Fundamentals of HPI
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Performance

Fundamentals of HPI ................................................................. 1
  Defining Performance.......................................................... 1

The HPI Process Model .......................................................... 4
  Step 1: Performance Analysis ................................................ 4
  Step 2: Cause Analysis .......................................................... 7
  Step 3: Intervention Selection ............................................... 10
  Step 4: Intervention Implementation ...................................... 11
  Step 5: Change Management ............................................... 12
  Step 6: Evaluation of Results ............................................... 13
  Basic HPI Competencies ...................................................... 15

References & Resources .......................................................... 16

Job Aid ...................................................................................... 18

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Info-line is a series of “how-to” reference tools; each issue is a concisely written, practical guidebook that provides in-depth coverage of a single topic vital to training and HRD job performance. Info-line is available by subscription and single copy purchase.

Printed in the United States of America.

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Fundamentals of HPI

Without a doubt, many of the organizations we work for are in need of some improvement. Do any of these examples sound familiar?

A customer service representative (CSR) at a financial services company does not know what mailings went to the customer, so the customer (who is a little irate at this point) has to inform the CSR of new offerings.

The volume of claims at a large insurance company is so astronomical that there is a huge backlog of claims that need to be paid. Customers have to wait months before the company can process their claim.

Your non-profit organization has to struggle to get anything done, and it seems as if one person is doing all of the work.

The programmers at a software company continually produce programs that do not meet the customers’ needs.

Examine what is wrong with your organization:

• Are you losing market share?
• Are you losing customers?
• Are you losing money?

Which of the following do you think will solve your organization’s problems:

• more or better information
• the right people in the right jobs
• additional resources
• more motivated employees
• better incentives
• more highly skilled employees

Most organizations seem to take the “one size fits all” approach to addressing their organization’s performance problems: TRAINING. The problem with haphazardly applying this approach is that training is the right answer only when the problem is caused by a lack of knowledge or skills. A clear understanding must exist that training does not solve problems associated with any of the following:

• inadequate information
• hiring the wrong person for the job
• old, out-dated tools and resources

• poorly designed incentive programs
• poor processes

But what if you had an objective, systematic way to fix what is wrong with your organization? There is a way: human performance improvement (HPI).

This issue of Info-line provides you with a detailed explanation of the HPI process and model. What follows is an overview of the roles associated with HPI and a description of the core competencies required of practitioners who want to join this very exciting and rewarding movement. Finally, this issue offers an overview for making the transition from trainer to HPI consultant.

For more detailed information on the roles associated with HPI and how to transition from training to HPI, consult the following Info-line issues: No. 9702, “From Training to Performance Consulting”; No. 9713, “The Role of the Performance Needs Analyst”; No. 9714, “The Role of the Performance Intervention Specialist”; No. 9715, “The Role of the Performance Change Manager”; No. 9803, “The Role of the Performance Evaluator”; and No. 9606, “Linking Training to Performance Goals.”

Defining Performance

Imagine that you have just returned from attending a concert or play. When asked if you enjoyed the event, you reply, “It was good.” What do you really mean by this statement? Do you want it to mean that the musicians, actors, and support staff were talented or that the basic sheet music or script was entertaining? Or is it that the musicians or actors worked together with the proper leadership from the conductor or the director to produce something that you thought was valuable (and that is why you were willing to spend your hard-earned money on expensive tickets)?

Performance is about factors such as culture, mission, workflow, goals, environment, knowledge, and skills all working together to produce something that is valuable to the consumer. So performance, regardless of the organization that produces the performance (be it a baseball team, software company, girl scout troop, or law firm), is about outputs or results.
When the sheet music or the script has potential, but the musicians or actors just are not talented, the performance fails. Perhaps the musicians or actors are talented individuals, but they just are not working well together. The performance just was not “good.” Performance, therefore, needs to occur on many levels. Geary Rummler, author and well-known performance specialist, suggests that performance needs to occur on three levels:

1. The performer.
2. The process.
3. The organization.

Optimal performance is obtained when all three levels work in harmony. The Three Levels of Performance figure shown at left presents a visual rendition of this process. A breakdown at any one of the levels will prevent optimal performance, thereby requiring some type of planned action to improve performance.

