

**PERFORMANCE IN THE WORKPLACE
GENERAL REPORT
FEBRUARY 5, 2010**

SUMMARY

The *Performance in the Workplace* study was conducted in the fall of 2009 with the primary goal of identifying factors that impact performance (both positively and negatively), for managers, employees, and the organizations they work for. A secondary goal was to help participants become more aware of their performance, and that of their employees and organization; in becoming more aware, they would improve performance.

The report's objective is to provide readers with useful results to improve their performance, and of those around them.

Over 1,800 data points from 56 participants were collected and considered, then distilled down to just a few key points that would help participants and others perform better. As it turns out, there were just **six key factors that led to great performance**.

This is the general report of the common and averaged results which every participant received. A separate report of each individual's specific results, along with feedback, was sent directly to each participant.

PROCESS

Participants were asked the same three two-part questions every Friday for six weeks (October 9 to November 6), and given the opportunity to provide additional comments. The survey was done online. The questions were:

- 1a. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate YOUR OWN performance over the past week.
- 1b. What factors (positive and/or negative) contributed to this rating?
- 2a. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the performance of your EMPLOYEES over the past week.
- 2b. What factors (positive and/or negative) contributed to this rating?
- 3a. On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your ORGANIZATION'S performance over the past week.
- 3b. What factors (positive and/or negative) contributed to this rating?
- 4. What additional comments you would like to make this week?

After collecting all the data in a format that could be analyzed, the process of identifying common themes among the comments commenced.

OBSERVATIONS

Fifty-six people participated in the study at some level – they completed at least three surveys – and 43 completed all the surveys. The following chart provides a breakdown of the types of participants:

How many people does your company employ?		How many people currently report directly to you?	
Fewer than 10	7.7%	0	7.7%
10 to 99	46.2%	1 to 5	50.0%
100 to 999	32.7%	6 to 10	26.9%
1000 to 4999	3.8%	More than 10	15.4%

More than 5000	9.6%	100.0%
	100.0%	

How many years have you been managing people?		What is your level of management responsibility?	
N/A	1.9%	Business owner	11.5%
Fewer than 1	5.8%	C-Level executive	13.5%
1 to 4	23.1%	Senior management	19.2%
5 to 9	19.2%	Middle management	32.7%
10 to 19	26.9%	Management	26.9%
More than 20	23.1%	Non-management	3.8%
	100.0%		107.7% *

* Some Business Owners also reported themselves as C-Level Executives

The following chart provides the averages of the ratings from the 43 participants who completed each week's survey:

	Own Performance	Employee Performance	Organization Performance
Week 1	6.51	7.11	6.22
Week 2	7.28	7.31	7.15
Week 3	6.97	7.53	6.76
Week 4	7.59	7.64	7.02
Week 5	7.44	7.85	6.93
Week 6	7.63	7.50	7.05
Average	7.24	7.49	6.86

On average, Employee Performance was rated highest, Own Performance second, and the overall Organization Performance lowest.

One theory for the Organization's performance being rated lowest is there were more managers participating than business owners and C-level executives; managers perhaps wanted to point out that the business owner or senior leaders weren't running things the way they would. But business owners and C-level executives agreed – they rated the organization lowest, as well – so this theory is incorrect. There was a trend of the individuals' performance directly impacting the overall performance of the organization – when Own and Employee Performance went up or down, so did Organization Performance ratings. This isn't surprising, and yet the correlation wasn't expected to be quite so dramatic.

While there wasn't a lot of "finger pointing" when it came to the overall performance of the organization, there certainly was some. Some of it was aimed at the economy, but most of it was at other departments or management (particularly for a lack of communication and collaboration).

A pleasant surprise was how few participants blamed the lack of performance on the economy. It seems that most people participating in the survey took personal responsibility for their companies' lack of performance.

PERFORMANCE RULES

The ratings and comments were distilled into just a few simple-to-focus-on factors that could be used on a regular basis. In other words, a few simple but critical "rules" which would help

participants and others perform better. As Albert Einstein once said, "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler."

The most common factors that impacted performance (both positively and negatively), in order of how often they were reported and the apparent impact were:

1. **Awareness** – Taking a few minutes on a regular schedule to stop and think about performance – what impacts it, what's working, and what's not working.
2. **Feedback** – Either a lack of feedback (negative) or the existence of it (positive) was evident in the performance ratings.
3. **Expectations** – When participants and their employees had clear direction and knew what was expected of them, they performed better.
4. **Focus** – Being focused on key issues, challenges and problems, and not getting distracted led to improved performance.
5. **Communication** – When there was good communication, performance improved; when communication was restricted (for reasons ranging from being absent to having other distractions getting in the way), performance suffered.
6. **Organized** – When participants took the time to get more organized and schedule projects, they performed better; when they didn't, performance worsened.

Overwhelmingly, the most common comment was, "I was amazed at how productive it was to take a few minutes once a week to reflect on the performance of my employees, my company, and myself."

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

The study was designed to enable you to use the information in this report to enhance your performance, and the performance of those around you – in the workplace and even in your personal life.

Six factors showed to have the greatest impact on performance in the workplace: awareness, feedback, expectations, focus, communication and being organized.

Questions or comments about the survey and the results are welcomed.

RECOMMENDATIONS: USING THE PERFORMANCE RULES

In addition to the objective results of the study I wanted to provide a few comments and recommendations.

Awareness is an amazing thing – and it leads to change. In fact, without awareness, there is a very good chance that change will not happen – things will stay the same. The lack of change could be a good thing, but awareness is what will tell you whether it is or not.

Anyone who has driven past one of those digital speed readout signs will have experienced the impact of awareness on behavior. What do most drivers do when they see their speed flashed up on these signs? They slow down. Why? Because the sign made them aware. Until then they had not been aware of what speed they were traveling, and once they were they made a change.

Asking yourself a few key questions on a regular basis can do wonders for your own awareness. It can do the same for your employees. *What if you scheduled five or ten minutes*

each Friday morning to ask yourself three or four questions, such as the ones used in this survey? What do you think that would do over the course of many months? What if you asked your employees some “awareness-building questions” on a regular basis? What impact would that have?

Consider how you can use the other five factors – feedback, expectations, focus, communications, and organization.

Time and time again, when managers are asked if their employees get enough feedback (both corrective and confirming – often referred to as negative and positive), and if they’re very clear on what’s expected of them, they say yes. And yet, when the employees are asked, they reply with a very definite no. *Think about that – ask yourself if you really do provide enough feedback and set clear enough expectations (they may be clear to you, but are they to your employees?).*

What process, what system can you use to help you and your employees stay focused on the “critical few” – the few things that have the biggest impact on your business’s performance and, therefore, results?

How can you improve communications? Most problems that were identified throughout the survey had a lack of communication at the core.

A number of participants commented on the negative impact that not taking the time to schedule work and not getting organized has. It’s obvious that taking a few minutes to plan, schedule, and get organized is a valuable investment. *How can you schedule time to schedule?*

One thing I’m certain of is that if you don’t use any of these recommendations, nothing will change. That may be a good thing. But if you want to make improvements in performance, consider these suggestions. And finally, my passion is in helping individuals, teams and organizations perform better, so tell me if there is anything I can do to help make that happen.

Go perform!

Ross Bentley