

CHAPTER

1

THE PERFORMANCE TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE

Some years ago, a company had a team of high-performing data entry clerks that was known for consistently rapid production with very low error rates. These were skilled, dependable employees who had worked together for a long time. When their company moved to a new and much larger building, the clerks were delighted with their workspace. They loved their spacious office, large wrap-around windows, and restful views of lush lawns and shady trees.

When they moved, they brought along all their existing office furniture, state-of-the-art computers, and other equipment. They settled into their wonderful new space and continued with their work. After a week or two, their manager reviewed the production reports and was surprised to see that the team's error rates had noticeably increased. He searched in vain for an obvious reason and could only conclude that the move had somehow disrupted the clerks' usual accuracy.

When this alarming trend continued through several reporting cycles, the manager decided the best course of action would be to retrain this group of skilled high performers because they had obviously forgotten how to do their jobs. So all the data entry clerks were retrained. And, as you may have guessed, their sub-standard performance continued with subsequent reports showing no reduction in error rates.

In desperation, the manager asked the performance consulting department for help and a consultant paid him a visit. After the manager brought her up-to-date on events, she asked to see all the reports from after the move and several sets from before to compare the clerks' performance.

After reviewing the reports, the consultant shared her findings with the manager. In the reports generated since the move to the new building, she noticed a definite pattern of increased errors in the late afternoons. The manager could not immediately provide an explanation for this, so the consultant asked if she could spend a few days on the floor to observe the clerks and learn more about their jobs.

When her observations were complete, the consultant met with the manager to again share her findings. Those large, bright windows really let in lots of light. In the late afternoons, as the sun began to set, it created glare on the clerks' computer screens. Even though they knew their software well, it was easy to make mistakes and not see them; hence, the increased error rates.

The manager was somewhat embarrassed to have missed this obvious reason for poor performance, but the consultant helped him see the value of another pair of eyes when trying to diagnose a problem from inside the situation. She pointed out the power of observation in analyzing performance problems and confided that she never fully believed anything her clients told her until she went to see for herself. The manager forgave himself his oversight and was pleased to discover that window coverings were a relatively quick and inexpensive solution to a critical performance obstacle (Addison & Haig, 2006, p. 35).

WHERE WE WORK

“Where do you work?” When asked that question by a new acquaintance at a party, we may say, “I work for the City,” or at a company-wide meeting, “I work in Customer Service,” or even, “I work downstairs in Shipping,” in response to an inquiry in the elevator. But what would happen if we said, “I work in Performance Technology”? This would be a truthful answer for anyone in the field of performance improvement, but would probably elicit a puzzled look from the questioner.

Welcome to the territory of the performance improvement professional. We inhabit a place of great mystery to many, and yet with careful explanation, examples, illustrations, and stories, much of what we find on the Performance Technology Landscape is familiar to others in our organizations who may be technicians, supervisors, executives, or front-line workers. Here on the Landscape we de-code performance issues and structure solutions to improve the results workers achieve in their jobs.

As the designated architects of improved performance in our organizations, we rely on a body of experience, proven approaches, and documented successes to help our clients provide an environment in which workers can meet and exceed expected performance results. The Performance Technology Landscape is our guide to designing and building Performance Architecture. Performance Architecture comprises evidence-based designs, plans, models, and tools that guide the integration of the Worker, Work, and Workplace to improve performance in organizations.

Let's begin by exploring the features of the Landscape. To help explain what we find, we'll use our combined eighty-five years of performance improvement experience coupled with the valuable work of such notables as Dale Brethower, Judith Hale, Paul Harmon, Lloyd Homme, Tom Gilbert, Robert Mager, Margo Murray, Geary Rummier, Harold Stolovitch, Don Tosti, and others. These

practitioners are among those responsible for building the foundation of performance technology; they have contributed through their work, and documented it in publications (Addison & Haig, 2006, p. 36).

