

Morten T. Hansen is an author who wanted to find out how top performers worked as well as trying to understand their routines and techniques. Hansen and his team were really determined to observe the results. Therefore, in 2011, they examined over 200 research papers and interviewed hundreds of professionals including both the employees and bosses.

Thanks to their research, they were able to find seven important work practices that explained the mindset and methods of the top performers. To check the viability of their hypothesis, they conducted a survey on 5,000 people. They found out that these seven factors contributed to a margin of 66 percent of their performance. In addition, the more a person had these factors, the better their ranking was.

To be more precise, the gradings were as follows: According to the answers and replies of 5,000 participants, they were able to see how many of these seven factors they practiced. In the end, they were able to put together a score based on their overall performance. For instance, if a person used only 20 percent of the principles among the seven factors, they got an overall of 20 percent on their performance and so forth. Do you find this puzzling? Don't worry because we will discuss it in-depth in the upcoming chapters.

## Avoid multitasking and try to focus your attention on individual tasks.

There is an ongoing wrong belief about getting a lot of work done by putting in extra hours and working harder. However, it is not always about working harder, it is about working smarter hence more efficient.

First things first, what you need to do is to stop trying to multitask and try to handle one thing at a time.

When you try to multitask in order to get things done quickly, you tend to get tired faster before doing a lot of work. You will end up wasting both your time and effort because none of the tasks you try to do will get full recognition and that means no good results.

HR specialist Susan Bishop experienced this first hand after opening her own search consultancy in New York City. She wanted to focus on hiring the perfect candidates for

media-related jobs. However, because she wanted to beat the competition, Bishop hired many clients from different industries. In the end, she could not focus and as a result, both her performance and profits threatened.

No one is immune to the incapability of multitasking, including judges. A study carried out in 2015 by judges of Milan proved that people who tried to multitask were found to be slower in processing cases. The quickest judge spent 178 days on a case whereas the slowest judge who tried multitasking spent a total of 398 days!

It is very important for you to focus on a single task at hand. Roald Amundsen knew a thing or two about the benefits of undivided attention and focus. The Norwegian explorer was in a contest to be the first man at the south pole in 1911. His rival was a veteran explorer and a Royal Navy commander, Robert Falcon Scott. Despite his reputation, Scott made the mistake of multitasking and tried to divide his attention between a variety of transportation methods such as dogs, ponies, skis and motor sleds.

Another mistake that Scott did was to send a dog expert to find good ponies for him. As a result, he received 20 small horses that were unsuitable for Antarctic conditions. Thus, Amundsen was triumphant over Scott and he won by using only dogs as a means of transportation.

Apart from winning the race, Amundsen became obsessed with finding out what type of dogs were the most suitable for Antarctica. Therefore, he spent a lot of time researching by himself and also getting help from the experts. A survey conducted with the help of 5,000 people shows that those who focused on their priorities performed better by an average of 25%.

## Remodel your work to focus more on value, quality, and efficiency.

It is important to redesign your work in order to focus on value, quality, and efficiency. For instance, if you have a colleague who is outperforming you, you might tone down your current work regimen instead of thinking about how you work, as a result, you will put in more effort.

If you want to boost your output, you should reconsider or change the way you work. In the survey conducted by the author with 5,000 people, series of job-related statements were ranked such as 'refreshing their job to put in more value' and in the end, generating new chances and finding new ways of getting things done. The outcome of the survey proved that those who were prepared to redesign the way work performed better overall. In order to redesign successfully, you have to focus on the ways in which your work puts value instead of simply giving in.

Anyone can add extra hours while doing their work or think in terms of money, but for an authentic redesign, you should find more efficient ways to generate more value for your purchasers, colleagues or even suppliers. Generating this value can be done in multiple ways from changing the process of your work to a more efficient way in order to make it simpler for your colleagues to improve the development stages for new products. Therefore, the important thing is to not only focusing to find new ways to accomplish your goals because you could end up with zero value-added. For instance, a dentist could decide to deal with more patients in a day, but such a strategy will result in inaccurate diagnoses.

Likewise, a lawyer might add more work hours regardless of proving a valuable counsel or not. Thus, by focusing on value, you should balance quality and efficiency while making a change. Moreover, it is okay for us to say that quality goes hand in hand with both accuracy and reliability.

However, let's say your work involves transcribing audio recordings. You should calculate your performance by observing your mistakes rather than counting words. This way, you will be more accurate hence higher quality and better performance. You should also take into consideration that if you can only get through ten words per minute, then this is not a very efficient way to work. It would not add much value to your work.

