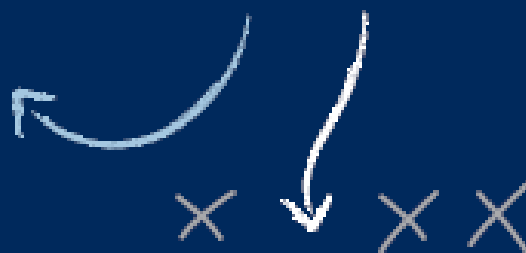


PEAK PERFORMANCE
PLAYBOOK



WHAT IS PEAK PERFORMANCE?

The ability of the individual, team and/or organization to attain a **consistent** and **sustainable** high level of performance by achieving **maximum efficiency and effectiveness**



Peak performance is attained by **combining “the right stuff” with “the right skills.”** Individuals must have the right talent to achieve superior performance and develop the right skills to reach their goals.

As most of us have seen, peak performance in the world of sports and athletics is a wonder to behold. In studying successful world-class individuals and teams in sports, we find that there are key characteristics (skills, behaviors, personality traits) that predict sustained success. So, too, business organizations around the world continuously search for the right personality characteristics, including that mental toughness and focus upon what it takes to be successful. They search for the **secret to finding a competitive edge.**

At TalentQuest, we have worked with business people in a wide variety of organizations, industries, and locations, and it has become clear to us that peak performers in business also achieve success in similar ways. We know from studies of successful managers, that, like successful athletes and successful performers in other disciplines, they demonstrate a set of skills and talents that predict **world-class success.**

This Peak Performance Playbook will outline tangible tips for your organizational leadership. Take this guide and put it to the test:

- How are your leaders stacking up?
- Are they exhibiting key characteristics of peak performers?
- Are they making strategic plays that will lead to winning outcomes?
- What can be done differently? Better?

This playbook will serve as a call to action and challenge new levels of leadership... read on to **put plays into action.**

CALLING ALL HEROES

In order to understand the components of peak performance, let's first look at several of the most successful athletes of our time. What do these world-class championship caliber athletes have in common? If you look past the obvious physical talent, skills, and conditioning, you would find that these exceptional athletes have similar characteristics.

Who are the peak performers in the sports world?

- Wayne Gretzky
- Michael Jordan
- Tiger Woods
- Martina Navratilova
- Joe Montana
- Mia Hamm
- Lance Armstrong

For most people, these names immediately conjure up visions of greatness and images of tremendous effort and will. What other shared attributes have contributed to such stature?

The critical combination = winning behavioral traits + pinnacle personality attributes

OFF THE BENCH: WINNING BEHAVIORS

➤ HIGH LEVELS OF SUCCESS

- The ability to achieve greatness beyond what was expected of them

➤ SUSTAINED PERFORMANCE

- The ability to attain a championship level time after time

➤ MAXIMIZATION OF TALENT

- The ability to extract the most out of their talent

➤ WHOLE BIGGER THAN THE PARTS

- The ability to achieve more than what others with comparable talent can achieve.

➤ MAXIMUM TIME “IN THE ZONE”

- The ability to sustain their effort for long periods of time (often times with perception of appearing easy!)

➤ FAST-FORWARDING SKILLS

- The ability to anticipate where the ball, their teammates and their opponents are going to be

PERSONALITY AT ITS PINNACLE

➤ **PERSEVERANCE**

- “Failure is not an option” mental approach
- The ability to persist through difficulties
- Acceptance of criticism
- Determination

➤ **TENACITY**

- A willingness to “pay the price” through various personal sacrifices
- The toughness to ensure pain, suffering, and hard work
- Fearlessness and control of emotions

➤ **CLEAR, UNWAVERING GOALS**

- High standards and expectations
- A commitment to perfection
- A consistent focus on the end result

➤ **WILLINGNESS TO PRACTICE**

- The ability to spend the necessary amount of time mastering their craft
- Continuous improvement mentality

➤ **ABILITY TO DEAL WITH ADVERSITY AND FAILURE**

- Extreme strength and emotional resilience to tolerate pressure and bounce back from setbacks
- Willingness to explore the unknown

Are your leaders displaying these traits and characteristics?

These are critical keys to peak performance within successful organizations. Let's break down the components of Peak Performance to put your leadership into play.....

STEP 1: ENVISIONING YOUR GOALS

"The only thing I care about is Super Bowls. Your legacy is based on championships -- how many championships you win -- and you remember guys like Michael Jordan and Walter Payton and even a Tom Brady. That's the kind of caliber athlete I want to be remembered as. So that's what I shoot for when I'm training."

--Reggie Bush, NFL New Orleans Saints second-year running back and former Heisman Trophy winner, discussing his clear vision and the legacy he wants to achieve.

