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Human performance improvement model

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*The following description of a Human Performance model was taken from
"Improving Skills for Administrative Assistants" By, Carol Birnberg, CPT & Tara Nida,
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The HPI (Human Performance Improvement) model helps project managers, as well as trainers, focus on improving performance in the workplace in a way that produces measurable results. It is a systematic process of measuring a performance gap, identifying the cause, developing the most efficient yet effective "fix," and evaluating results … all the while tying it in to the business needs of the company. The model is deceptively simple but if followed, guarantees that at the end of a project or program, you will be able to quantitatively point to success or the need to re-evaluate and go through the process again.

The HPI model has five components that form a circle of continuous improvement, table 1. They are:

- Business analysis
- Performance analysis
- Cause analysis
- Intervention
- Evaluation

Business Analysis: During this stage the business goal and project goal should be clearly defined in measurable terms. To identify the goals you should ask:

- What is the ultimate business goal or bottom line?

- What is the project goal? This goal is more specific, stating what measurable, performance levels are expected at the end of the project.

- Are the business and project goals in sync? How will project results contribute to the business goal?

It is critical that everyone involved in a project understand the business reason for the project and stay focused on project goals that contribute to it. Note: "Training" is never a project goal. It may be an appropriate intervention but only if the results of training support the business goal.

Performance Analysis: At this stage you will quantitatively define the level of performance necessary to reach your project goal and the ultimate business goal. To begin you should ask questions such as:

- What performance level will enable us to reach the desired business goals?

- Who specifically is not performing at that level?

- Who is an exemplary performer? Why?

In answering these questions, keep the focus on performance and "outputs". (Outputs are the results of actions or

Table 1: Human performance improvement model phases and purpose

Phase	Purpose
Business Analysis	Identify the business goals. How can this be described in terms of employee performance?
Performance Analysis	What is the current situation? Identify the desired and current performance levels and the performance gap to be closed.
Cause Analysis	Identify possible causes for the performance gap that affect performance at the organizational, process, and individual performer levels. Causes are: Knowledge, Motives, Resources, Process, Information, and Wellness.
Intervention Selection	Select appropriate interventions to close the gap. Match intervention to type of root cause.
Intervention Implementation	Manage the implementation of those interventions and gather data for evaluation of the results.
Evaluation of Results	Identify both formative and summative evaluation methods to be used and measure how well the performance gap has been closed.

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performance). It is important not to blame or point fingers. This phase is all about determining the gap between what the performance level and outputs currently are and what they should be in order to reach the performance goals.

Cause Analysis: Now that you have defined your performance goals and determined the gap, you are going to identify why the gap exists. Your analysis should include inquiries such as:

- Are performers provided clear and frequent feedback on performance?

- Is there a lack of knowledge hindering performance?

- Do performers have the necessary tools to meet the performance goal?

- Are performers capable of meeting the performance goal?

- Is proper motivation in place?

Answering questions like these will help you determine why the gap exists. The cause or causes of the gap will determine the intervention. Skip this step and you may apply the wrong "fix" to the problem, wasting time and money.

Intervention: In this stage you will select the intervention(s) that will address the cause(s) of the performance gap. Interventions may include better communication, change management, process consulting, networking, or training.

Note: Training should be used as an intervention if, and only if, the reason for the performance gap is lack of knowledge. If there are other reasons standing in the way of achieving the business goal, training will be a waste of company assets. Often training may be part of the solution but the total intervention will include methods to specifically address the other causes.

Evaluation: Because every project faces limited resources and time, it is safe to assume that no planned intervention will resolve 100% of the gap. Therefore, it is necessary to include a plan for multiple evaluations. Phased evaluations will allow you to make changes along the way, assess effectiveness at the end of the intervention and determine if additional interventions are needed in the future. A plan for evaluation is a plan for continuous improvement.

