

PANACEA

PERFORMANCE BLUEPRINT

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Steve Sullivan

In the “cave days” goals were small. As mankind evolved through the various stages of human development, expectations grew and so did results. Our ancestors could not fathom a fraction of what has been achieved and yet, for most of us, the unimaginable is taken for granted. In the Information Age, anything more than a second to deliver the world takes you back to the drawing board.

It's understood that knowledge is critical in building balanced high performance organizations and knowledge is ubiquitous. Never before have we had the quantity of information that can make us better. A few taps on a keyboard will carve up your environment myriad ways. The click of a mouse delivers a library. And yet everywhere you look people and organizations are failing. They are not achieving their potential.

I believe that the crux of the problem lies in one's ability to identify the significant from the mundane. There are those that believe that everything matters. Caveat Emptor! Information by itself has little worth. It becomes meaningful only when it is put into context. For many, identifying what is relevant is a struggle.

Genetics plays a part. While technology has taken a quantum leap since the Stone Age, people haven't. Synapses still misfire. And when they do, problems arise. At the supervisory level you'll feel the pinch, when the decision is born in the executive suite it could knock you out.

Aristotle knew it. So did Freud. Even Wanda understood the deal.

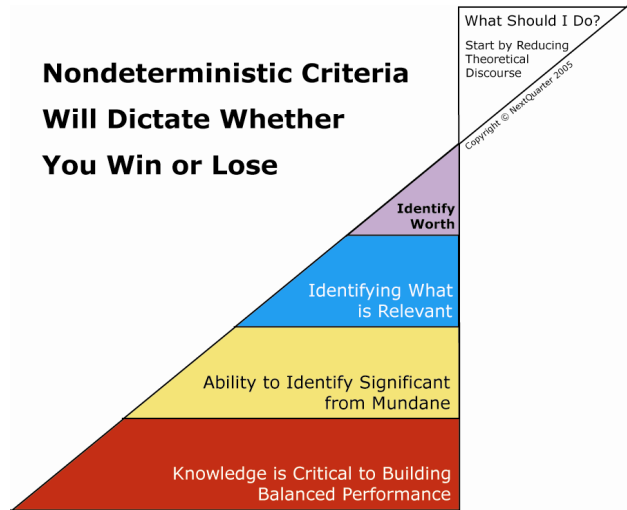
People Are Fallible

On any day decision-making can be tough. Throw in the unpredictable, confusion, circumstance, self-interest, ignorance and apathy and the dilemma escalates. Political unrest, business debacles, and armed insurrection happen for a reason.

While there is merit in looking into why people are flawed, I'm more concerned with what can be done about it. Start by reducing theoretical discourse. Embrace the attitude that action is the catalyst for change. The sooner you do something, the quicker you can adjust what you have done. Results come in the arena after your plan has been tested, implemented, modified and reinforced. In a deterministic world, more often than not, non-deterministic criteria will dictate whether you win or lose.

Pick up the paper, turn on the television, listen to the radio, peruse an annual report. Things are amiss. Agreement is everywhere. Is it as bad as we think? It might be worse. In an age of technological sophistication America was brought to its knees with box cutters. Other examples abound.

In recent years, we have seen a parade of dishonest operators plead ignorance. They stated there was too much going on. On that point, they are probably correct. Whether it was Re-engineering, Empowerment, The Boundaryless Organization or a hundred other cleverly designed processes, the new paradigm came in like a lion and went out like a lamb. In a vacuum the precepts were pure. In a world awash with warts “clever” got clubbed.



In principle there is much that has worth. The problems arise when the laboratory becomes a war zone. When civility turns to chaos you had better be anchored to something more substantial than an opinion.

My experience has taught me that solutions are usually a concoction of elements that gravitate toward the simplicity end of the spectrum. Sure there are complex issues and it takes complex thinkers to resolve them. But when we take simple issues and make them complex, we complicate our lives. It's difficult to target opportunity when your environment has morphed into a fragmented maze. Trying to find relevance in a smoke screen is tough.

In every area there are things that lie at the core of what needs to be done. Whether you are running a delicatessen or an army, identify what has worth. Not everything is complicated. Empires have been built on three words: Duty, Honor and Country.

An Age Old Question

What should I do?

For years I searched for the Silver Bullet. My trip on the path to enlightenment encountered enumerable bumps. Early on, I lacked the experience to understand that many a Guru had a self-serving interest in their sermon. I didn't know that the "Honcho" had gotten there by keeping a low profile. I had no idea that credentials could be bought. I didn't recognize that empty heads had long tongues. On more than one occasion I took the bait. Results never matched expectation. Disappointment followed.

