



The 10 Principles of Professional High Performance

- Functional Expertise
- Commitment/Sense of Responsibility
- Effectiveness/Efficiency
- Precision/Striving for Excellence/Attention to details
- High Productivity/Agility
- Initiative/Proactivity/Self Driving Force
- Fulfillment of the Promised/Deadlines/Tasks
- Excellent Communication
- Team Spirit/Good Interpersonal Relationship
- Stability/Resilience to Pressure

by Patrick Dorell

There are 10 essential elements that characterize the professionals of a high performance organization. The combination of these elements is the engine that drives the organization and makes it operate at a high level and with excellence in all departments.

In this e-book we will describe each of these criteria:

• **Functional Expertise**

This is a basic criterion of any professional, that is, it is fundamental that the individual master the techniques that are inherent to his activity. For example, an accountant needs to be aware of accounting principles, a graphic designer needs to know the programs with which to create his arts, a bricklayer needs to know how to prepare the cement to lay the bricks. At first glance this criterion seems very obvious and intuitive. However, when evaluating with a little more attention the reality of countless companies and organizations, it is noticed that very often there are substantial failures in this regard. It is up to the company to be very attentive when hiring the professionals and seek to have an accurate diagnosis of the actual technical training of the same. Once hired with the purpose to carry out the respective activity in question, the company is expected to ensure the continued technical development of the employee if this is necessary to fully meet new demands not previously planned.

• **Commitment / Sense of Responsibility**

Being committed to your job and professional activity is a characteristic that is often linked to personality traits, education and sometimes even culture. What we mean is that this criterion often transcends the professional environment and is linked to the individual's way of facing life itself as a whole. If the person is “committed to the cause”, he will probably be so in many aspects of his life and not only on the professional side. Being committed is also related to the legitimate desire to try to always do the best you can, to do your best in that situation that you are exposed to. It does not matter if we are talking about a mega project that involves numerous steps and processes or if it is something simple like changing a lamp at home. The sense of responsibility is the intrinsic feeling that the individual carries that leads him to consider the task as serious and worthy of his closest attention.

• **Efficacy / Efficiency**

These two concepts go hand in hand and are widely diffused in the corporate world. Efficacy is related to achieving the proposed results. Efficiency is related to using the appropriate methods to achieve the proposed results, that is, to do it the right way. For example, a truck that is old, slow moving and consumes a lot of fuel can be effective to

transport furniture from São Paulo to Florianópolis, after all the furniture will reach the destination. But this truck will not have a good efficiency because it will have spent a lot of gas and a lot of time to reach its goal. In the corporate world, it is important to be both Effective and Efficient, that is, to achieve the established goals and use the appropriate methods. An accountant needs to make the correct tax calculation and in this task, he needs to use the adequate spreadsheet that takes less time and requires less effort to handle it.

• **Precision / Search for Excellence / Attention to Details**

This criterion is perhaps one of the most controversial of this list. Many companies care about agility, proactivity, dynamism and end up not giving due attention to accuracy and attention to small details. One of the secrets to achieving high-end performance and results is to accurately embody in your values the determination to "do it well" and the "pursuit of excellence" at all. Again, we have cultural aspects to insert in this equation to know that in some countries or societies "to improvise a way, any way" is common and there is a relatively high tolerance for the "regular" standard. Phrases such as "let's not forget that the excellent the enemy of the good" are often used as justifications for the poor execution of things. But a high-performance organization simply does not accept this kind of thinking. In it, you can exactly ally both: do with agility and at the same time do it well done!

• **High Productivity / Agility**

This is perhaps the most emblematic criterion of what characterizes a high performance organization. We all know that sloppiness and slowness have a negative impact on all aspects in which they are present. A slow company loses ground to competitors, loses money due to low productivity and negatively infects every work environment. We are in the era of speed. The knowledge age has already been overcome because today 90% of the information is available to everyone due to globalization and the internet. On the other hand, the constructive pieces and creative cogs of ideas float in this environment to which all have access. But the companies that harvest them first and foremost implement first are those that will win in this increasingly hostile competitive environment. You need to think fast, plan fast and act fast on the precise implementation. Only companies that have speed as an intrinsic aspect of behavior will be able to do this. For visualization, think of a nest of creative, well-directed ants.

• Initiative / Proactivity / Self Driving-Force

This criterion is typical of people who have entrepreneurial spirit. But it is not exclusive to these people. In reality, initiative and driving-force are characteristics also related to leadership potential and decision-making ability. A high performing organization requires that employees have a certain degree of independence of action and can perform their tasks as well as seek out new initiatives without continually needing to be pushed or motivated or encouraged by their leaders or bosses. Rather, there is a clear direction, clarification and follow-up of the scopes, goals and objectives of each specific department and function to ensure that the proactivity stays in line with the company's focus. But on a day-to-day basis it is very important that people be active in their initiatives to reach and even surpass these goals. By analogy, the flight plan needs to be very well detailed and the fuselage well built, but the turbines must have their own engines to ensure the propulsion required for a successful trip.

