



Human Performance Technology: Your Competitive Advantage

In today's demanding and rapidly changing business environment, companies are looking for ways to increase their competitiveness. They look to opportunities such as technology expansion, global partnerships, and virtual work environments. But amidst this search for a competitive edge, one opportunity is often overlooked—people and performance.

This is where Human Performance Technology (HPT) can help. HPT offers a way to achieve and even exceed business goals by leveraging the performance of people. As an approach to solving performance problems, HPT pinpoints problems and their root causes and then applies the most direct, cost-effective solution to generate the business results you need.

If you want to make people and performance your competitive advantage, HPT can help.

What is HPT?

HPT is concerned with improving the human performance that drives business performance. It is a comprehensive, systematic approach to solving problems involving human performance in organizational and work settings. What kinds of performance problems? Here are just a few:

It's taking too long to get this team up to speed
Workplace injuries are on the rise in this facility
We're not meeting project deadlines
We can't seem to get and keep skilled workers
We're spending money on training but not getting the results we expected

HPT focuses on helping companies find systemic-based solutions to these types of performance problems so that business goals can be achieved.

The Business Side of HPT

Human performance consultants provide the tools and methods to help businesses:

- Identify and eliminate obstacles to successful performance
- Identify strategies and solutions tied to business goals
- Assess the level of performance needed to achieve these goals
- Align performance to business goals and results
- Design multifaceted interventions to achieve and sustain required performance
- Evaluate the success of performance improvement interventions

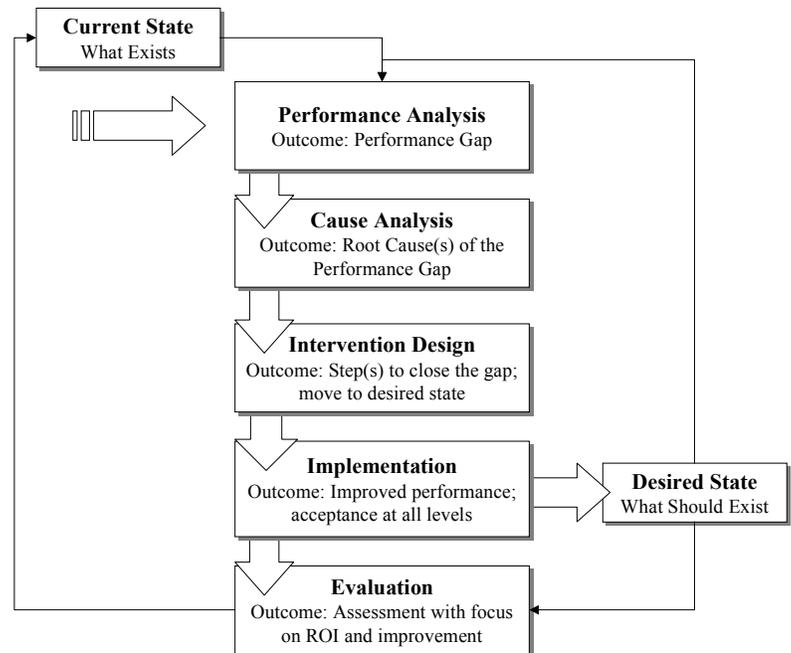
HPT recognizes the need for solutions predicated on causes, rather than symptoms. This approach results in sustainable performance solutions instead of quick fixes. Solutions designed to eliminate the underlying causes of a performance problem benefit businesses by generating long-term performance improvement.

The bottom-line orientation of HPT also makes it credible to businesses. A fundamental component of HPT is the assessment of the cost for overcoming a performance problem as well as the cost of not overcoming the problem. In this way, companies are able to determine the potential economic gain of a performance improvement initiative, and decide whether or not the initiative is economically feasible at the present time.

How Does HPT Work?

Performance Analysis

In collaboration with the client, the human performance consultant's first step in approaching a performance problem is to conduct a performance analysis. This is the process of breaking down a performance problem. It involves assessing the current performance level and defining a desired performance level. Information and data needed for this step are collected from a variety of methods, such as interviews, observations, focus groups, and surveys. The difference between the current and desired performance levels is called the performance gap, which is the focus of HPT.



Cause Analysis

Once the performance gap has been established, the human performance consultant's next step is to uncover the root cause of the problem. Causes can include lack of motivation, improper incentives, environmental roadblocks, and lack of skill or knowledge. This analysis is the crucial link between the performance gap and its appropriate intervention.

Intervention Selection & Design

With the performance gap and the cause analysis completed, the next step is intervention selection and design. Interventions can include:

- Redesigning the job
- Restructuring or developing feedback and incentive systems
- Working change into the corporate culture
- Designing and developing job aids and/or training
- Modifying a system or a process

This step identifies the most appropriate intervention that will result in an efficient and cost-effective resolution to the performance problem.

Implementation

The process of implementing the intervention has as much impact on its success as the intervention itself. Because resistance to change can be a powerful barrier to performance improvement, steps must be taken to ensure acceptance at all organizational levels. Implementation can involve employee development, change management and/or communication strategies.

Evaluation

Measuring a performance intervention is essential in order to determine the degree of improvement and the impact on business results. By evaluating whether or not new behaviors, skills, or knowledge have transferred to job and business performance, an organization can determine the return on investment (ROI) of the intervention. Evaluation also allows organizations to monitor performance, thereby providing a process for continuous improvement.

Leading organizations realize that new levels of performance are required to compete successfully in the global market. HPT provides organizations with a strategy to increase competitiveness by identifying problems and opportunities related to people and performance.

<http://www.ispi.org> (International Society for Performance Improvement)

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