According to Rummler, the organizational level establishes the necessary circumstances for the other levels of performance. When performance is not optimal, examine first the organization’s culture, policies, mission, goals, and operating strategies. These factors delineate the boundaries by which we define processes and jobs.

The process level is where the actual work gets accomplished. When performance is not optimal, examine factors such as workflow, job design, required inputs and outputs, and the performance management procedures to see if these processes actually work and support the organizational goals.

The individual performers within the organization affect the processes. When performance is not optimal, determine if the individual performance goals, knowledge and skill, work environment, availability of support tools, coaching, and feedback support the processes.

Seldom is it true that only one set of factors (organization, process, or performer) are adversely affecting performance. When trying to identify why the performance problem exists, it is critical, therefore, to examine factors at all three levels of performance.

The reason for having a performance improvement need within an organization can usually be linked to one of the following three “trigger events”:

1. Inadequate performance.
2. Introduction of something new (for example, a new process, system, technology, employee, or law).
3. Increased expectations.
What Is Human Performance Improvement?

The concept of human performance improvement (HPI) or human performance technology is not new. In fact, much of the work that is the basis for the current focus on HPI was conducted in the late 1960s and early 1970s by individuals such as Thomas Gilbert, Joe Harless, Robert Mager, and Geary Rummler.

Much like instructional systems development (ISD) is a systematic process used to design and develop training programs, HPI is a systematic process used to address poor performance. In ASTD’s publication Models for Human Performance Improvement, author William Rothwell states:

HPI is the systematic process of discovering and analyzing important human performance gaps, planning for future improvements in human performance, designing and developing cost-effective and ethically justifiable interventions to close performance gaps, implementing the interventions, and evaluating the financial and non-financial results.

**Systematic** means that HPI is approached in an organized, rather than incidental way. It is based on open systems theory, or the view that any organization is a system that absorbs such environmental inputs as people factors, raw materials, capital, and information; uses them in such transformational processes as service delivery or manufacturing methods; and expels them as outputs such as finished goods or customer services. Process is a continuous activity carried out for a purpose.

**Discovering and analyzing** means identifying and examining present and possible future barriers that prevent an organization, process, or individual from achieving desired results. Important implies that priorities are established in the search for improvement opportunities. Importance is influenced by quantity, quality, cost, time, moral or ethical values, or some combination of these elements.

**Human performance** “denotes a quantified result or a set of obtained results, just as it also refers to the accomplishment, execution, or carrying out of anything ordered or undertaken, to something performed or done, to a deed, achievement, or exploit, and to the execution or accomplishment of the work” according to Harold Stolovitch and Erica Keeps in their book, Handbook of Human Performance Technology. Note that the quantifier human should be placed in front of performance to distinguish it from machine, capital, stock, or other forms of performance. Gaps are the differences between actual and desired results in the past, present, or future.

**Planning for future improvements** in HPI is meant to emphasize that HPI work is not focused solely on solving past or present problems; rather, it also can be focused on averting future problems or realizing improvement opportunities.

**Designing and developing cost-effective** and ethically justifiable interventions means finding and formulating optimal or desirable ways of solving past or present human performance problems or planning for future HPI opportunities. The word intervention implies a long-term, evolutionary, and progressive change effort. Cost-effective implies sensitivity to bottom-line improvements by those who perform HPI work. Ethically justifiable implies sensitivity to ethical and moral viewpoints.

**Implementing the interventions** means finding the optimal—most cost efficient and cost effective—way to plan for HPI. Sometimes called deployment, it refers to the installation process for an HPI intervention.

**Evaluating the results** focuses on accountability. Those who do HPI work must always remain keenly aware of the need to gather persuasive evidence of the economic and non-economic value of their efforts.

Adapted from ASTD Models for Human Performance Improvement by William Rothwell, 1996.
Fundamentals of HPI

Inadequate performance results when part of the system breaks down. The organizational level is not producing the structure by which processes can be established. Or, the performers are not able to perform the processes.

