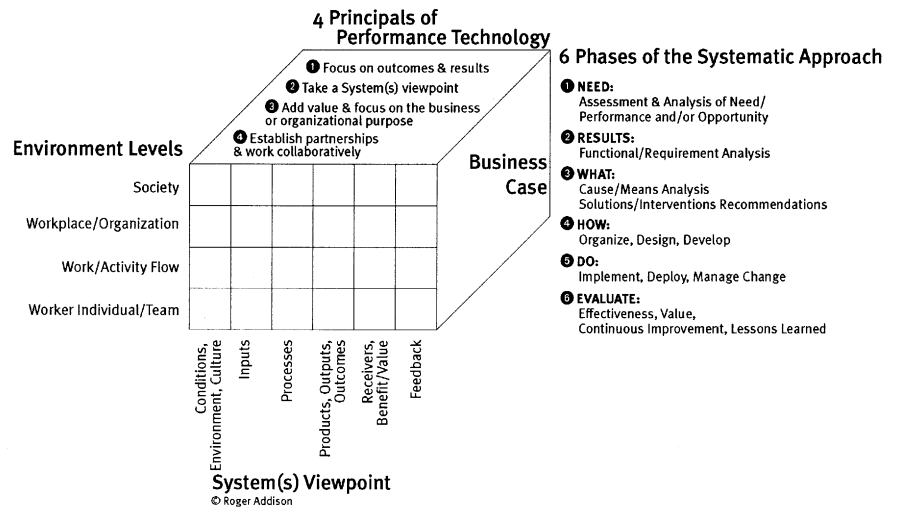


Figure 1. Performance Technology Landscape.

Tips for Practitioners: Implementation Can Make or Break You (Addison & Clayton, 1999)

- Define mission and vision: What is your purpose?
- Define expectations: It is the leader's role to set the direction and define the measures for success.
- Assess the culture: Know what you are getting into. The traveler who thinks ahead will determine what the climate is like at the destination and plan accordingly.
- Form implementation teams: Select people who can go the distance, people who have proven themselves in challenging and difficult situations.
- Develop contingency plans: Prepare for the unexpected. Consider everything that could possibly go wrong, and plan accordingly.
- Communicate—with employees, clients, and customers: Let them know what to expect in advance so they will be prepared to accept the solutions.
- Educate: Show employees, clients, and customers what is new and different and focus on results.
- Establish monitoring mechanisms: Communicate what is working and not working for employees, customers, and clients.
- Learn from failure and mistakes: Do it, fix it if necessary, and learn.
- Reward success: Your team members need to know that their performance is appreciated. Look for success every day; recognize individual and team success.
- Celebrate accomplishments: Do not wait for the end to celebrate. Recognize and celebrate accomplishments and milestones along the way.

In other words, culture is “the way we do things around here.”

Research shows that culture and economic performance seem to have a strong correlation. For example, Kotter and Haskett suggest:

Corporate culture can have a significant impact on a firm’s long-term economic performance. Firms with strong values (as measured by the extent to which employees share the values of the firm) tend to achieve higher performance. In this regard, a careful analysis of the firm’s cultural values can help an organization in its quest for aligning the three performance levels because cultural values provide the employees with a guiding framework for their daily work (Kotter & Heskett, 1992, p. XX).

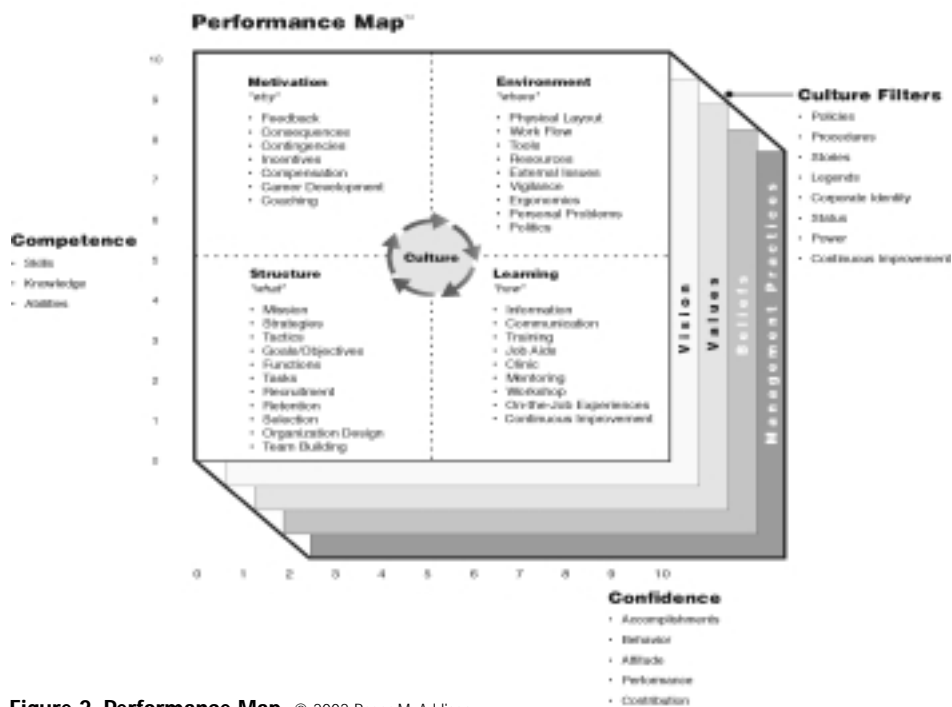


Figure 2. Performance Map. © 2002 Roger M. Addison

Confidence comprises the organization’s ability to sustain and manage its employees’ capacities for accomplishing the desired work, display constructive behavior, and maintain positive attitudes and the willingness to contribute to success.

The Performance Map in Figure 2 illustrates the four drivers of performance. Competence is defined as the employees’ skills, knowledge, and abilities. Experience shows that skills and knowledge account for only 5% to 15% of poor performance (Stolovitch & Keeps, 2004; Dean, 1999). The essential levers for improving performance lie in the following factors:

- **Motivation:** Especially feedback and consequences
- **Structure:** Clearly communicated strategies and goals and good management practice
- **Environment:** Tools and resources and the workplace.

A Framework for Achieving Sustainable Results

Performance improvement practitioners find both difficulties and rewards, success and failure, and learning about people, businesses, cultures, and themselves in the process. ISPI’s Code of Ethics is intended to promote ethical practice in the profession and to gain and strengthen the credibility of HPT practitioners. The Code of Ethics is based on six principles:

- **Added Value:** Strive to conduct yourself, and manage your projects and their results, in ways that add value for your clients, their customers and the global environment.
- **Validated Practice:** Make use of and promote validated practices in performance technology strategies and standards.
- **Collaboration:** Work collaboratively with clients and users, functioning as a trustworthy strategic partner.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Continually improve your proficiency in the field of performance technology.
- **Integrity:** Be honest and truthful in your representations to clients, colleagues, and others with whom you may come in contact while practicing performance technology.

- **Confidentiality:** Maintain client confidentiality, not allowing for any conflict of interest that would benefit yourself or others.

ISPI invites you to apply this Code of Ethics to your own performance and to strive to be a model practitioner. This is in the interest of the Society, but also in your own interest. Your sustainability in the market and your own results depend on your clients’ satisfaction with your work. Good practice gets return customers! 🏡

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