THE PERFORMANCE TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE

The Landscape (Figure 1.1) houses the vital components of the work of human performance technology (HPT). HPT is an integrated system approach to performance improvement that is illustrated by the multiple dimensions of the Landscape:

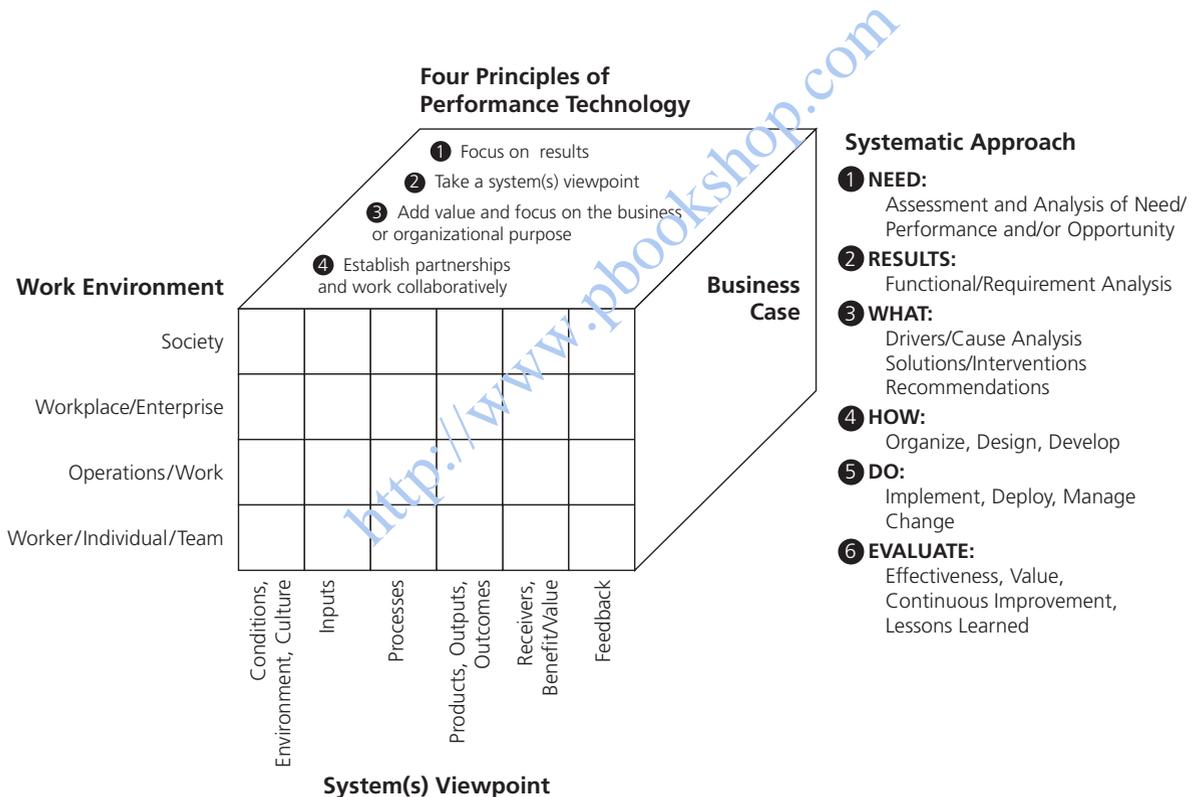


FIGURE 1.1. *The Human Performance Technology Landscape.*

Source: Addison, R. (2004). *Performance Improvement*, July 2004, 43(6), 15. Reprinted with permission of John Wiley & Sons.

4 Performance Architecture

To help us further explain the Performance Technology Landscape are two key concepts: performance and human performance technology.

What Is Performance?

While many of us might think of performance as simply an activity on the Performance Technology Landscape, seasoned performance improvement professionals add a critical component; a result (Addison & Haig, 2006, p. 38). So, performance = activity + result, as in reading a blueprint, *activity*, and following it to build a house, *result*. We further stipulate that the result must be of *value*. In this example, building a house provides a family with shelter. The value is in the importance of the house to all stakeholders: the resident family, guests, neighbors, builder, architect, property tax collector, etc. Performance can be further defined as “those valued results produced by people working within a system” (ISPI, 2004, p. 9).

