

Characteristics of a Performer

You know them well!

When you have a top performer working in your team, *you know it*. They just get on with the job, and the results come rolling in.

So let's have a look at some of the key factors which make these people so valuable.

They Envision the Result

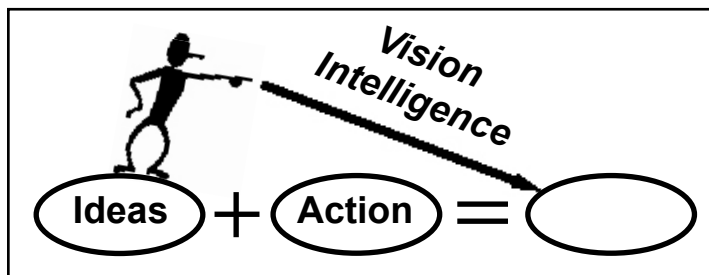
An effective individual, when presented with a new project or job, will quickly identify what the *end result* should be. And if the result is not immediately obvious to them, they will concentrate on getting it clearly defined before they start.

Consequently, in looking at a new area or project, a top performer will typically ask questions like:-

“What are we trying to achieve here?”

“What's the main objective of this project?”

“Where are we going with this?”



In simple terms, a top performer is *results-oriented*, so they will just naturally have their eye on the overall target.

They will also want to put the results they achieve into context with the rest of the operation. They will quickly align their results with the overall objectives of the bigger picture.

They either *know* what the results should be already, or they will get them nailed. And they

do this *before* they begin to operate in the new environment, or start to run the new project job.

Take an office cleaner, for example. If they are good at their job, and they are a top performer, *they will know what a clean office should look like*. They will know that the end result of their efforts is to achieve a clean office.

You don't have to come along after them and point out that they missed the windows, or that the corners are still dirty. They know what the objective is before they get into action — *they can envision the end result*.

What a joy it is to work with such people.

By contrast, how frustrating it is to work with people who *cannot* see what they are supposed to be achieving.

Non-performers have to be continually directed. You cannot take your attention off their area because you know it will go off the rails if you do. What does this do for executive sanity?

This Really Happened

Here's a true story, and a good example of an office cleaner who did not understand that the end result of their job was a clean office. They thought they were being paid to *do certain actions*, rather than *achieve specific results* in their work.

So, there they were, mopping the hallway. That was the action they were supposed to perform. But, because they had no concept of the end result, they saw no problem with the fact that *they were using a dirty mop!* Consequently, they were spreading dirt from the mop along the lower edges of a clean wall, which now had ugly dirty marks on it.

As far as the office cleaner was concerned, they had done their job — they had mopped the office

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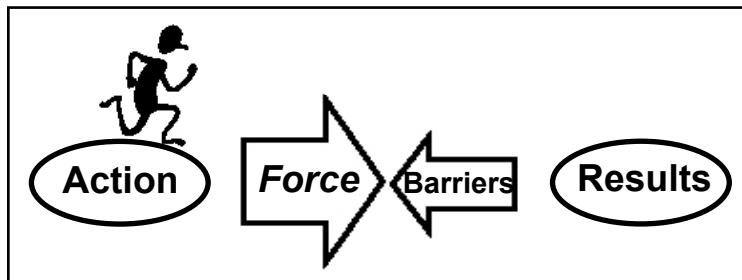
hallway (that's the ACTION). But with no idea of the purpose of the exercise (the RESULT), they had actually produced the opposite of that which was required. **They had produced a dirty office, instead of a clean office.**

And the pity of it was, they could not see what all the fuss was about. "What are you complaining about? I mopped the floor, like you said..."

Their Actions are Effective

Have you ever had someone continually come back to you with problems? Top performers don't do that.

Top performers will find a way. They will go over,



under, through or around the barriers they meet. ***They are not robots following blind orders.*** They will use their intelligence to figure a way to overcome the obstacles.

Sometimes the barriers are considerable indeed, but the measure of the top performer is their ability to get the result, come what may. Of course, there has to be a degree of intelligence in the way in which they "make it happen".

This Also Happened

Here's another true story to illustrate the point. Someone was asked to collect some plants and deliver them to an office. One of the plants was a really nice palm tree in a large pot.

After trying for some time to get the palm tree into their van, without success, our intrepid courier came up with a "solution":-

"We'll have to break the top fronds off to make it fit."

And he was not joking! That would certainly solve the problem of getting it into his van, so he could deliver it. But it was hardly the end result the recipient was expecting!

The Theoretician

Sometimes you see someone who is very big on ideas. They can ***seem to be a top performer*** as they apparently have the first attribute of being able to see the end result. The only problem is, it's all theory, with no ability to get into action to produce those results.

Such people put a lot of importance on their academic achievements, or their titles. They seem to feel that having such status is all they need. But they fall dramatically short when it comes to getting results, so don't be fooled.

A top performer, when they get into action, will not come back to you with endless problems and reasons why they cannot get the result. They find a way!

They Measure their Performance

One attribute by which you can easily recognise a top performer is that they ***know what their results are.***

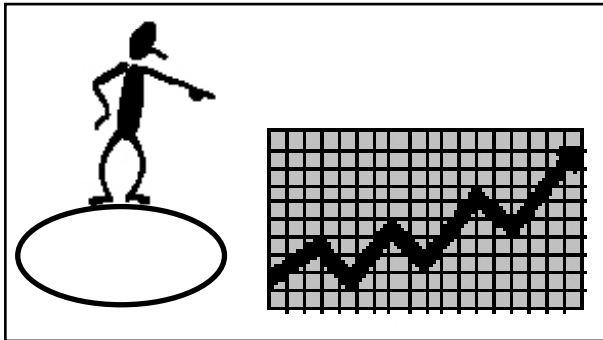
The fact that they are results-oriented means that they are very interested in what results they produce.

- **They measure them.**
- **They record them.**
- **They are very happy to tell you about them.**

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A top performer is always seeking to improve their results. If things went well, they want to know why, so they can repeat the same strategy next time. And if things did not go well, they also want to know about it, so they can correct that shortcoming in future.

How many times have you seen someone get a bad result, then proceed to do the same job in exactly the same way next time? Is that smart? No, but if the person has no concept of what they are supposed to be achieving, that's most likely what they will do.



So, the third characteristic of a top performer is their constant awareness of, and interest in, the measure of their results.

Ask a top performer what results they have achieved in the past. You will usually get a clear statement of achievements from them immediately. They don't have to think about it. They are actually ***proud to tell you of them.*** And they don't forget them.

Can you imagine a top sales person, who doubled their budget three years in a row, not remembering that fact? Of course not! So, if someone tells you they "can't remember" their results, that's as good as saying they have none!

Executive Time

A manager has their own job to do and their own results to achieve.

Part of that job is supervising the people in their team, of course. But when this supervision takes

so much of their time that it overwhelms the rest of their responsibilities, you have an overworked executive. And the rest of their job suffers as a result.

If you have ever replaced someone in your team with a more effective performer, you know what a relief that can be. You find you ***have more time in the day*** because you can ***take your attention off that area***, and get on with your own job.

What can be done?

The obvious long term solution, of course, is to hire top performers! (We can help you in this department). But there is also something you can do with the less effective staff you already have.

Top performers look after themselves in this regard. But the next category down – the average performers – ***will respond to focus and direction.***

Take the time to make the organisational or departmental objectives clear. Help your staff to understand where their individual results fit into the whole. If you haven't tried this, you will be pleasantly surprised.

And make sure that ***you*** can clearly define the results which every job in your area must achieve. Every job in your organisation has a valid and measurable result — otherwise, why are you paying someone to do it?