Examples can include the following:
- Claims are processed incorrectly.
- The product breaks after the third use.
- The answers provided to customers are wrong.
- Deadlines are missed.

When something new is added or will be added to the organization, a performance opportunity exists. The new factor may affect the organizational, process, or performer level of performance.

Examples include the following:
- A new software package is installed.
- A new employee is hired.
- A new law is passed.

In our competitive work environments, today’s acceptable performance is tomorrow’s unacceptable performance. The organization that proactively identifies the need for an increase in performance will be the organization that beats out its competition.

Examples of proactive behavior include the following:
- Raising quality standards to outperform the competition.
- Increasing sale levels in anticipation of a new rival entering the market.
- Increasing production levels in preparation for launching a new product.

In each circumstance, whether inadequate performance, the introduction of something new, or increased expectations, the HPI process is the same.

If you think of the performance improvement process in the context of your own health, it is easy to understand. When you are not feeling well and you go to the doctor, the physician asks you a number of questions and runs some tests to determine the cause of the problem. Once the cause is established, the physician selects the right treatment and prescribes it. Sometimes the treatment is simple ("take this pill"), but often the treatment involves many steps ("take this pill, drink plenty of fluids, and get plenty of rest").

Once you begin the treatment, you start to feel better. The doctor may even ask you to look for signs of improved health: "If you don’t see a noticeable improvement in two to three days, call me—we could be on the wrong track." As a final step, the doctor sets up a follow-up appointment to ensure that your condition no longer exists. The physician may even order additional tests to compare against the original test.

HPI involves the same steps employed by the doctor. The HPI Process Model (refer to the diagram at right) illustrates the six-step process:

1. Performance Analysis.
2. Cause Analysis.
3. Intervention Selection.
4. Intervention Implementation.
5. Change Management.
6. Evaluation of Results.

Step 1: Performance Analysis

The performance improvement process starts with a two-step analysis phase. Imagine that when you walk into the examining room the doctor takes one look at you and says, “You have an ulcer.” Sounds ludicrous. Why then, in the business environment, do we tend to make quick judgements in our organizations? Look at a simple example:

Sales manager to training manager: “Four of my sales people didn’t meet their sales goals last quarter and I would like to send them to sales training.”
As an HPI specialist you should ask yourself, “How do we know that training is the right answer to the performance problem unless we ask some questions? Listed below are some sample questions to help you get started:

- Do the sales people have the information they need to sell the new product?
- Have the sales people been given new performance goals that emphasize selling the new product?
- What is the sales person’s level of knowledge about the new product?
- What incentives or disincentives are there for selling the new product?
Follow these instructions to use a fishbone diagram for cause analysis.

1. Assemble stakeholders (individual workers, managers, division heads, executives, and so forth).

2. Draw this fishbone diagram on a flipchart or whiteboard.

3. Have stakeholders describe the performance gap in the box shown on the far right. Have stakeholders clarify what is actually happening (what can be seen and measured) and what results are desired.

4. Brainstorm causes of the gap by considering each performance category described in the boxes to the left of the performance gap box. (You will notice that the “bones” on the top of the diagram focus on the individual. The bottom-left “bones” focus on the process, and the bottom-right “bones” focus on the organization.)

5. Assure the group that there are no right or wrong answers. Challenge stakeholders to consider all the “bones.”

6. Record their responses to uncover causes of the performance gap.

Adapted from William J. Rothwell’s ASTD Models for Human Performance Improvement and Tom Gilbert’s Behavioral Engineering Model.
Think of all the money that organizations waste on training, reorganization, or any other intervention because management thought it could not afford to spend the time and money to properly analyze the situation in the first place.

When conducting a performance analysis, you identify and describe past, present, and future human performance gaps. You collect information from key stakeholders (for example, executives, department heads, and line managers) as well as individual performers by asking questions that examine how existing performance compares with the desired performance. Then, you examine documents (such as annual reports or customer surveys) to find the consequences of the performance gap.

Other names for this phase—“performance gap analysis” or “up-front analysis”—refer to the same activity. As with any analysis, you can select a variety of methods to collect the information (such as surveys, interviews, or focus groups). Refer to Info-lines No. 9408, “Strategic Needs Analysis” and No. 8502, “Be a Better Needs Analyst,” to acquire more information on how to conduct a needs analysis.