What Is Performance Technology?

We define a technology as a set of empirical and scientific principles and their application; applied knowledge, and science. Performance technology (PT) is a technology that includes all of the variables that affect human performance. We use PT in the workplace to identify the factors that enable workers to perform their jobs and produce desired results. PT provides tools and processes to identify opportunities for improved performance, valued solutions, and return on investment, as well as the building blocks to construct new performance environments and systems. In brief, HPT:

1. Focuses on valuable, measured results;
 2. Considers the larger system context of people’s performance;
 3. Provides measurement tools that can be used repeatedly and will consistently show the same outcome; and
 4. Describes programs and solutions clearly enough to be duplicated by others.
- (ISPI, 2004, p. 4)

We frequently find our clients confused by the term technology because they think of it as machinery, or equipment, or automated systems. It is helpful to explain technology as the dictionary does, “The application of knowledge especially in a particular area” (Merriam-Webster, 2003).

Interpreting the Performance Improvement Terrain

The PT Landscape functions as scaffolding for performance technologists, providing a base from which to view the ways we can build improved human performance and increase value to the client organization. A closer look at the PT Landscape calls out four critical components of effective results: Principles of Performance Technology, Work Environment, System Viewpoint, and Systematic Approach.

PRINCIPLES OF PERFORMANCE TECHNOLOGY

Performance improvement professionals adhere to four principles in our work, often expressed as RSVP+:

R—Focus on results: Use our knowledge of the business to help clients link their performance improvement initiatives to business needs and goals, and initiate such projects by specifying what the end result is to be.

S—Take a system viewpoint: Consider all aspects of the organization's performance system when we analyze a situation, including competing pressures, resource constraints, and near and long-term anticipated changes.

V—Add value: Produce results that make a difference, both in how we do the work and in what we produce.

P—Establish partnerships: Work with clients and other performance improvement professionals to share skills, knowledge, creativity, and successes to produce the intended results.

+—Remain solution-neutral: The + in RSVP+ reminds us that as ethical performance consultants we stay focused on the client's needs/requirements and remain solution-neutral, recommending what is best for the client's situation regardless of our solution preferences or personal expertise.

Using RSVP+

These principles can serve as valuable guides for performance consultants. For example, results are most often expressed in terms of profits or growth, such as increasing profit or growing market share by a specific percentage. It is important to link our results to critical business, process, and individual measures.

What is the system in the client organization you work with? Is it a series of functional silos? For initiatives to become part of the organization's fabric, processes must be aligned across the system. Take a look at industry leaders, such as Hewlett Packard, where project teams from functions and locations around the world come together, often virtually (Friedman, 2007, p. 207).

What is the quality of the system? We know that a bad system is pervasive and will override the best performer's efforts. The same bad system will overwhelm a good customer's legitimate complaints, enabling resolution of the complaint but without changing the system (Rummler, 2004, p. xiii). Know the environment into which you plan to introduce change.

Partnerships are critical. When you look around your organization you will find lots of people trying to improve performance in their own areas. Consider the power of a broad group of stakeholders partnering for the same goals. Today, if an organization isn't thinking horizontally, it is not innovating.

Organizations get what they measure, and they measure what is of value to them. Don Tosti recommends that we align our practices with the organization's values (in conversation with Don Tosti).

And finally, RSVP makes a wonderful frame on which to construct an elevator speech to describe your work. Try creating several short statements that touch on each of the principles and see what you can build (Haig & Addison, 2007). See Chapter 8, Chart Your Course, for more on the elevator speech.

By thinking systemically, we are able to identify and work with all the linkages in organizations as we strive to improve performance (Addison & Haig, 2006, p. 39).

