



WHITE PAPER

# Bringing Human Performance Fundamentals to the Workplace



# Human Performance

Pro athletes train rigorously, dedicating themselves to extensive gym sessions and regular practice sessions to push their limits. Their unwavering commitment prepares them to perform at their peak when it's game time, with no room for mistakes.

Both mental and physical toughness influence their results. Through rigorous training, pro athletes master their roles and face unexpected obstacles head-on. They expect to make the right call every time. While a wrong decision in a game may cost points, the stakes in the power and manufacturing industries are much higher.

**Just like pro athletes, workers in the power and manufacturing industries need training programs that include cognitive abilities, agility, decision-making skills, and precision.**

These training programs are designed to enhance workers' expertise, maintain their proficiency, and advance their capabilities. While they may not be gearing up for the big game, workers can reach a high-performance level through robust training and rigorous performance standards.



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# Understanding Human Performance

While advanced manufacturing technology has improved many processes, manual labor remains essential in many areas. Improved technology emphasizes the importance of human operators, yet their role is not adequately considered during design. Human factors are typically only considered for safety and ergonomics, disregarding the complexity of human behavior.

**Adapting behavior and cultural norms to prioritize human performance cannot be underestimated when building the workforce of the future.**

Understanding human performance can be difficult. It involves figuring out the difference between how well someone performs and their true potential. However, the training process provides a way to conduct comprehensive evaluations, generate insightful reports, and implement strategic approaches to better understand workers' strengths and weaknesses.

Trainers can then design training to enhance performance. **By understanding the fundamental principles of training, human performance becomes a systematic discipline, which can mitigate accidents and improve an organization's reliability.**



# Prioritizing Human Performance

Being “good enough” is defined by the standards an organization sets for performance. Unfortunately, expecting a worker to make the best decision every time can feel like an unrealistic demand. “We’re only human and are going to make mistakes” or “accidents will happen” undermines the potential of human performance. While no one is perfect, settling for doing the best you can is the opposite of striving for excellence.

Aiming for excellence may sound corny, but **embracing and integrating human performance principles in training can transform workers’ performances.** It can mean the difference between a worker who meets the minimum requirements and one who excels in their field.

## Successful Human Performance Stories

The energy and manufacturing industries are noticing successful human performance activity in other fields. The U.S. Armed Forces records human performance across every spectrum of its training and operations. This record ranges from tracking and creating overlapping redundancies for maintenance routines on aircraft carriers to training soldiers to make quick decisions in combat situations using simulation.

Additionally, the medical field uses human performance development and tracking to increase the quality of ER procedures by routinely replaying actual emergencies with the entire medical staff. To improve response time, first responders such as firefighters and police officers regularly test their reflexes with enhanced role-playing activities that intentionally insert obstacles such as equipment failure.

**Human performance is a critical part of success, especially in situations where high stress events are random and unavoidable, as found in the utility and manufacturing industries.**





# How to Implement Human Performance in Your Organization

Human performance development is like a gap analysis for a person. The following outline helps explain how to organize the process.



## Determine what's expected to master a specific skill:

- Job description
- Job complexity
- Number of tasks required to complete a job function
- Variables affecting the individual
- How long it has taken previous operators to reach their current performance level

## Thoroughly analyze a person's skills using these measures:

- **Knowledge and awareness** – how to identify a situation's attributes
- **Reaction time** – speed to identify the problem and decide on a solution
- **Accuracy** – decision-making effectiveness based on established expectations

## Identify how to improve using the following training structure:

- Levels of skill from novice to proficiency
- Learning progression between novice and proficiency
- How long it should take the person to improve their skills between levels
- Schedule and sequence of training to develop those skills
- Milestones for growth and measures to evaluate milestones

Human performance works anywhere. All areas of an organization should focus on excellence. However, it is particularly applicable in situations where employees perform repetitive routine tasks. These situations can range from someone checking materials on an assembly line to a system operator maintaining system reliability.

Doing the same thing over and over causes employees to go on autopilot and lose focus. **You can break up the monotony of shift work with physical activities and mental reflex exercises to heighten brain activity.** These actions will help employees stay sharp and alert whether it's the first hour of their shift or the eleventh.

## The Importance of Leadership

**Leadership is critical when creating a culture for improving how employees perform.**

Developing human performance takes time and organization. It also needs everyone's full support.

All employees should be held accountable – from the newest recruit to the most veteran supervisor. Including veteran employees is integral. Inviting them to contribute shows respect for their skillsets and enhances your training program. Their participation reinforces the expectations of excellence for every task. It also encourages all employees to keep improving.



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