You will need to answer the following questions as a result of the performance analysis:

- What is the desired performance situation versus the actual situation?
- What is the gap or difference between the actual and desired performance?
- Who is affected by the performance gap? Is it one person, a group, an organization, or a work process?
- When and where did the performance gap first occur, or when is it expected to begin?
- When and where were the symptoms and the consequences of the performance gap first noticed?
- What has the performance gap cost the organization? Can the impact of the performance gap be measured?

The output of the performance analysis phase is a clearly defined problem or opportunity—complete with the existing and desired conditions that surround performance. You may have also noticed that some of the questions presented to ask during the performance analysis are key to evaluating the success of the HPI process. You need to collect concrete examples of the consequences of the performance gap to measure the effects of the HPI process.

**Step 2: Cause Analysis**

Once you have adequately defined the performance gap, you can determine the cause of the gap through a cause analysis. Your goal is to answer one question: Why does the performance gap exist?

You are not simply addressing symptoms; you are getting to the root cause of the gap. First, you need to ask important questions that examine issues related to the organization, the process, and the performer. These questions should include the following issues:

- incentives
- flow of information
- equipment
- employee abilities
- motivation
- work environment
- knowledge and skills

Similarly, you will need to gather your information through a variety of methods. One cause analysis technique uses a fishbone diagram. Refer to the diagram at left for instructions on how to use this analysis technique.

Following are the types of questions you will need to answer as a result of a cause analysis:

- How well do performers see the results of what they do?
- How well are performers rewarded or provided with incentives for performing as desired?
- Are performers penalized for achieving desired work results?
## Types of Interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention Types</th>
<th>Possible Causes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training Interventions</strong>&lt;br&gt;Activities that focus on the acquisition of new knowledge and skills.</td>
<td>• lack of knowledge and skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consultative Interventions</strong>&lt;br&gt;Activities that focus on helping clients to help themselves.</td>
<td>• lack of support and feedback&lt;br&gt;• lack of results and consequences&lt;br&gt;• performance ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Techno-Structural Interventions</strong>&lt;br&gt;Activities that focus on the performer’s physical setting, available tools, or organizational structure.</td>
<td>• lack of rewards and incentives&lt;br&gt;• lack of equipment and tools&lt;br&gt;• environment support through organization structure&lt;br&gt;• performer’s ability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process Interventions</strong>&lt;br&gt;Activities that focus on how the performers complete their work.</td>
<td>• environmental support&lt;br&gt;• ineffective job/process&lt;br&gt;• design&lt;br&gt;• lack of data information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examples</strong></td>
<td><strong>Partners</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• classroom training</td>
<td>• subject matter experts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• on-the-job training</td>
<td>• line supervisors, managers, executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• computer-based training</td>
<td>• technical writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Web-based training</td>
<td>• programmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• job aids</td>
<td>• workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• paper-based self-study</td>
<td>• communication specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• video-based training</td>
<td>• instructional designers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• formal and informal coaching programs</td>
<td>• line supervisors, managers, executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• feedback systems</td>
<td>• H R specialists, generalists, managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• mentoring programs</td>
<td>• survey design experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• recognition programs</td>
<td>• communication specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reward systems</td>
<td>• compensation specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• incentive plans</td>
<td>• organization development experts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• career counseling centers</td>
<td>• employee development staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>• career ladders</td>
<td>• career development specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>• tuition reimbursement</td>
<td>• line supervisors, managers, executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• job rotation</td>
<td>• H R specialists, generalists, managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• promotion systems</td>
<td>• technology specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ergonomic improvements</td>
<td>• information systems staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• work space redesign</td>
<td>• ergonomists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• equipment upgrade</td>
<td>• communication specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• electronic performance support systems</td>
<td>• recruiters and staff specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reorganization</td>
<td>• workflow specialists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• employee selection</td>
<td>• organization development experts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• information systems</td>
<td>• employee development staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• policies and procedures</td>
<td>• career development specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• job redesign</td>
<td>• line supervisors, managers, executives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• competency modeling</td>
<td>• workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• quality systems</td>
<td>• H R specialists, generalists, managers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• documentation systems</td>
<td>• team building experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• communication systems</td>
<td>• information systems staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• management systems</td>
<td>• procedures writers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• team interventions</td>
<td>• communication specialists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• strategists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• workflow specialists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• quality control experts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• organization development experts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• employee development staff</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
• Do the performers have the ability to do the job?
• Are performers given the data, information, or feedback they need to perform at the time they need it?
• Do performers have the support tools and resources they need?

