Workplace Performance Analysis

In many cases, training and education programs are developed without a direct correlation to what specific performance needs they are supposed to address. This may be acceptable in academic fields but can be an enormous waste of resources in the workplace.

“The danger in leaping from apparent problem to apparent solution is that large amounts of time and money can be spent in throwing training at a problem that training cannot solve. You need to dig a little deeper. This is why a procedure like performance analysis is important to those who actually want to solve problems – rather than just talk about them.” 1

Performance analysis is the process by which you identify and respond to problems and opportunities, through the study of individuals and their organization to determine an appropriate solution system. Think of performance analysis as analogous to a physician’s diagnostic process.

A **Performance Analysis** is usually conducted as a preliminary study (up front and fast) of the situation to identify possible solutions to a performance problem.

**Figure 1: Alignment**

The first step in examining workplace performance is to look at the how the organisation is aligned between its environment and its workers. The **Mega** level addresses the connection between the organisation and community & society.

The **Macro** level looks at how the organisation itself functions and the **Micro** level addresses the needs of teams, groups, individuals. For instance, the Mega focus looks

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1 Mager & Pipe in *Analyzing Performance Problems* (1997)

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at long-term core values. Proper alignment of these values can help to avoid problems such as those experienced by Enron, Arthur Anderson or WorldCom.

The Macro focus looks at the optimal structure and aligns the mission with these values. The Micro focus ensures that workers have a job worth doing, the right tools to do it, and are rewarded for doing it well.

While looking at the alignment of these three interrelated levels, we will also examine the internal company processes and the outputs that are created.

**Figure 2: The Performance Model (Mega & Macro)**

The reasons for beginning with a systemic approach, as shown in Figure 2, can be summed up in the words of Klaus Wittkuhn, a human performance practitioner in Germany:

“It is not an intelligent strategy to train people to overcome system deficiencies. Instead, we should design the system properly to make sure that the performers can leverage all their capabilities.”
Figure 3: Work Performance Analysis (Macro)

The Macro, or company level, looks at how work is performed within the context of the system model in Figure 2.

Generally speaking, we start by determining if there are gaps in general performance, such as employee turnover, or in an opportunity, such as growth and hiring. We then determine what the general causes or factors are in addressing the opportunity/gap and then look at what interventions (tools) are appropriate.

This process is elaborated on the next page.
Key Steps in the Conduct of the Performance Analysis:

Know the Business

Understand the client’s business.
What are their objectives?
What are their challenges?
What do they value?

Define the Opportunity / Gap

Document the difference between optimal and actual.
What should happen?
What does happen?
How do you know?
Who wants it solved?

Clarify the Costs

Identify the price of the challenge / problem.
What is lost if nothing is done?
What is gained if we fix it?

Cause Analysis

Causes, Enablers and Obstacles
Question the assumptions and potential solutions.
What is causing the problem?
What will prevent a solution?
What will make a solution easier?

Focus on Key Sources

Find and focus on the people who are close to the problem and have perspective on the issues. We do not try and reach everyone – especially in an initial performance analysis.

Focus on Facts and Results

Look for data, through observations, records, experiences.
What evidence is there?
Is it consistent?
What does it tell us?
Is there more?
Every worker performs within a **Support** system. This system includes some **Direction** and the worker creates some type of output – usually a product or a service. There is typically some internal **Feedback** on how well the job is done, from a supervisor or co-worker.

Outside of the company, the product or service is seen as **Valued Performance** by external customers. In an optimal system, the external clients level of satisfaction is fed back into the company, through **Motivational Consequences**, to the worker. One type of consequence could be a performance bonus.
Table 1: Cause Analysis Worksheet

Table 1 can be used to examine the enabling and restraining forces in the workplace. This factors can be examined against a reasonable performance goal, as determined at the macro level. An example Reasonable Goal could be “To Increase feedback and understanding of required job performance.” For each goal we would determine the Desired Level of Performance and the Present Level of Performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Driving Forces</th>
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<th>Restraining Forces</th>
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<td>Clear Processes &amp; Procedures</td>
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<td>Safe, Organized Environment</td>
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<td>Other incentives</td>
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<td>Motives</td>
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<td>Motives Aligned with Work</td>
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<td>Employees Desire to Perform</td>
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<td>Realistic Expectations</td>
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<td>Recruit, Select the Right People</td>
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<td>Capacity</td>
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<td>Capacity to Learn</td>
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<td>Capacity to do what is Needed</td>
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<td>Recruit, Select the Right People</td>
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<td>Emotional Limitations</td>
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<td>Knowledge &amp; Skills</td>
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<td>Necessary Skills</td>
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<td>Proper Placement</td>
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<td>Cross-trained</td>
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Appendix

Potential Human Performance Interventions

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<tr>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instruction &amp; Training</strong></td>
<td>Face-to-Face / Distance / Networked:</td>
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<td>(potential for informal learning)</td>
<td>Self-Paced Instruction</td>
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<td>Instructor-led Training</td>
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<td>Collaborative Learning</td>
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<td>Problem-based Learning</td>
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<td><strong>Information System Design</strong></td>
<td>EPSS</td>
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<td>(potential for informal learning)</td>
<td>Job Aids</td>
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<td>Expert Systems</td>
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<td>Intranet / Extranet</td>
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<td>Interactive Multimedia</td>
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<td>Online Information</td>
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<td>Communities of Practice</td>
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<td>Social Bookmarking</td>
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<td><strong>Communication Systems</strong></td>
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<td>(potential for informal learning)</td>
<td>Voice mail</td>
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<td>Intranet / Extranet</td>
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<td>Meeting Planning</td>
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<td>Newsletters &amp; Bulletins</td>
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<td>Document Design (Macros)</td>
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<td>Negotiation Systems</td>
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<td><strong>Career Development</strong></td>
<td>Internal Recruitment</td>
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<td>Job Rotation</td>
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<td>Experiential Learning</td>
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<td>Structured Practice</td>
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3 This list is provided for illustration purposes only. It shows the wide range of possible interventions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Type</th>
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| **Human Development System Design** | Health & Wellness Programs  
                      Networking Systems  
                      Tuition Reimbursement  
                      Scholarship Programs  
                      Support for Professional & Public Activities  
                      Literacy Programs  
                      Leadership development Programs |
| **Documentation & Standards**      | Policies  
                      Procedures  
                      Guidelines  
                      Reference Manuals  
                      QA Documents  
                      By-Laws  
                      Articles of Incorporation  
                      Partnership Agreements  
                      Contracts, Letters of Intent, MOU |
| **Ergonomic Design**              | Facilities Design  
                      Tools & Equipment  
                      WC Compliance  
                      Safety Planning |
| **Feedback System Design**        | Identification of Performance Indicators  
                      Competency Models  
                      Performance Information Systems  
                      Client Feedback Systems |
| **Management Science**            | Strategic Planning  
                      Goal Setting  
                      Visioning  
                      Supervision & Management  
                      Marketing Systems  
                      Public Relations  
                      Financial Systems  
                      Problem Solving  
                      Decision Making |
| **Job & Work Flow Design**        | Work Flow Analysis  
                      Job Classification  
                      Work Scheduling  
                      Business Process Engineering |
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<th>Intervention Type</th>
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<tr>
<td>Organisational Design &amp; Development</td>
<td>Team Building</td>
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<td>Incentive &amp; recognition Programs</td>
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<td>Commission Systems</td>
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<td>Selection System Design</td>
<td>Recruiting &amp; Hiring Systems</td>
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