WORK ENVIRONMENT

In organizations work is performed at three, and sometimes four, levels:

1. *Individual/teams*: the worker level
2. *Operations/process*: the work level
3. *Organization/enterprise*: the workplace level
4. *Society*: the communities served, the world

Performance consultants determine where issues originate and how they permeate the various levels to make sure that our investigations are complete. A client may, for example, identify an issue as originating with an individual worker or a work group. We may dig deeper to discover that, while the issue affects individual workers, its source is a work procedure at the process level. Then we strategize differently based on where the issue “lives.” One strategy for a performance issue that originates at the individual or worker level is to raise its level to make it more visible and thus gain additional support for resolution.

At the work or process level, we identify all the functions impacted by the process under investigation, working horizontally to ensure that relevant stakeholders are partnering to make the needed changes.

For a workplace or organizational level issue, we show how it impacts the entire enterprise, including suppliers, customers, and the competition.

For many years Roger Kaufman has brought our attention to working at the societal level (Kaufman, 2006). In his most recent book, Thomas L. Friedman presents his argument for a green revolution (Friedman, 2009). Many organizations today acknowledge society as a fourth level where they, as good corporate citizens, can make valuable contributions to the environment, the economy, and to the communities they serve. This service may involve encouraging employees to contribute their efforts to local charities, such as the Volunteer Day program or the seventy-eight Community Involvement Teams at Levi Strauss worldwide (www.levistrauss.com/responsibility). Another example is through active support of humanitarian issues as with Hewlett Packard’s Design-for-Environment program (www.hp.com/hpinfo/globalcitizenship/environment/productdesign/design.html) that provides environmentally sustainable products through recycling services, or the Siemens Arts Program (<http://w1.siemens.com/responsibility/en/citizenship/artsprogram/into.htm>) that supports and advances local arts and culture in company locations around the world.

Performance improvement professionals also work at the societal level, using HPT tools and techniques to address broad areas of need in the developing world (Haig & Addison, 2002; Kaufman, 2006).

Whenever possible, performance improvement practitioners expand their work to higher organizational levels to increase the impact of improved performance and add value for the organization. Many practitioners are accustomed to working with individuals or teams to improve performance. However, organizations realize broader, longer-lasting gains in performance improvement when we work across the organization rather than escalating because the customer is ultimately affected (Figure 1.2).

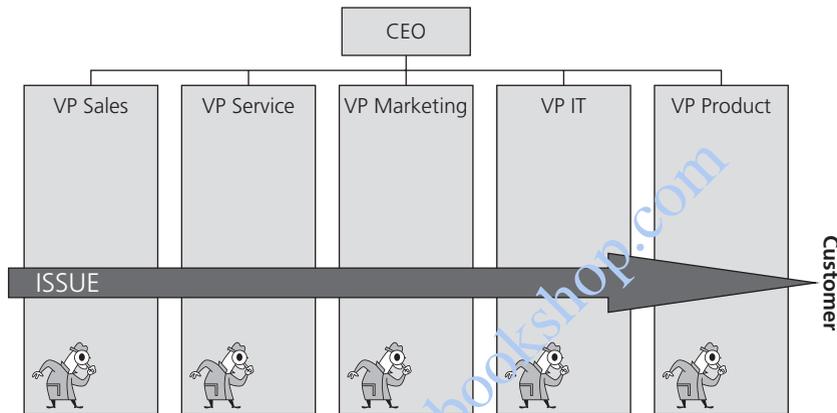


FIGURE 1.2. *Worker, Work, Workplace Issues.*

HOW WE THINK—SYSTEM, SYSTEMATIC, SYSTEMIC

Just as architects view the total project as a system as they plan and design, we in HPT see the organization as a system, thus differentiating ourselves from other disciplines with our system viewpoint.

System Viewpoint

HPT professionals consider that every organization is, by definition, a system, and that all components of that system are related. Therefore, when performance improvement is needed in one component we consider all of them in our investigation. Any place we touch in the organization will affect other areas because the organization is a system. This is often referred to as thinking systemically. The System Model in Figure 1.3 is representative of this basic HPT principle. Many performance improvement professionals have their own version of this model.