• Fulfillment of the Promised/ Deadlines / Tasks

This criterion has a very strong influence on the construction / destruction of credibility. Fulfilling what has been promised is essential to developing a healthy process between supplier and customer, either externally to the company or even internally among employees. In addition, it is essential for processes to flow smoothly and without stress. It turns out that there is often no planning at the moment to promise something to another person. In this way, the individual ends up promising something without proper evaluation if it will really be possible to carry out all the necessary actions for the delivery within the agreed period. Often it is not checked whether information is available and if not, with whom and how to obtain it. It is often perceived that the promise can not be fulfilled. However, the deadline is passed and feedback is given only after the task has been finalized effectively. Often this return ends up happening even days after the agreed due date. The correct and professional way is to alert the person when it becomes clear that the agreed date (or promised content) will not be met; And negotiate a new deadline and content, now rather well planned. So, the client (the person to whom it has promised something) has a chance to try to reorganize and redo his own planning. But there is the influence of a psychological / cultural aspect in some people and societies. The one that the person finds unpleasant and "boring" to feedback to the other person with "negative" news, that is, that the original term will not be fulfilled. Well, much more annoying and unpleasant will be the fact of simply absent from this responsibility generating doubts, uncertainties and negative impacts on the client. It is also important to note that many people simply have the pernicious habit of leaving everything to the last hour. So why start a task now if I only have to deliver it in 5 days? This characteristic is related to the tendency that some people have to focus on

doing only what is essential at that very moment to move on to the next moment putting into practice the law of minimum effort.

• **Excellent Communication**

Communication has the ability to open and close doors in the corporate world. Just as excellent communication can provide agility, precision and fluidity to the processes and as a consequence is essential as a facilitator for high business performance, the reverse is also true. That is, poor and failed communication has the ability to act perniciously to slow down and even destroy the operational flows that move the organization. But what makes excellence in communication? The goal of excellent communication is to get the right message clearly, accurately, quickly and to the right person (s). And for that, there are several factors to consider: WHAT, HOW, WHEN. Let's explain. WHAT: the content to be communicated. It is important that the content is correct. There is no point, for example, in answering a question with a totally different theme than what is being asked. It seems obvious but this mistake is more frequent in the corporate world than one might think. HOW: it is essential to communicate using the appropriate way and manner suitable to the situation. For example, you should decide if the best way is: in person, via email, telephone, etc. Additionally, attention should be paid to using the most direct, understandable and accurate way to communicate. It is no use to be formal or too far-fetched in a communication that is made for simpler people or in a circumstance that demands to be more informal. After all, the goal is to be understood. In general, instead of using long phrases with several connected themes, it is better to use several short sentences with separate themes. In case the communication is done in person, it is important to pay attention to the energy, intonation, speech and body expression appropriate to the situation. There are many verbal communication techniques that can be trained and help improve the performance. WHEN: It is crucial to watch for proper timing of communication. Excellent content and excellent form are totally useless if referral is made before or after the appropriate time. Due to the great dynamics and current speed in the business world, it is absolutely CRUCIAL to be very agile in communications. One should not take too long, for example, to reply to an email or a whatsapp message or to return a call. Because the consequent blocking of the fluidity and consequent discomfort generated by these delays can totally compromise the dynamics necessary to win in the business world. Remembering that we are living the SPEED ERA. In general, with exceptions, the following acceptable deadlines for return communications are considered in a high performance enterprise standard: E-mail: up to 24 hours. Telephone connection: up to 12 hours. Whatsapp message: up to 6 hours. These deadlines are independent of hierarchical level or function. For example, even the CEO of a gigantic corporation needs to return received messages within these deadlines, either directly or through a help system (automatic email, answering

machine, personal assistants, automatic whatsapp feedback messages, etc). There is the following saying: "Not always a good communicator will be a good leader; But a good leader will always be a good communicator. " For it is impossible to effectively lead others without communicating effectively with them.