The output of the cause analysis phase is a clearly defined cause or list of causes that you can address by selecting and implementing the appropriate performance intervention. Also, you need to make sure that you have a clear sense of the target group that is involved in the cause.

**Step 3: Intervention Selection**

After determining root causes of the performance problem or performance opportunity, you must select the interventions that will address the situation. According to Wendell French and Cecil Bell in *Organizational Development: Behavioral Science Interventions for Organization Improvement*, an intervention is “a set of structured activities in which selected organizational units (target groups or individuals) engage in a task or a sequence of tasks where the task goals are related directly or indirectly to organizational improvement.”

Before starting, determine the depth to which you will attack the problem or opportunity. Most performance problems or opportunities exist on several levels (organization, process, or performer). As you delve deeper, the potential benefits increase but so do the risks. Do not tackle more than you can deliver. In addition, you need to keep in mind that most performance improvement requires a combination of interventions.

To address the performance situation, you may need to implement a series of interventions. Perhaps you need an intervention for each of the following situations:
• to establish performance
• to maintain the established performance
• to extinguish incorrect performance

Begin the intervention selection process through divergent thinking. First, list all of the interventions that you can think of that might solve the root cause of the performance gap. Refer to the Types of Interventions chart on the previous pages for a categorized list of possible interventions. At this point in the process, do not worry about how plausible these interventions are—just make sure the intervention addresses the cause. Be sure to relate possible interventions to the target group. For example, if the target group is an individual, do not list interventions that only work with groups. (See the chart Target Groups sidebar at right.)

Next to the possible interventions, note the following elements associated with each:
• costs
• benefits
• potential obstacles

Also try to find opportunities where one intervention might solve two or more root causes of the problem. Always consider the organization’s culture: Which interventions could be effective without disrupting too many of the organization’s norms and values? Pare down the list by eliminating ideas that have very little chance of success or are prohibitively expensive. Do not be too hasty—sometimes the craziest ideas start to have merit when considered carefully. At the end of the selection process, be sure that you have selected at least one intervention for each of the root causes.

Answer the following questions that result from the intervention selection process:
• What will a successful intervention be able to do?
• What are the costs and benefits associated with each intervention?
• Will one intervention address more than one cause?
• What are the concerns of stakeholders toward these interventions?
• What will be required to gain buy-in?
• How well do these interventions match what you know about the organization’s culture?

The output of the intervention selection phase is a design document that includes intervention require-
ments, intervention components, and intervention specifications. You will need an action plan that lists the major tasks included for each intervention, the resources required to implement each intervention, and a plan for incorporating stakeholder support.

**Step 4: Intervention Implementation**

At this point, you are ready to help the organization implement the selected intervention. Implementation involves four parts: intervention, organization, leadership, and individuals affected.

**Intervention**

During the implementation phase, watch how people within the organization respond to the intervention. Observe for the following:

- Is it easy to implement? If not, you may need to find a way to implement it in stages.
- Is the intervention similar to past practices? You need to find a way to communicate the similarities to past success stories.
- Can the intervention be modified? Users like to make something their own. A successful implementer does not care if the user makes slight changes to the intervention, as long as it is still effective.
- Does the intervention have any social impact? Users do not want their relationships with other people to change. If it requires change, you will want to communicate these changes early.