We make the greatest impact on performance when we address the whole system. As the System Model illustrates, performance begins with Inputs into a system, which are processed until the Results reach the Receiver; hence, performance occurs from left to right. Performance improvement specialists, however, work from right to left, beginning by clearly identifying the desired Results of an initiative and then working backward through the model to Inputs (Addison & Haig, 2006, p. 40).

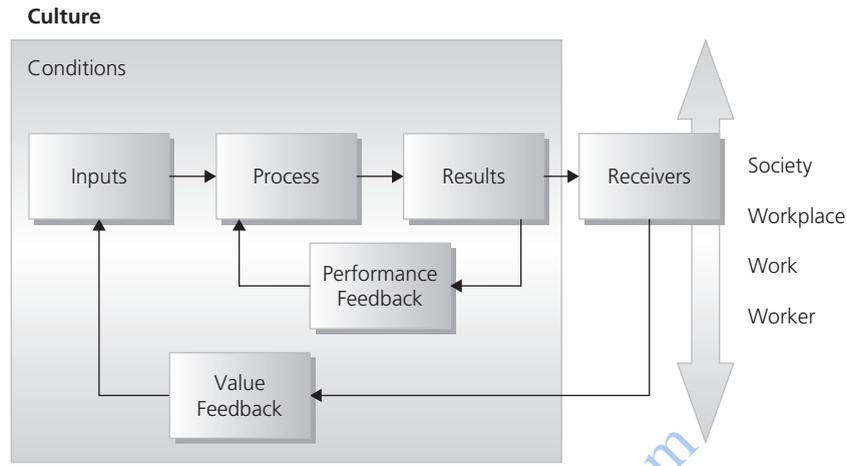


FIGURE 1.3. *System Model.*

Thinking Systemically

By thinking systemically we are able to view the enterprise as a complete system made up of the following components (adapted with permission from ISPI, 2004):

- *Receivers:* The people who receive or are directly affected by the result—the stakeholders
- *Results:* The products, services, or any valued result produced by a process
- *Process:* The sequence of actions in the value chain that produces the desired results

The Organizational or Workplace Level focuses on those processes concerned with the governance of the organization.

The Operational or Work Level includes all the processes in the value chain as well as those that maintain them. The variables here take into account the specific activities and tasks and their sequence and flow. At this level we often look for broken connections and misalignments such as bottlenecks and disconnects.

The Performer or Worker Level is focused on the actions of the individual. It therefore seems best to put the performer in the Process box. The variables to be considered are those internal to the performer that are relevant to the execution of the task. These include:

- Skill or knowledge
- Motivation
- Other variables such as confidence, preferences, practices

It may be useful to think of two types of processes. Some, such as sales or service, touch the customer. Others, like employee payroll or recruitment, enable the organization to function. Ultimately, organizations require both types of processes to be effective.

Inputs: Everything that initiates or is used during a process including customer requests, stakeholder demands, information, the strategic plan, tools and equipment, work schedules, assignments, and support.

Conditions: The surroundings or environment within which performance occurs such as economic and market trends, industry norms, the physical, business, and social environment. This includes the physical workspace, as in the story of the data entry clerks that introduced this chapter.

Performance Feedback: Information about the quantity or quality of outputs that is fed back to a performer, operational unit, or organization from within the system. It can be used to make adjustments that will improve the results.

Value Feedback: The same type of information as provided by Performance Feedback, but originating from outside the system. Sources may include end users, stockholders, the surrounding community, the media, and so forth (Addison & Haig, 2006, p. 41).

Remember that performance feedback comes from within the system and value feedback from outside. One of us explains the difference this way: When the chef tastes the soup it is performance feedback; when the customer tastes the soup it is value feedback.

System thinking is scalable and can be applied at any of the three organizational levels: worker, work, or workplace.