**In order to implement changes and improve your overall performance, use the learning loop and ask inviting questions.**

Learning loop refers to keep learning new things while working. In short, while you are still on the job, you are getting smarter and better. After getting feedback from other people and checking your results, you should focus on making changes in order to improve those results. In other words, a learning loop is a nice strategy to improve your performance.

The author's survey included Brittany Gavin, a manager of good and nutrition at a California hospital. A lot of patients were complaining about the quality of the food which meant that the overall performance was not satisfactory. As the manager, it was Gavin's job to gather her staff and come up with new ideas to solve this problem.

When Gavin asked whether her team had any new ideas about fixing this problem, sadly, there were not any plausible ideas. Gavin started going to a training program and there she learned that she had made her questions more specific and captivating. Thus, instead of asking general questions like 'Does anyone have a new idea?', you should ask 'What kind of improvements should we make in order to satisfy our customers' needs?'

After asking more specific questions such as above, Gavin evaluated the results. She got many responses from a variety of people and made adjustments to improve the performance. She used the learning loop strategy for weeks and made impressive progress that caused patient satisfaction to rise. 84 new ideas were implemented, one being better handling of milk so that it would stay cool when served.

By spending about 15 minutes each day, you could improve a certain skill of yours and it is also a good way to start a learning loop. The author himself used learning loops in order to improve his skills and become a better keynote speaker. He started recording his speeches and he would check them personally to find mistakes. In addition, he consulted others to find mistakes that he could not find himself. They gave their feedback and he combined them with his own to improve himself. All of these took between a half or an hour to finish each day.

**Energy comes from purpose and passion, which can be boosted by changing your job.**

Without a doubt, many of us spent quite some time trying to find out which career suits us best. People may have even told you to find something that you are passionate about. It is true that passion is very important in a career. However, you also need to drive that passion in the right direction with purpose.

Passion is a great tool to help you identify the things that you truly love. Also, it helps you generate purpose which in the end, creates meaningful work. The type of work environment in which you have clear objections and contribute things to other individuals, organizations and society in general.

According to the author's survey, people who are both passionate and have a purpose in their work, perform 28% better than those who have neither. The author also found out that, when passion meets purpose, it motivates people and allows them to focus on their work better for better performance.

Another outcome of his survey is that passion and purpose are not the only predictors for how long people will work. What they predict though, is the number of attempts that will be given during work hours. If you feel like you need some kind of motivation to polish your passion and purpose, you might want to try to find some kind of a new post. This does not necessarily mean quitting your job as it can happen in your current position.

For instance, Steven Birdsall, the CEO for global sales at the German software company SAP, is a good example in this case. Birdsall lost all of his excitement and he wanted to become an entrepreneur. It was so serious that he even thought about quitting his job until he realized that he could use his entrepreneurial ideas by introducing a new venture within SAP.

Birdsall's new line of business focused on rapid deployment solutions or RDS in short. It allowed outside organizations to utilize SAP software for a certain amount of time at a fixed price. RDS had already a market demand but thanks to Birdsall's resourcefulness, it became even more demanded. There was, of course, a great deal of risk in Birdsall's plan but since he had both passion and purpose, he managed to pull it off. His entrepreneurial ideas helped the company to earn a good number of potential customers. In the end, RDS was making an annual revenue of \$1.3 billion.

## To win people over, target their emotions and perspective to anticipate their concerns.

We usually don't get the chance to work alone as we have co-workers, bosses, and clients. At a minimum, we rely upon the expertise, information and especially the money of others. Most of the time, our work depends on being accepted by other people and getting their support. Thus, we need to get people on board to have their support so that we could have an idea with a strong purpose. It is even better when that idea is supported by people's emotions.

There are a couple of ways to play on people's emotions. For instance, you can give a speech about sensitive or pressing issues that would arouse fear, anger, and resentment. After that, you can promise to fix those issues and make the future a better place which would turn those negative emotions to hope joy and excitement.

British chef Jamie Oliver caught both the attention and emotion of people when protested against the food served in schools. At a school in West Virginia, he showed the parents and the students the amount of yearly fat consumption by tossing out a mountain of fat.

This act caused people to feel anger because of these poor eating habits. Oliver assured that he will do everything to fix this problem and promised a better and healthier future for students. Even though this is a nice strategy to get people's support, we are still met with doubts from time to time.

However, there is a way to get the support of people who are against your ideas. In order to achieve this, you need to be smart and use clever ways that can neutralize any kind of opposition. For instance, it is a good tactic to empathize with people who are refusing your ideas. This way, you could easily eliminate the negative thoughts of people and gain their support.