**Organization**

An intervention will be successful only if the organization is ready for it. Prior to full-blown implementation, look for the following:

- Are the interventions and the organization’s culture in sync? If not, be prepared to fail.
- Does the strategic plan support the intervention? If so, communicate the similarities. If not, stop implementation until you find a way that it can.
- Are there external conditions that will influence the organization negatively? If so, consider postponing the implementation until you are prepared to deal with the external conditions.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target Groups</th>
<th>Intervention Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intrapersonal</strong></td>
<td>The performance is the function of an individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>career counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>work space redesign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal</strong></td>
<td>The performance is a function of the interaction of two or more individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>job rotation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>conflict resolution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>role clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intragroup</strong></td>
<td>The performance is a function of the interaction among team and group members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>team building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>process re-design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>rewards systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intergroup</strong></td>
<td>The performance is a function of the interaction of two or more groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>process clarification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>reorganization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*</td>
<td>strategic planning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Leadership**

Organizational leadership can make or break an intervention. Perhaps the most important aspect of the implementation effort is the sponsor. When identifying and selecting a sponsor, look for someone who fits the following description:

- has the power to validate change within an organization
- is well-respected in the organization and believes in the suggested changes
- has the time to support the effort by writing letters, kicking-off training sessions, providing rewards for good performance, and so forth
- is someone you are comfortable working with—if he or she is not appropriate, you should be prepared to find another sponsor
Finally, you need to consider the individuals affected by the intervention. Below are some items for consideration:

- Some people adapt to change more quickly than others.
- You need to understand the characteristics of your audience to implement an intervention successfully.
- Are other changes occurring at the same time? If too many things are happening at once, you may need to change your time frames.

Note, however, that you are not necessarily responsible for implementing the selected intervention. Your responsibility is to identify the talent and resources needed to implement the interventions. The individuals who actually implement the intervention may be people within your organization (such as members of the human resources department, subject matter experts [SMEs], managers, or trainers). Or, you may get the help of outside consultants who specialize in compensation, ergonomics, management development, or computer programming.

The output of the intervention implementation phase is the occurrence of the actual intervention, such as the following examples:

- a new organizational structure
- an updated software program
- an incentive system
- a training program

A well-planned implementation is necessary for you to track the changes taking place as a result of your efforts.

**Step 5: Change Management**

During the change management phase, identify how people are reacting to the intervention, and address these reactions. Some things to consider are as follows:

- Although change management is positioned late in the HPI model, it is critical to begin thinking about change issues very early in the process.
• It is not necessary to have 100 percent of the population in favor of the change. It is actually beneficial to have some doubters.

• All of the planning in the world will not eliminate the discomfort associated with change that results from implementing interventions. As change agent, you need to anticipate the discomfort and make plans on how to address it.

Diane Dormant, in Introduction to Performance Technology, suggests incorporating the following change management strategies:

• Be a spokesperson for the change. Write newsletter articles or create other media events that introduce the change.

• Be credible and positive about the change. Enlist the help of the sponsor or key stakeholders.

• Empathize with the change concerns of the target group. Answer their questions and provide clear, reliable information.

• Emphasize the strengths of the intervention and its changes, and acknowledge the weaknesses too. Again, enlist the help of the sponsor or key stakeholders.

• Provide success images through relevant examples or successful demonstration of the change. If possible, promote discussion with others who have successfully changed.

• Provide incentives or rewards for changed behavior.

• Provide feedback and status reports as reinforcement and support for the change.

Many models represent the stages people go through as they experience change. Several Info-line issues address the change management process. Refer to Info-lines No. 9715, “The Role of the Change Manager,” and No. 9904, “Change Management,” if you need additional help in managing your change effort.

The output of the change management phase is an on-going status report that tracks the following items:

• how well the intervention is working

• effect of the intervention on the target group

• modifications made to the original plan to address new concerns

Step 6: Evaluation of Results

During the final phase of the HPI process, determine how well the intervention met its desired outcome. To do this, you need to evaluate the intervention itself and the overall performance problem or opportunity. As with the change management phase, it is critical that you begin thinking about evaluation issues very early on in the process. Below are some issues to think about when focusing on evaluation:

• Be sure you are measuring against valid business results. An “increase in employee morale” is not a business result. A 10 percent decrease in production errors is a business result.

• Be sure you identify the desired business results prior to intervention selection.

