

# Promoting Performance

Performance Matters  
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## Enhancing Expertise in Business, Sport & Life

### On the cutting edge: Think like an expert

We all make decisions. But the decisions made by experts are generally superior to decisions made by others. The good news, according to psychologist Gary Klein, is that most everyone can learn to think like an expert. Here's how:

1. Recognize patterns in familiar events (develop situational awareness)
2. Make fine perceptual discriminations



(identify the important factors in a situation)

3. Recognize typicality and detect anomalies (experts are masters of exploiting anomalies)
4. Mentally simulate future events (to evaluate courses of action) and analyze past

events (to generate explanations and review options)

5. Practice improvising
6. Adapt new ideas into familiar situations.

Source: Klein, G. (1997). Developing expertise in decision making. *Thinking and Reasoning*, 3(4), 337-352.



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### Four keys to communicating with relevance

- Illustrate your point with your listener's experience.
- Be explicit as to how your point relates to your listener's current or future goals.
- Link your point with information already familiar to your listener.
- Reinforce your point using clear, meaningful examples.

### Something Special

"Now, I'm fighting cancer, everybody knows that. People ask me all the time about how you go through your life and how's your day, and nothing is changed for me. I'm a very emotional, passionate man. I can't help it. That's being the son of Rocco and Angelina Valvano. We hug, we kiss, we love. And when people say to me how do you get through life or each



day, it's the same thing. To me, there are three things we all should do every day. We should do this every day of our lives. Number one is laugh. You should laugh every day. Number two is think. You should spend some time in

thought. And number three is, you should have your emotions moved to tears, could be happiness or joy. But think about it. If you laugh, you think, and you cry, that's a full day. That's a heck of a day. You do that seven days a week, you're going to have something special."

Coach Jim Valvano  
accepting the Arthur Ashe  
Courage Award

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### Where experts find answers

If you are an expert in your field, where do you turn for advice, new ideas, or fresh insights? This study examined knowledge sources experts found most useful in improving their professional practice. Using card sorting and semi-structured interviews with 43 nationally prominent golf and tennis instructors, we dis-

covered that experts most often relied on professional experience and their peers to improve their workplace performance. Other knowledge sources cited as significant contributors to improving performance included client conversations, attending conferences, formal education, and reading books and magazines. Several recommendations

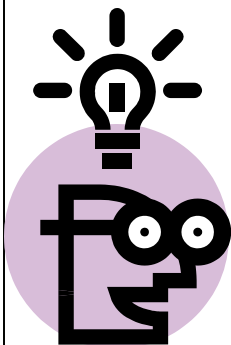
were made to help anyone improve performance:

1. analyze experiences to discover new lessons
2. observe and talk with colleagues
3. seek insights from top performers in your field
4. 4. read.



Source: Schempp, P. (May, 2006). Where experts find answers. Paper presented at the American Society for Training and Development, Dallas, TX.

### Turning Potential into Productivity



Businesses and sport teams make heavy investments in people believed to have 'great potential'. But there are few clues or guides to navigate the tricky course of turning potential into productivity. Dr. Dean Simonton has proposed a model predicting how the output rate of creative products varies during a career. Four principal points:

1. Those with a higher initial

potential will have higher rates of output in their final years.

2. The period of peak productivity depends on the field in which the individual is engaged. For fields with extremely slow rates of forming ideas and elaborating concepts (e.g., engineering, politics, research), productivity peaks will occur late in a career and postpeak declines will be negligible.
3. Individuals who start their creative careers later than normal can expect that

their career peak will be displaced proportionately, and they will probably still be going strong in their last years.

4. The rate of output of senior citizens will be around half that seen at the career peak, but will still exceed what they achieved in the first decade of their careers.

Source: Simonton, D. (1990). Creativity in the later years: Optimistic prospects for achievement. *Gerontologist*, 30, 626-631.

### Mentor Magic

At some point in most everyone's life, we serve as mentors. The higher the level of expertise you achieve in your business, sport or life, the more often you will be looked upon for guidance. It may also be fair to say that in most everyone's life, they can identify at least one person whom they consider a mentor. When

your time comes to mentor, be prepared. A good mentor

- \* Is responsive
- \* Is a good listener
- \* Is open and honest
- \* Is non-judgmental and ethical
- \* Is approachable and available
- \* Is a good problem-solver

- \* Is a good observer
- \* Is patient
- \* Sets expectations
- \* Communicates
- \* Has genuine interest in helping the protégé
- \* Has time and expertise.