I decided I would attempt to figure it out for myself. I knew that Performance was at the heart of accomplishment. But what was it? How did it come about? How could it be sustained? Buzzwords popped into my head. On the surface they had appeal, but I knew the real power lay in establishing their relationship to one another. Did Responsibility and Teamwork share common ground? At what point did Accountability determine Success? Were Betrayal and Loyalty mutually exclusive or inextricably linked? As the mental fog dissipated a word materialized. RESPONSIVENESS. I liked it. In my mind it held the secrets to the Performance Universe.

It came to me that there is nothing more important than responding to the issues, threats, opportunities and challenges that confront you. Whether you do it in the battlefield, boardroom or bakery, Responsiveness will determine the height of your success or the depth of your failure.

We know that some organizations accomplish everything they want, while others never achieve their potential. For years, the "experts" have connected Responsiveness with commitment. And, yes, commitment is a vital component of Responsiveness, but being committed in the wrong areas doesn't accomplish much.

A journey of a thousand miles starts with a step. If that step is in the wrong direction you've extended the trip.

Case Study

The team was assembled. An egalitarian atmosphere prevailed. Everyone was allowed to take a shot. It was never factored in that there were those that did not possess the skill or capability to participate. No one calculated how insecurity, self-promotion, ego, and turf protection would contaminate input. Assumptions were made. Opinions solicited. Goals identified. Resources allocated. Benchmarks established. The plan was communicated and the players went into action.

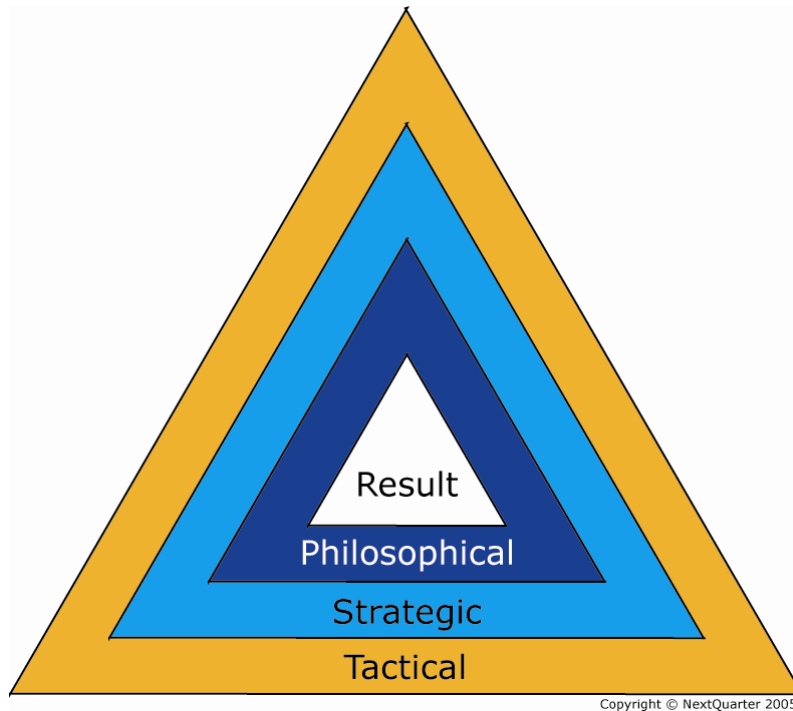
It didn't take long for the impact to be felt. It started with a gentle whisper and became an alarming alert. Absenteeism, turnover, picket lines, customer complaints, and litigation went north. Sales, profits, morale and productivity headed in the opposite direction.

In this scenario a reactive year-end review was part of the process. By the time the review took place the damage had been done. Time, resources, relationships, credibility and momentum were squandered. As a result, the organization was a long way from where it needed to be and it would require time and resources just to get back to the starting gate.

The Cold Hard Facts

In every organization, due to a variety of factors, there are people that don't perform. Some can't. Some won't. For many, responsiveness is a four-letter word. For others Responsiveness is the coin of the realm.

But, if Responsiveness is going to have any operational significance it needs to be dissected into some utilitarian components and those components will fall into one of three categories.



At the Philosophical level we identify what has worth. Here is where we contemplate what is important. At the Strategic level we create the initiatives that support our Philosophy. At the Tactical level we act. Here is where we implement what needs to be done. In building an organization the progression is linear-Think-Plan-Do.

Let's get started. Responsiveness requires Focus and Speed.

For an organization to respond it needs to be focused. I suggest you start with Values. Take your pick.