• **Team Spirit / Good Interpersonal Relationship**

An organization (be it business or team or family or others) is nothing more than a group of people in constant interaction. It is vital for the proper functioning of the same that these continuous interactions happen with fluidity and lightness. Many factors contribute to this fluidity and lightness. But the intrinsic ability of individuals to be able to relate effectively to one another is one of the main aspects that influence the overall outcome of the organization. Having team spirit means understanding that despite individual differences, the most important is the whole, the team, the complete organization. And that is the sum of individual contributions is what generates the end result of every team. Each individual has his or her essential contribution quota. It is like a cog of many parts. It is worth mentioning that unfortunately it is not uncommon that some individuals of the team present serious behavior problems, attitude and failures related to other criteria of high performance. And this can generate a very great difficulty in group harmony. The reason for these distortions found in some companies is mainly due to lack of criteria and / or lack of recruitment and selection capacity by the superiors as well as to the mismanagement that has been exerted by them until that present moment. However, there are also people who are "difficult" by nature and in this case, it is often worth disconnecting them from the organization rather than wasting time money and energy to try to change their "essence" in an attempt that they do not hinder processes or contaminate the environment. It is also important to highlight that the organization itself has a strategic responsibility to stimulate good interpersonal relationships among employees. Good mood, light environment and positive energy are elements that top management can promote and encourage as corporate features. Obviously, it should be emphasized that these factors do not interfere with professionalism and the quest for high performance as a whole that people should have.

• **Stability / Pressure Resilience**

A very important characteristic of people who operate in high performance is the ability to withstand stress and pressure. In an analogy, there is no use in a car that has a very powerful engine, excellent aerodynamics, great optional items, but soon after the first month of use it already has problems of operation because many parts are worn. It will not serve to make the great trip to which you bought it. Even because the trip imposes

many obstacles (bumpy road, rain, lack of signs, etc). Corporate scenarios and environments are increasingly exposed to a tension and pressure inherent in the very competitive dynamic that prevails in capitalist markets. Challenging goals, short deadlines, complex problems to be solved, dependence on suppliers that do not operate on the same high-performance frequency, others' slowness that impacts its functions, primary mistakes being made by others, but which directly affect the activities and objectives ... All this is a part of the business environment. And all this increases the stress and the anxiety level. But the individual who operates in high performance must know how to deal (as far as possible and reasonable) with all of these factors. It is obvious that when these hostile aspects are overly frequent and large, it is a sign that the business as a whole is likely to be in a delicate situation and then senior management must act quickly to stabilize the environment by more incisive measures. Another very important thing is the stability that it is necessary to have in high-performance environments, that is, the reliability that the employee will come to work assiduously and without often getting sick, arriving late, getting stuck in traffic, having to go to the aunt's friend, etc. Stable people transmit trust to the company that people can count on them "for whatever comes" and show commitment. And it is precisely this spirit that is important in high-performance operations.

A BRIEF COMMENT ON MERITOCRACY

For an organization to truly operate in High Performance, it is absolutely ESSENTIAL that, in addition to the 10 Principles of Professional High Performance, MERITOCRACY management system is implemented in the company. That is, employees are evaluated solely for the merit of achieving their goals, achieving good results for the company and precisely meeting the High Performance criteria described in this e-book. Other criteria such as time in service, age, friendship or sympathy are totally outdated, do not fit in any way in the current competitive landscape and can never be used under any circumstances in the management of any employee. While the criteria of High Professional Performance are the professional characteristics of employees, Meritocracy is the system in which these employees are inserted and evaluated. One thing complements the other and both are needed. For example, it is no use that all employees have incorporated the criteria of high performance but be evaluated by time in service. In a very short period of time, employees would simply not sustain their mode of operation and there would be a performance collapse. It would be a total discouragement and a counter-claim. Conversely, it would not work if Meritocracy were fully deployed in the company, but employees operated without the high-performance criteria. It would be like a cake without filling, that is, unsustainable and the organization in very short time would stop. Therefore, both concepts must necessarily walk ALWAYS TOGETHER AND COMBINED.

A BRIEF COMMENT ON HIGH PERFORMANCE OBSTACLES

No matter how hard we try and implement the principles of professional high performance within our organization, we will never cease to be impacted by external aspects of our company. The reason is the simple fact that any company depends on other organizations (suppliers, distributors, customers, partners, etc.) to be able to operate. In this context, we mention some of the main points that are frequently present in the behavioral profiles (both in employees representing other companies/organizations as well in single individuals) that drastically disrupt "high performance mode":

- The word is worth little
- The fun is worth a lot
- The commitment is low
- What matters is to take advantage
- Communication is weak
- Everything moves slowly
- Nothing flows without follow-up
- Strong follow-up make people hide
- Standard delay of 48-72h
- The delivered quality is low

Note: It is important to emphasize that the above points may present amplifications or attenuations (even total inversion) by influence of the cultural characteristics and habits inherent to each respective society or country considered.

About the author:

Patrick Dorell is a chemical engineer, MBA, business consultant specialized in top management, marketing, branding and human resources. Natural entrepreneur, has a track record that includes a successful career as an executive in large multinational companies where he helped developing some of the most reputed brands of consumer products. Additionally, he was involved in the creation and operation of several start-up projects from the initial conceptualization all the way till to negotiations with investors of various modalities. Currently, he is dedicated to the creation of innovative entrepreneurship initiatives and the activity of coaching and mentoring.