Source: Ridout, S. (2006). *PT: Magazine of Physical Therapy*, January, 42-48.

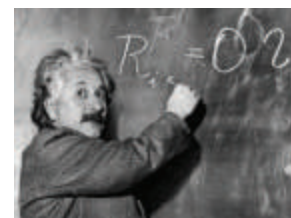
## Seeing the Extraordinary in the Ordinary

“We think of Einstein as one concerned only with the deepest aspects of science. But he saw scientific principles in everyday things to which most of us would give barely a second thought. He once asked me if I had ever wondered why a man’s feet will sink into either dry or completed submerged sand, while sand that is merely damp provides a firm surface. When I could not answer, he offered a simple explanation.

It depends, he pointed out, on *surface tension*, the elastic-skin effect of a liquid surface. This is what

holds a drop together, or causes two small raindrops on a windowpane to pull into one big drop the moment their surfaces touch.

When sand is damp, Einstein explained, there are tiny amounts of water between the grains. The surface tensions of these tiny amounts of water pull all the grains together, and friction then makes them hard to budge. When the sand is dry, there is obviously no water between the grains. If the sand is fully immersed, there is water between the grains, but no *surface* to pull them together.



Albert Einstein

This is not as important as relativity; yet there is no telling what seeming trifle will lead an Einstein to a major discovery.”

Source; Hoffman, B. (1980). My friend, Albert Einstein. In *Unforgettable Characters*, Berkley Books, p.147

## Finding your Optimum Zone

Yuri Hanin, a senior researcher at the Research Institute for Olympic Sports, believes each of us has a unique Individual Zone of Optimal Functioning (IZOF). He defines the IZOF as “optimal emotions (that are) most relevant and appropriate for a particular athlete under specific conditions. Optimal performance state includes both positive and negative emotions reflecting idiosyncratic strategies and skills an individ-

ual athlete might use in recruiting and utilizing resources” (p. 67). In other words, achieving a psychological state to optimize performance (i.e., getting in the zone), is different for each individual and is a matter identifying which emotions help you achieve your best performance. For some, a feeling of emotional calm may promote optimum performance, while a high state of arousal or even anger may spur another to their highest

levels of achievement. Poor performance may be the result of emotions incompatible with your optimum performance and thus block you from recruiting the resources needed for a great performance. To achieve your IZOF, you must first understand the emotions that you personally need to perform you best in a given time and circumstance, and then work to evoke those emotions during performance. Find your zone!

Source: Hanin, Y. (2000). *Emotions in Sport*. Champaign: Human Kinetics.

## Believe yourself worthy



Paulo Coelho

“Oscar Wilde said: ‘Each man kills the thing he loves.’ And it’s true. The mere possibility of getting what we want fills the soul of the ordinary person with guilt. We look around at all those who have failed to get what they want and feel that we do not deserve to get what we want either. We forget about the obstacles we overcame, all the suffering we endured,

all the things we had to give up in order to get this far. I have known a lot of people who, when their personal calling was within their grasp, went on to commit a series of stupid mistakes and never reached their goal—when it was only a step away.

This is the most dangerous of the obstacles because it has a kind of saintly

aura about it; renouncing joy and conquest. But if you believe yourself worthy of the thing you fought so hard to get, then you become an instrument of God, you help the Soul of the World, and you understand why you are here.

Source: Paulo Coelho, (2002). *The Alchemist*. Harper Collins: New York.

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## PerformanceMatters

Performance Matters, Inc.  
809 Commons Park  
Statham, GA 30666  
USA

Phone: 706 540-6372  
FAX: 706 542-3417  
E-mail: [info@PerformanceMattersInc.com](mailto:info@PerformanceMattersInc.com)

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### OUR MISSION

Our firm specializes in developing expertise and getting results for individuals who aspire to lead and achieve—in business or in sport. Performance Matters, Inc. grew from a research group studying experts and expertise at the University of Georgia. Our innovative and cutting-edge research helped elite coaches and players gain exceptional competence and success. Demand came from around the world for speaking engagements, specific research on expertise and tailored programs for promoting outstanding performance in both sport and business. If Performance Matters to you, call us. We will make a difference.

What the superior man seeks is in himself;  
what the small man seeks is in others.

*-Confucius*

Only one person can ultimately judge the  
level of your success. You.

*-John Wooden*

## SUCCESS

To laugh often and much;  
To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children;  
To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends;  
To appreciate beauty,  
To find the best in others,  
To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition;  
To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived  
This is to have succeeded.

*-Ralph Waldo Emerson*



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