



## Perform Or Perish: Coaching As Competitive Advantage

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Performance yields production. Production is a fundamental measure of professional viability and value in organizations. We are judged on the quantity and quality of our performance and production. Performance is the product of execution. Performance is the integration of complex motivations and actions interacting to produce behaviors favorable to our achieving desired results. However, the behaviors

necessary to achieve desired results may not be accessible to us.

This can be a disturbing notion. Frequently, when presented with evidence of inadequate performance, we react emotionally, informing ourselves that the data is incorrect. Moreover, we may forcefully reaffirm that nothing will stop us from achieving our goals. While belief and commitment are key drivers in goal achievement, they cannot substitute for the behaviors and performance necessary to achieve desired results. Sadly, when the gap between actual and necessary performance is significant, desired results are rendered unachievable. As a consequence, the perform or perish equation is introduced.

Coaching can influence performance. A qualified coach can be an objective, evidence-based evaluator of performance and potential. As neutral, external observers, coaches can collect and analyze performance data and provide unbiased feedback. Additionally, through the use of select performance assessments, coaches can help craft performance enhancement plans focused on improving performance.

This seems like a rationale and responsible; right? Wrong! Often, when confronted with performance issues, we construct realities favoring our desires. We distort fact and bend logic to suit our perspectives and purposes. Our perspectives skew the evidence and we reject it, creating conditions that may be professionally detrimental. This rejection undermines our acquisition of insight, in turn hindering personal and professional growth.

Let's explore several perceptual errors people make that distort their perception.

### Perceptual Distortion

Frequently, we distort perception to accommodate perspective. When experiencing performance issues, we may make assumption concerning evaluators' abilities and motivations. To make sense of these evaluations, we may reduce objectivity and increase subjectivity in order to support a positive perspective of the performance feedback. Perceptual distortions distort our view of reality, detract from goal achievement, and enable under-performance, in turn low to non-achievement. Dr. Jean Gordon, professor of human resource management at Capella University in Minneapolis, Minnesota states "The influence of perceptual

distortions on individuals' perceptions of their performance can be significant. Superior and poor performance are equally subject to distortion resulting in unrealistic expectations concerning performance and expected results."

### Expectancy

Expectancy anticipates others to living up to our expectations. There are two types of expectancy; Self-Fulfilling Prophecy and Selective Perception. In Self-Fulfilling Prophecy, we expect others to act in a certain way. When we behave towards others in ways we expect them to behave, they will often act as we've expected. Our behaviors create the situations we expected resulting in predictable performance outcomes and reinforced perceptions. In Selective Perception, we selectively filter information in order to see and hear what we desire. As a result, poor performance can be rationalized inhibiting objective analysis of performance gaps.

### Projection

Projection is the tendency to blame our problems and difficulties on others. Projection disables accountability; it's a defense mechanism focused on shifting responsibility for our behaviors, especially poor performance to others. Uncurbed, projection can undermine performance, hinder goal achievement, and ravage career potential.

### Stereotyping

Stereotyping standardizes our perceptions of a group disregarding qualities of its individuals. It is an effort in consistency; assuming people are alike by virtue of their group association. We construct categories of people, places, and things in order to minimize the amount of information-processing necessary to organize our worldview. Stereotyping influences how we think and behave. While it may be useful in organizing broad characteristics of groups, it can be detrimental if we allow it to distort our views of others, in turn influence our actions and performance.

### Coaching as Competitive Advantage

Coaches can help identify and reduce perceptual error. Their objective analysis of performance data can enable us to make more informed decisions concerning the viability of our goals and ability to achieve them. Informed decision-making can influence the result of the perform or perish equation. Gain competitive personal and professional advantage. Get coached and perform to potential. ■

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