• Be sure that the date you need to conduct your evaluation is available to you before you agree on how the intervention will be evaluated.

• An obvious link should exist between the selected intervention, the optimal performance, and the desired business result.

• Focus your HPI evaluation on the higher levels of Donald Kirkpatrick’s four levels of evaluation (namely, reaction, learning, behavior, and results).

As with analysis, much has been written about training evaluation. If you need additional help with your evaluation efforts, you may want to refer to other Info-line issues (such as No. 9801, “Benchmarking”; No. 9705, “Essentials for Evaluation”; No. 9813, “Level 1 Evaluation”; No. 9814,
## HPI Process, Roles, and Skills

### HPI Process Model
- Performance Analysis
- Cause Analysis
- Intervention Selection
- Intervention Implementation
- Change Management
- Evaluation of Results

### HPI Roles
- Analyst
- Intervention Specialist
- Change Manager
- Evaluator

### HPI Skills
- Compare actual and ideal performance.
- Prepare surveys using open-ended and closed questions.
- Identify knowledge and skill requirements.
- Break down components of larger whole.
- Examine work environments for issues or characteristics.
- Interpret performance information.
- Select interventions that address root causes.
- Forecast the effects of interventions.
- Assess relationships among interventions.
- Identify critical business issues and changes.
- Set, communicate, and achieve goals.
- Determine how an organization should address causes.
- Identify communication networks.
- Understand group dynamics.
- Observe and communicate interactions and changes.
- Facilitate change.
- Measure difference between actual and ideal performance.
- Assess how results match intervention intentions.
- Assess impact of interventions on organizational culture.
- Find ways to continuously improve.
- Collect information and feed it back accurately and clearly.

Adapted from ASTD Models for Human Performance Improvement by William Rothwell, 1996.
“Level 2 Evaluation”; No. 9815, “Level 3 Evaluation”; No. 9816, “Level 4 Evaluation”; and No. 9805, “Level 5 Evaluation: ROI”). As you read these Info-line issues, remember that you need to work with the parts of the models that focus on measuring results.

The output of the evaluation of results phase is a well-documented account of the changes that took place in the organization with an emphasis on the benefits achieved as a result of the HPI process.

Basic HPI Competencies

Before leaping into the world of HPI, you may want to examine your own skill and knowledge level. William Rothwell in ASTD Models for Human Performance Improvement provides a detailed description of the roles, competencies, and outputs associated with the performance consultant. He begins by listing the core competencies associated with practitioners of HPI.

How do you rate yourself in relationship to these capabilities? From the following list, check the core competencies that you possess, and look for ways to improve in the areas in which you feel you lack some capabilities:

- industry awareness
- leadership skills
- interpersonal relationship skills
- technological awareness and understanding
- problem-solving skills
- systems thinking and understanding
- performance and understanding
- knowledge of interventions
- business understanding
- organization understanding
- negotiating/contracting skills
- buy-in/advocacy skills
- coping skills
- ability to see “big picture”
- consulting skills

Rothwell also defines competencies for the separate roles effected by an HPI practitioner. Refer to the HPI Process, Roles, and Skills chart at left for a visual reference.

Moving to Performance Improvement

Much has been written about the transition from training to HPI. Webster’s Dictionary defines “transition” as the “passage from one place, condition, or stage to another.” We all know that a caterpillar transitions to a butterfly and a tadpole transitions to a frog. The idea that training professionals need to “transition” to HPI professionals is both scary and misleading.

The misleading part of the transition is the thought that an increased need for HPI specialists will eliminate the need for skilled instructors. While it is certainly true that HPI is not about a new way of training employees, it is also true that an organization’s need to train its employees will never be eliminated. It follows logically that the need for skilled instructors will never be eliminated. Think about it: Did the growth in the need for skilled instructional designers eliminate the need for skilled instructors? The apprehensive part of the transition is the thought that to be an HPI specialist, you need to be an expert in all the possible interventions.

Again, look at the role of an instructional designer. A skilled instructional designer knows how to partner with SMEs to design and develop a training program for which he or she is not a content expert. HPI specialists also need to partner with experts within a specific discipline to implement appropriate interventions.