- Honor
- Integrity
- Unity
- Freedom
- Charity
- Compassion
- Diligence
- Community
- Fairness

Values are the soul of an organization. Values proclaim what the organization cares about, what it believes in, what we will fight and die for. Values are timeless in their ability to impact and influence. Values are at the core of everything. But in order to respond, Values must be transformed into Behaviors. Values give an organization its identity but it is Behaviors:

- Honesty
- Resilience
- Civility
- Initiative
- Candor
- Diligence
- Loyalty
- Urgency
- Courage
- Discipline
- Sensitivity
- Generosity
- Kindness

That get the mission accomplished. An organization that behaves well succeeds.

Now that we've framed what is ideal we can move forward. The second tier is the Strategic level. Here is where we plan for what we want to do. It starts with Knowledge. Target these disciplines.

- Compliance
- Leadership
- Sales
- Marketing
- Accounting
- Human Resources
- Legal
- Operations
- Safety
- Quality
- R&D
- Technology

Get your team together and have a huddle. Once you have identified the good stuff put it down in black and white. Identify the Do's and Don'ts. Focus requires Knowledge but Knowledge without Direction is like a sail without wind. People that succeed are guided by:

- Goals
- Beliefs
- Attitudes

When you care about the right things and behave accordingly, accomplishment is inevitable.

Because all environments are in a state of flux we need to be flexible. When you operate in a world fraught with change you'd better be Agile. Lighten your load. There is much you are doing that doesn't need to be done. Agility comes when you flatten the playing field. You need to incorporate Agility in your:

- Plan
- Project
- Program
- Process
- Proposal

Agility is good. Action is better.

On the plains of hesitation lie the bones of countless millions who at the dawn of victory chose to wait and in their waiting died-George Cecil

Waiting is seldom rewarded. The most successful operators respond to the:

- Threat
- Challenge
- Issue
- Opportunity

That confronts them. They understand that action is seldom fatal. More often than not, it is the catalyst for accomplishment. There is not a leader of any

consequence that didn't understand the concept. Action is at the heart of performance and action affects outcome.

We know we need to act but the question is where. One more iteration and PANACEA is complete. From here on, it's Tactical. It is where the rubber meets the road.

Knowledge is a function of Information that should fall into three categories:

- Developmental
- Operational
- Ethical

There are those that believe Information is everything. If it were, librarians would rule. Information allows you to respond. Experience:

- Personal
- Professional

Helps you respond correctly. All those things you learned through success and failure have merit. Experience will start you in the right direction, but on any path to accomplishment you will encounter bumps. It's okay to take a break and pinpoint where you are. That will come with Assessment. Take a look at your:

- Performance
- Capability
- Products
- Service
- Quality
- Reliability
- Image
- Reputation

It's okay to ask, "How am I doing?" Your:

- Customers
- Suppliers
- Employees
- Affiliates

Will be happy to tell you. Their Response may validate that you are doing fine or it may require that you change. How you've aligned your Resources:

- Facilities
- Equipment
- Personnel
- Capital

Will determine how quickly that will happen. With the Control that is exhibited through:

- Commitment
- Structure

You can respond immediately because you have incorporated that into your program. A hierarchical sign-off may no longer be part of your plan. I suspect if the first guy who saw the iceberg could have called the play, the Titanic would still be afloat.

But, everything is for not if the people in the organization are unwilling to engage. The status quo serves no one but the mediocre. I've never met anyone that didn't understand the concept and yet so many are unwilling to embrace it. For them, staying put, works. Experts have concluded that there are a number of factors involved in why people don't act: physiology, past experience, psychology. I accept them all and I've learned that whatever the reason, Preparation:

- Education
- Training

Is the vehicle to victory. When an individual is properly prepared they become confident in their ability to succeed. When that occurs, the fear of failure is replaced by an understanding that winning is inevitable. When you apply a regular dose of Motivation:

- Incentives
- Consequences

The team responds.

The Cosmic Question

What does it all mean? It means nothing if it is not applied. Let's make it easy.

Case Study

On the Spectrum of Accomplishment you've determined your organization's performance ranks five on a scale of ten. You recognize the organization is not meeting its potential.

