

# **ATTAINING SUPERIOR WORK PERFORMANCE**

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## **Introduction**

Have you ever wondered what does it take to become a star performer at work? Are star performers born or made? These two questions are most relevant in today's high-performance workplace characterized by a focus on quality products and services, reduced supervision and multiple responsibilities. Management expects employees at all levels to produce superior work performance within deadlines. In this regard, employees should take heed that in today's highly competitive and dynamic business environment there is "no job for life". As stated by Peter Cappelli, "The old employment system of secure, lifetime jobs with predictable advancement and stable pay is dead." If you genuinely want to attain superior performance at work and make it an integral part of you (a daily habit), do continue reading.

## **Meaning of Superior Work Performance**

Superior work performance is work that is done in an effective and efficient manner. Being effective means choosing the appropriate goals and attaining them. Effectiveness measures the degree to which predetermined goals are attained. It is essentially "doing the right things". An important element of effectiveness is quality which is essentially "meeting or exceeding customers requirements consistently". Being efficient means minimizing the cost or resources utilized in attaining predetermined goals. Efficiency measures the ratio of outputs such as products and services to inputs such as labour, materials and capital. It is essentially "doing things right". Simply put, superior work performance is doing the right things right. It encompasses primarily producing quality work within deadlines; accomplishing work objectives with minimum utilization of resources; and making effective and timely decisions.

## **Basics of Quality**

To enhance work performance, every employee should clearly understand the basic principles of Quality. Quality involves doing the right things right the first time by understanding internal and external customers' requirements, taking preventive measures to prevent defects from occurring, and making decisions based on facts. Take heed that quality is not merely an attribute of a product or service. It is also a mindset. Quality must become a way of life for every employee. Without employees exhibiting the right attitudes in their daily work, quality improvement efforts are doomed to fail.

## **What Separates Stars from Average Performers in the Workplace**

Research shows conclusively that star performers at work are made, not born. According to Robert E. Kelley, what really separates star performers at work from average

performers is neither a higher IQ nor a higher level of self-confidence but rather it was how they made use of what they had. What mattered ultimately was how they go about doing their work. I must add one extremely important prerequisite for star performance at work: An inner desire to excel which transforms doing a quality job into a daily habit. Quality is an attitude of mind wherein an individual takes pride in every job performed.

### **Fifteen Tips to Improve Your Work Performance**

1. Know your job thoroughly. Keep track of latest research or developments in your area of expertise. Be well-informed for knowledge is power. You should also have a fair working knowledge of what the other departments in your organization do.
2. Form the habit of performing every job to the best of your ability. Focus on doing the right things right the first time and every time.
3. Determine your key work goals on a monthly or weekly basis. Goals are not equally important. Hence, prioritize the various goals and draw up action plans with realistic deadlines to attain them. Concentrate on completing the vital goals first. If you are unsure about which goals are more important, double-check with your superior.
4. Maintain a daily "To-Do List" which includes activities to attain your weekly goals. Prioritize them and estimate the amount of time required for each one. Do it preferably at the end of the previous day.
5. Practise preventive management by building quality into the work process. Anticipate what can go wrong and take preventive steps to prevent those errors from occurring.
6. Maintain a well-organized desk. Arrange systematically on your desk the items you use most frequently. Ensure the working area directly in front of you is always clear. Clear your desk of anything you are not working on.
7. Follow through on major tasks to ensure their proper completion.
8. Keep a notebook to jot down ideas and important information.
9. Learn how to make sound and timely decisions. Gather relevant information quickly; determine the root cause of the problem based on facts; examine the pros and cons of various alternatives; draw on the experience and knowledge of others; and then make the decision.
10. Before starting a task, be crystal-clear about what are the desired results or expectations of your superior. If you are unsure, do not hesitate to seek clarification from your immediate superior.
11. Always double-check your completed work before submitting it to your superior. Ensure there are no factual or typographical errors.
12. Improve your oral and written communication skills.

13. Be creative. Challenge the established way of doing things. Tackle challenging tasks while you are fresh and energetic.
14. Set up a personal file system. All files should be clearly labeled. File papers neatly in the appropriate file folder. Clean out your files periodically and discard information that is no longer needed.
15. Continually ask yourself the following three questions:
  - Am I doing the right things?
  - Am I doing things right?
  - How can I do things better?

## **Conclusion**

It has been stated that every job is a self-portrait of the person who did it. Hence, decide consciously to autograph your work with excellence. Remember, we live only once and that life is too precious a gift to be wasted. Make a firm decision to become a star performer at work. In this regard, I am reminded of Hillel's famous statement: If not now, when? If you are not for yourself, who will be for you?