A better way to look at the movement toward HPI is as an “expansion.” Again using Webster’s, expansion is defined as the “act of increasing the range, scope, volume, size, etc. of.” This means that we, as HPI specialists, need to be prepared to offer more than just a training solution in our efforts to help our clients improve their individual and organizational performance.
References & Resources

Articles


Books


Info-lines


— —. “From Training to Performance Consulting.” No. 9702.

— —. “The Role of the Performance Evaluator.” No. 9803.

— —. “The Role of the Performance Intervention Specialist.” No. 9714.


— —. “Level 2 Evaluation.” No. 9814.


— —. “Level 5 Evaluation: ROI.” No. 9805.


HPI Process Checklist

Use this checklist as you advance through the phases of the performance improvement process.

**Phase 1: Conduct a Performance Analysis**

**Technique:** Use a variety of methods (such as interviews, focus groups, and surveys) to determine the performance gap. Answer the following questions:

- ☐ What is the desired performance versus what is actually happening?
- ☐ What is the difference (gap) in performance?
- ☐ Who is affected?
- ☐ What is the impact?

**Output:** A clearly defined problem or opportunity, complete with conditions that surround the performance and concrete measurements that can be used in the evaluation phase.

**Phase 2: Conduct a Cause Analysis**

**Technique:** Use a variety of methods (such as a fishbone diagram) to determine why the performance gap exists. Consider all of the causes that may apply, such as the following:

- ☐ knowledge
- ☐ motivation
- ☐ rewards
- ☐ skills
- ☐ expectations
- ☐ incentives
- ☐ tools
- ☐ performer’s ability
- ☐ consequences
- ☐ environmental support
- ☐ feedback
- ☐ results

**Output:** A clearly defined list of causes that includes the target group involved.
Phase 3: Select, Design, and Develop Interventions

**Technique:** Use the following guideline to help determine intervention requirements:

- What results should be seen?
- What is important to stakeholders?
- What are limitations to budget, time, and resources?
- Brainstorm possible interventions and then choose appropriate interventions based on benefits and advantages versus costs and disadvantages.

**Hint:** More than one intervention may be required to establish and maintain correct performance while extinguishing incorrect performance.

- Create a project plan that includes major tasks, resources required, and timing/dates for each intervention.
- Develop a pilot intervention and test it, prior to producing the final intervention.

**Output:** A selection/design document that includes intervention components, major tasks, resources required, and timing. A development project plan that indicates development dates, pilot tests, and revision time.

Phase 4: Implement the Intervention

**Technique:** Use the following strategy to implement an intervention that affects the four parts of the implementation phase: intervention, organization, leadership, and individuals.

- Gather the implementation team and gain support from the intervention sponsor.
- Determine implementation strategy.
- Prepare the implementation team, target group, and organization by clarifying expectations.
- Identify possible intervention implementation weaknesses (such as those listed below) and create strategies to address the weaknesses.
  - The intervention is hard to learn.
  - The external workload increased.
  - Users were not involved in the process.

**Output:** An implemented intervention (such as a new computer system, reorganization, a new process, a training program, or an incentive system).
Phase 5: Manage Change

Technique: Using the statements below, identify how people are reacting to the change, and address those reactions.

- Identify where the target group is in the change process.
- Determine what strategy to use to address their reaction to the change stages:
  - Be a spokesperson for the intervention or change.
  - Provide clear, reliable information about the intervention or change.
  - Provide incentives or rewards.

Output: An on-going status report (often newsletter articles, videos, or peer discussions) of how well the intervention is working, the effect on the target group, and modifications made.

Phase 6: Evaluate the Results

Technique: Use the following strategy to evaluate how well the intervention met its desired outcome.

- Reaction: Use an intervention satisfaction survey.
- Learning: Use assessments, interviews, focus groups, or surveys to determine if “they got it.”
- Behavior: Use observations, interviews, focus groups, or surveys to determine if the performance gap no longer exists.
- Results: Use observations, interviews, documents, or surveys to determine if the impact of the performance gap no longer exists.

Output: A report of the measurable changes taking place in the organization with an emphasis on the benefits associated with the HPI process.