

THE PERFORMANCE FACTOR BY PAT MACMILLAN

A Paper

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The Performance Factor is written around a model that describes high performance teams. This paper applies the details of the book to two current situations for the author. The first includes the requirement to develop a technical management approach to support a distributed team of high end technical experts in solving agency-specific mission problems. The second includes the requirement to prepare a technical proposal as part of a formal source selection process for award of a 7-year contract. The agency's challenge includes the technical and administrative burden of coordinating over a twenty contracts that currently provide technical expert support related to solving agency-defined problems that are considered directed tasks (requiring team solutions). This places an extensive and unnecessary weight onto the government team to execute a number of duplicative contract administrative actions.

The author currently provides similar work to a separate government agency and his company directly supports both organizations with technical expertise and direct contracts. This acquisition is a strategic initiative that will include over 30 separate subcontractors teaming together to provide overall support and necessary technical expertise. Our company will lead the teaming effort.

The Performance Factor provides key details about unlocking the secrets of high performance teams and includes three parts. Part One is *New Century, New Rules, No New Rulebook* and describes the business environment today that makes team execution important for organizational and mission success. Part Two is *Characteristics of a High Performing Team* and describes the six characteristics in detail, their importance to team effectiveness and how they

can be applied. Part Three is *Turning Principle into Practice: Building the Team* and explores the application of these principles from both an individual and organizational perspective. I appreciate Pat MacMillan's observation that the insights in the book "do not require organizational experts for implementation but rather study, practice, and a liberal dose of common sense as you adapt them to the needs of your specific team."

MacMillan describes the organization of the 21st century must offer the highest levels of quality, service and value in order to survive. This translates to company qualities that include (1) Flexibility, speed, agility and responsiveness; (2) Fast, high quality decisions; (3) Ongoing learning and exceptional creativity and innovation; and (4) Quick, precise and consistent execution.

MacMillan asserts the team structure is the most effective way to best achieve these results. This sounds straight forward, however unclear tasks, ill-defined roles, inadequate processes, failing relationships and awful communications all make this a challenge. The bottom line is that teams and teamwork reflect a fundamental shift in how organizations approach work. This situation directly applies to problem solving with the agency.

Teamwork is an organizational philosophy whereas teams are specific and discrete organizational units. The definition of a team is a group of people committed to a common purpose who choose to cooperate in order to achieve exceptional results. The purpose of a team is to accomplish an objective and to do so at *exceptionally* high levels of performance. Exceptional means synergistic from the Greek work *synergos* meaning "working together". It reflects that output of results is greater than the individual parts. (Chapter 2)

Teamwork is cooperation at its highest level, and the level of cooperation drives the level of results. Three key factors that impede these results include role definition, ineffective processes and communication.

The Characteristics of a High Performing Team: High performance teams have six characteristics that allow them to consistently achieve exceptional levels of results: (1) Common Purpose; (2) Crystal Clear Roles; (3) Accepted Leadership; (4) Effective Processes; (5) Solid Relationships; and (6) Excellent Communication. (Chapter 3)

Common Purpose: A clear, common, compelling task that is important to the individual team members is the single biggest factor in team success. This is often driven by the Significant Problem (SP) [vague term intentionally used]. Aligning the team mission to the SP includes making sure it is clear, relevant, significant, achievable and urgent. (Chapter 4)

Crystal clear roles: Clear roles characterize high performing teams. That does not translate to an organizational hierarchy defined by lines of authority, chains of command, channels of communication or spans of control—rather it reflects the proper coordination of tasks, encouraging initiative, delegating decision making and reducing formal checks and controls. Said more succinctly, an effective team structure is defined by clear roles that ensure proper coordination of tasks, appropriate insight on status and clear authority to operate within roles that support the SP. This establishes a level of interdependence and cooperation. Team members must not only understand the roles of other team members, but must also appreciate the unique contribution of those roles. For effectiveness, roles should be clear, complete, compatible, complementary and consensual. (Chapter 5)

Accepted Leadership: Leadership in the team environment includes the authority to mobilize staff and set constraints. It balances the need to provide just the right amount of

structure in an innovation (e.g. unstructured) environment. Compliance results in acceptable performance whereas commitment leads to exceptional performance. This is based on focused effort, initiative, creativity and commitment. Successful team leaders have the responsibility to ensure the problem gets solved. This sometimes includes the unique task of facilitating a shift of task leadership within the team as the solution progresses. (Chapter 6)

Effective Processes: A team can be no more effective than its processes and the ability of the team to execute them well. There are two types of processes that apply—work implementation processes and thinking processes. Work implementation processes are core processes to accomplish the team mission whereas thinking processes involve team problem solving dynamics, often very specific to the situation. (Chapter 7)