There are three, main types of evaluation:

Summative: This is typically done throughout the planning and implementation process. A pilot group is one method of summative evaluation. You test the intervention on a small group, and then measure the results. Summative evaluation allows for fine tuning along the way. It allows developers and project managers the freedom to move quickly and possibly make mistakes because those mistakes are systemically identified and corrected.

Formative: This type of evaluation is typically done at the end of a project. It answers the question, "Did we close the gap?" A measurable gap makes formative evaluation easier, allowing one to say quantitatively if a gap was closed completely or partially. Measurable results naturally lead to continuous improvement.

Confirmative: This method of evaluation answers the question, "Did they really get it? Is the gap still closed?" Confirmative evaluation is typically done three to twelve months after the initial intervention. Data from this evaluation frequently becomes part of the cause analysis of a new circle of continuous improvement.[1] (Table 1)

Resources

ASTD (American Society for Training & Development) is the world's largest association dedicated to workplace learning and performance professionals. ASTD's members come from more than 100 countries and connect locally in nearly 140 US chapters and 25 Global Networks. The 70,000 plus members work in thousands of organizations of all sizes, in government, as independent consultants, and suppliers. **http://www.astd.org/ASTD/**

References

1. "Improving Skills for Administrative Assistants" By, Carol Birnberg, CPT & Tara Nida Published in 1SPl's Performance Improvement Journal. October 2005.

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Figure 1

ASTD HPI Model
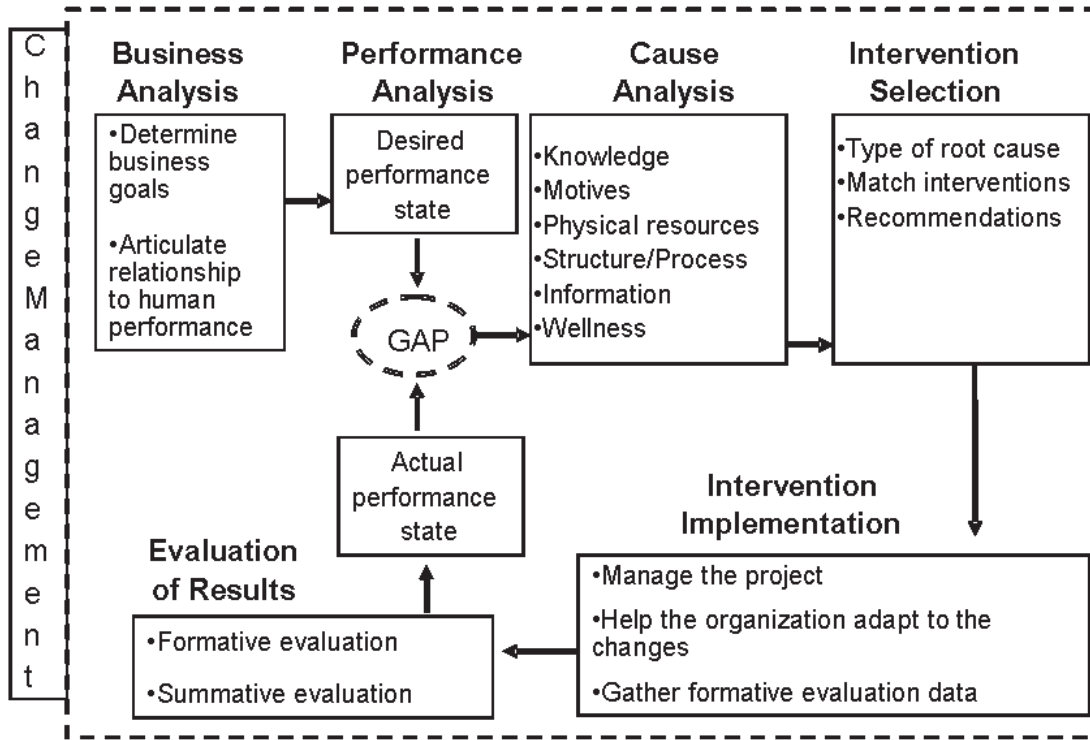
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