Systematic Approach

Performance improvement professionals use a systematic approach to organize projects. They follow sequential steps and create a replicable process to identify needs and recommend solutions, shown in Table 1.1.

TABLE 1.1. Systematic Approach.

Step	Action
1. Need	Identify and review the problem or opportunity with the client
2. Results	Assess current performance against expected results and identify requirements for success
3. What	Identify sources of current performance and recommend solutions
4. How	Design and develop selected solution
5. Do	Implement approved solutions and put change management processes in place
6. Evaluate	Monitor performance against the expected results defined initially

Finally, performance improvement specialists take care to nurture and enhance the business partnerships we have established with our clients (Addison & Haig, 2006, p. 42).

HPT AS THE INTEGRATOR

Today, it is common to encounter numbers of people within organizations whose goal is to improve performance. They use a variety of approaches that have become familiar:

- Training is focused on providing individual employees with skills, knowledge, and abilities
- Six Sigma addresses processes and their creation and improvement
- Organization development addresses organizational workplace issues

It is beneficial for an organization to have a widespread interest in performance improvement. However, the professionals working in the disciplines just described are often in different parts of the organization and may be looking vertically, within their own functional areas.

We suggest that HPT methods, tools, and techniques can be used to integrate performance improvement initiatives horizontally across the organization. The power of Performance Technology is not in emphasizing the means but rather the ends. The integration of the worker, work, and workplace is a key to improved organizational performance (Addison, 2007).

CONCLUSION: LESSONS OF THE PERFORMANCE TECHNOLOGY LANDSCAPE

The Landscape has become a touchstone for us as performance improvement professionals. When we want to check the validity of a concept, a model, a tool, or an approach that is new to us, we come back to the Landscape. We look to the Landscape to show us where the new item fits in the performance world, how it supports the Principles of Performance Technology, at what levels of the work environment it could be effective, and to what extent it would mesh with the existing culture. Everything we do, or that can be done, to improve performance is contained in the Landscape.

The Landscape shows us that we can be effective and efficient in our organizations, and we can affect performance if we accurately diagnose what is getting in the way of results and recommend effective solutions. It is not necessary to study for years to do this work. With the right tools and resources, and the skills to decode them, performance improvement specialists can excel at what makes us unique: diagnosis.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

To learn about . . .

Go to . . .

Worker/Individual/Team Level

Chapter 2

Problem Solving

Analysis

Tie to the Business

Models and Tools

Work/Process Level

Chapter 3

Process

Critical Process Issues

Practice

Maps—Making It Visible

Workplace/Organization Level

Chapter 4

Mapping the Organization

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Chapter 5

What Is Implementation

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Chapter 6

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Project Management

Models and Tools

Focus Forward: Trends to Watch

Chapter 7

Trends That Impact Clients

Natural Resources

Technology

Economics

Performance Improvement

Chart Your Course

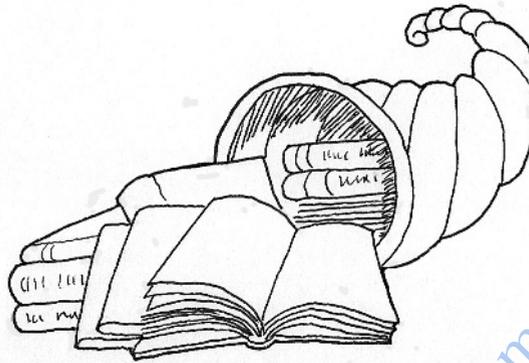
Chapter 8

Worker/Self

Work/Process

Workplace/Organization

AUTHORS' PICKS



Here are some of our recommended additions to your library and subscriptions you might enjoy.

Library Additions

Gilbert, T.F. (1996). *Human competence: Engineering worthy performance*. Washington, DC, and Amherst, MA: ISPI and HRD Press.

Hale, J. (1998). *The performance consultant's fieldbook: Tools and techniques for improving organizations and people*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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Stolovitch, H.D., & Keeps, E.J. (Eds.) (1999). *The handbook of human performance technology* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

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