Solid Relationships: Solid relationships involve the team dynamics for synergy born out of the differences and technical acumen between team members. Diversity in expertise and roles fosters creativity against goals, decisions, problems and opportunities. Trust defines effective team relationships and is fostered by character and motives. High levels of cooperation are enabled by elements of trust, acceptance, respect, understanding, and courtesy. (Chapter 8)

Effective communication: Effective communication enables a team to achieve exceptional results. It is not the transmission of information, but the receipt and understanding and action based on the sender's intent. Clear communication leads to constructive conflict that fosters five distinct phases of interaction. They include clarification of the facts, collaboration, creativity, consensus and commitment. (Chapter 9)

These elements are factored into the technical approach planned and outlined in Appendix 1. Some specific tactics and strategies to prepare the overall proposal under a tight timeline are listed in Appendix 2.

Appendix 1: Developing an Effective Technical Management Approach to Present in the Proposal

Use of *The Performance Factor* will include adapting the details outlined in the book against the stated goals, objectives and details as outlined in the Statement of Work and solicitation documents.

Common Purpose: The proposal will consider five levels of tasking and support that will be expected of the team in execution. They are derived from the SOW details.

Level		Oversight	Task Type	Problem Definition
1	Strategic	Leadership	Directed	SP/Other
2	Tactical	Stakeholder	Directed	SP/Other
3	Functional Area	GPM	Directed	SP
4	Discipline	GPM	Assigned	SOW tasks/disciplines
5	Ad Hoc	GPM	Assigned	SOW tasks/disciplines

Clear Roles: The use of Functional Areas provide the basis for a description of roles. As the underlying structure of the SOW, these areas also include unique technical disciplines that reflect a range of complementary and sometimes overlapping technical support options.

Advanced Frameworks and Tool Development primarily supports the other two technical areas.

Accepted Leadership: Government Team Managers provide leadership in the team environment that includes the authority to mobilize staff and set constraints. Within the team, staff members from the three different Functional Areas will provide task leadership or support, as necessary. Depending on the problem being addressed, it could include one or a combination of these Functional Areas.

Effective Processes: This includes the Directed Task process that defines the problem solving process directed by the government. Execution (Thinking) processes are the process frameworks that facilitate problem solving and issue resolution and reflect team

execution that will be an emphasis for the contract technical approach. They are less defined, but more important within the context of the Directed Task process.

The Directed Task process includes the following six steps: (1) SP definition; (2) Expert Assessment; (3) Team Execution; (4) Results and Feedback; (5) Reporting; and (6) Metrics. Thinking processes are the internal coordination necessary within the SP definition to facilitate coordination among functional areas and collaboration among other organizations and agencies.

Solid Relationships: This dynamic will be reflected in the plan, but team dynamics will be an ongoing task. In the proposal, our emphasis will not include replacing current processes (sometimes dysfunctional), but enhancing the current operational / development environment. We are not going to focus on current weaknesses, but enhancing the obvious strengths within the organization and details as outlined in the statement of work.

Excellent Communication: This will be addressed in both for formal Directed Task process where the collection of metrics is needed as well as an assessment of overall mission effectiveness. Beyond the details of the Directed Task, both communication and collaboration will be emphasized (due to specific objectives identified by the customer). Significant effort is planned in proposal development to foster collaboration and communication. The proposal will reflect the use of content management and workflow tools in support of coordinating work, tracking and statusing tasks, reporting of results, assessing impact, and accumulating metrics to trace resources against specific mission areas.

Appendix 2: Executing and Effective Technical Management Team for Preparing the Proposal

Chapter 14 – *Turning Principle into Practice: Building the Team* includes an example led by Mary Taylor to lead a Task Force for her company. Mary is already overworked, but has no choice but to take on this strategic requirement. This describes my situation in supporting a strategic proposal for my current company. Mary’s strategy for implementation of this short term task is listed on pages 256 – 258. I am modifying my approach to leverage these ideas.

Individual orientation: Meet with individual contributors and key technical volume authors to provide detailed expectations and outline their role in the process.

Team orientation: This process has been ongoing with the requirement to develop a formal presentation (finalized last week) that reflects the overall company/team experience and competence with this customer supporting the mission tasks. For team unity/symbols, I am providing members with personal face masks for planning and writing.

Kickoff session: Mary’s effectiveness was enhanced by a series of team development/planning sessions that include an outside facilitator. I plan to use the expert proposal manager’s kickoff for the technical/management volume to outline a more detailed plan for team assignments and authoring tasks. This will include an overall strategy not normally included in this type of session, but available since I have developed the strategy outlined in the first part of this paper.

Ongoing, day-to-day development: I will support daily tag ups with detailed requirements and status of the technical volume that align with the overall proposal development strategy. I also plan to develop a task tracking mechanism that can capture and track actions associated contributors that can be shared with the group.