Lorenza Pasetti as the manager of Volpi Foods, a US-based company that processes cured Italian meats, used this tactic. She wanted to counter the disapproval of the Consorzio del Prosciutto di Parma. The organization believed that Pasetti was being disrespectful to the traditional Italian culture by using the words Italian and Prosciutto. Pasetti realized that the

only problem was with the use of words regarding Italian heritage. There were not any problems with US market shares. When Pasetti and Consorzio met, she said that she was planning on establishing deep Italian ties with the family-owned Volpi Foods. It was satisfying enough for Consorzio to back down.

## Encourage your team to debate beforehand so that your meetings would be more productive.

Working as a member of a team helps you to visualize and understand how much of that work takes place in group meetings as this is the place where big decisions are made. To move a project forward, this plays a crucial role and shows holding effective meetings is a must-have skill.

Indeed there are a lot of ways to approach meetings but the best way is to fight then unite. Even though it sounds absurd at first, a good fight is highly useful as it allows people to debate and state their own ideas. It creates a fertile place where ideas can easily flourish compared to a dull and silent meeting where no one would be interested to challenge the status quo.

We learned that heated debate is a good start but it should end before its too late. The second and equally important part is to find common ground and unite. Also, the entire team should be willing to accept the final decision made by the leader.

The author's study shows that teams who use this strategy of a fight and unite perform better than those who don't. If you want these fights to be as constructive and beneficial as possible, you should gather a diverse team. If all team members think more or less the same, there would not be any innovative ideas. Moreover, there would not even be a fight if people from similar backgrounds and perspectives are gathered.

The author conducted numerous pieces of research on team performance in order to rank the top 2,000 CEOs of public companies. Surprisingly, Bart Becht, the CEO of a small company named Reckitt Benckiser, came in sixteenth place.

Becht was ranked alongside famous CEOs like Jeff Bezos from Amazon. The reason why Becht was successful is related to the idea of a fight and unite. He encouraged constructive conflicts in his meetings but he also made sure people in those meetings were very diverse.

Becht explained the author what kind of personal differences that truly mattered. He valued pure and simple experience rather than nationality, job title and so forth. By bringing people who have different experiences, he created an environment where new and exciting ideas emerge.

## Identify the potential value in order to avoid the pitfalls of collaboration.

Collaboration has a high chance of bringing you great things but there are still good and bad ways of collaboration. The author argues that there are two mistakes about collaboration which damage overall performance: one is called over collaboration and the other one is under the collaboration.

Over collaboration can be defined in many ways. For instance, some organizations feel obliged to collaborate even though they are experienced and can take care of themselves. They might not need any external factor so this kind of collaborations make them waste both time and energy.

On the other hand, collaboration is a situation where some organizations fail to collaborate when they really need external help. In such situations, the overall performance will decline.

Under collaboration can be extremely serious especially in medical issues. In 2012, the hospital system in Fort Dodge, Iowa, did not have the means to exchange patient information with other departments. As a result, some patients were treated badly in a department where the doctor was lacking important medical knowledge. This is why the hospitals in Fort Dodge had a high readmission rate.

You should practice disciplined collaboration if you want it to be beneficial. The top performers collaborate in a way that they choose to collaborate in activities that offers value. According to the author's survey, people who are collaborating in a more disciplined way perform 14 percent better than over and under collaborators.



Thus, if you are confused about choosing a type of collaboration, ask yourself if it is beneficial or adds any value to you and the potential collaborators. Another important thing while collaborating is to explain the benefits of the collaboration to the others. This way, you are almost sure to gain their trust and start collaborating.

Mike, the business unit manager of the chemical company Agilent Technologies, needed to collaborate with the life sciences unit on a new chemical liquid device. On the second try, Mike managed to convince them by showing them some calculations that he made. The calculations showed that if they were to collaborate, they would gain nearly \$1 billion in about eight years. The life sciences unit was indeed interested in this collaboration and this was before getting turned down for the first time.

To maximize the potential of a collaboration, you need to get the right balance and know the real value of your work.

## Great at Work: How Top Performers Do Less, Work Better, and Achieve More by Morten T. Hansen Book Review

It is true that talent and effort play an important role in being great but the most important thing is working smart. After conducting a thorough survey, the author Morten T. Hansen discovered some common mistakes and developed some techniques to get better results at work. These techniques include being focused on a single work and avoiding multitasking, having a diverse team as possible, being both passionate and purposeful and also knowing the right time to collaborate.

It is easy to say focus on one task but sometimes your boss might burden you by assigning more work than you can handle. In such cases, you should learn to say no and explain why it will not be efficient. If you truly have more work than you can handle, you should kindly and respectfully explain to your boss why you will not be able to perform more tasks. If you give understandable and acceptable reasons, then your boss is more likely to behave sympathetically.

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