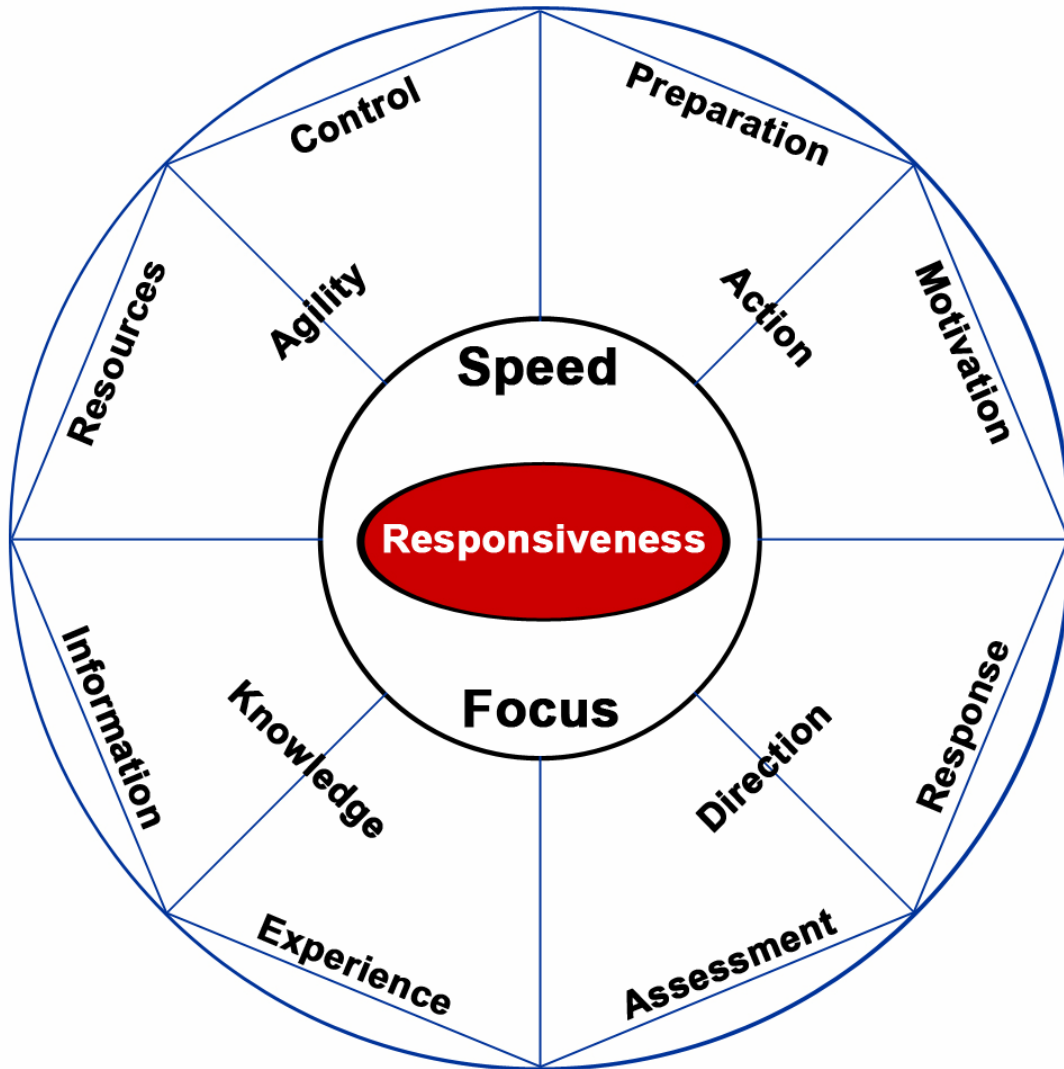
You embrace PANACEA. You assemble your team for an operational review. Prior to the review everyone is sent a copy of PANACEA with its corresponding White Paper. In that the performance drivers in PANACEA are universally accepted, you allocate no time for debate. Each participant is required to complete a PANACEA performance assessment. The objective is to identify where operational philosophy and reality are at odds.

For example, in the organization's mission statement it professes a belief in leadership excellence. Examining that element in PANACEA identifies that no program, to make leaders excellent, exists. The performance gap has been identified. With the proper program that gap can be closed.

In the first case study, assessment lay at a distant juncture. Using PANACEA we can assess from day one. If actions, behaviors, programs, processes and procedures aren't in place we know we are deficient. We correct it. There are myriad ways PANACEA can be utilized:

- Organization Blueprint
- Operational Compass
- Performance Directive
- Compliance Meter
- Personal Mnemonic
- Management Assessment Tool
- Life Enhancement Roadmap

I've never seen a leader that didn't want to perform or an organization that liked getting lost. In today's complex competitive world there is so much going on, if you do not have a tool to keep you on track it won't be long before you are questioning how you ended up in the Twilight Zone.



By in large, most people want to play by the rules. Whether they are building a framework for excellence, navigating the unknown, measuring results or reviewing what needs to be done, PANACEA is a crucial daily-use tool. It can help evaluate a marketing or training program, reduce organizational hostility, reward effort, communicate stability, measure progress, analyze threats, increase loyalty and improve productivity.

There is more that PANACEA can do. Each element can be expanded a hundred fold. PANACEA is not a cure. It is a gateway to a better world.

Steve Sullivan is an internationally recognized authority on selling, leading and performance issues. More about Sullivan can be found at www.stevesullivan.com.