VISION

Peak performers are consistently engaged and find meaning in what they do. For athletes, teams and sports franchises, that may be the World Series, the Super Bowl, Wimbledon, etc. They **identify what success looks like** and they **keep that vision in mind at all times**. They have vision of what they want, where they want to be and what they want to accomplish. They consistently and, often compulsively, maintain their eye on that vision. In order to achieve peak performance, you must **develop a vision for all involved** (individuals, teams and the entire organization) to provide "the big picture" and a **course of direction**. If a behavior or activity does not support the vision, it simply is not done and it is certainly not a high-priority or high-impact item.

You likely can recall the notable achievements of the American track superstar, Michael Johnson. He became the only man ever to win both the 200-meter and 400 meter Olympic gold medals at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Michael Johnson mobilized his extraordinary talent through effective **goal setting** and mental strength.

Research on effective goal setting in the world of business as well as sport and exercise has consistently shown that it can lead to enhanced performance. In fact, a recent meta-analysis (evaluation of pooled data from a whole series of studies) showed that goal setting led to performance enhancement in 78% of sport and exercise research studies, with moderate-to strong effects.

So how does it work?

Top performers and athletes like Michael Johnson have understood that, although dream goals such as Olympic gold medals are important in helping to direct our efforts, it is the day- to-day, short-term goals that provide the key to success. We can classify goals into three types:

I. Visionary or long-range goals - Goals that seem a long way off and difficult to achieve. Achieving these goals might range from six months to several years ahead.

II. Intermediate goals - Benchmarks for where you want to be at a specific time. For example, if your dream goal is to reduce your personal best running time by one second over 10 months, an intermediate goal might be a half second improvement after five months.

III. Short-term or daily goals – These goals are considered to be the most important because they provide a specific focus for our training in each and every session. Prior research on Olympic athletes found that setting daily training goals was one factor that distinguished winning performers from their less successful counterparts.

Establishing goals is the critical first-step on the path to peak performance. Do you have clearly articulated goals? Both short-term and long-range? Does your organization effectively communicate goals? Do your employees have opportunities to set (and achieve) individual goals?

ACTION TIPS:

“ENVISIONING YOUR GOALS”

- At your next staff meeting, set some time on the agenda to specifically discuss what success looks like and how they will know if they have arrived. Determine a clear metric that can be agreed upon that would constitute the most specific, most valuable, most important success (i.e., clear targets in revenue, new customers, reduction in turnover, customer satisfaction ratings, etc.) to be.
- Get a public, verbal and written commitment from each member of the team concerning that success.
- Keep that desired outcome at the forefront of every meeting, discussion and planning session so that activities and behaviors can be assessed and prioritized against that benchmark.

STEP 2: “FAST – FORWARDING”

"I skate to where the puck is going to be."

--Wayne Gretzky, NHL Hall of Famer

Even in his prime, Gretzky was not very fast, his shot was oddly weak, and he was last in the team in strength training. He would operate from his "office," the small space in the back of the opponent's goal, anticipating where his team would be well before they got there and feeding them passes so unsuspected he would often surprise them. For a cover story in 1985 he told Time, "People talk about skating, puck handling and shooting but the whole sport is angles and caroms, forgetting the straight direction the puck is going, calculating where it will be diverted, factoring in all the interruptions." TIME (April 26, 1999)

What Wayne Gretzky described above is called "fast-forwarding" (Sashittal & Jassawalla, 2002) or the ability to travel forward in time and predict where, after seemingly infinite combinations of ricochets and caroms, the puck will emerge—the ability to make his way to the precise spot.

Fast-forwarding in sports involves the ability to anticipate the flow of play and stay ahead of real time. Athletes who fast-forward anticipate where teammates and the competition are going to be, providing a competitive advantage and enhancing teammates' performances. They inspire others to greater performance and motivate through their focus and intensity.

In all walks of life, "fast-forwarding" is about **anticipation**, being **steps ahead of others in thinking and visioning**, and **predicting outcomes** from one's experience as quickly as possible. Great performers need talent, but they also need to anticipate effectively. That is what made Wayne Gretzky the best.

In business, we find that consistently great employees (as well as great athletes) stay several steps ahead of "real-time." Exceptional employees anticipate where they need to be, what their teammates might need, and where their internal and external opposition are going to be positioned. They consistently seek alternative, sometimes creative, approaches that circumvent barriers to success.

ACTION TIPS:
“FAST – FORWARDING”

- Ask your team or department, if they are in the business of firefighting or fire prevention? Firefighting is reactive while fire prevention is proactive. If they are firefighting more often than not, generate a discussion about what they would need to be more in the business of prevention.
- Identify your measure of success and lead a discussion with your team about the barriers and obstacles that could impede progress or defeat the team.
- Develop a plan to address those barriers and obstacles to ensure that success will be achieved.

STEP 3: BUILDING THE GAME-PLAN

"He never talked about winning. The only thing we can control is our preparation."

--John Vallely, former UCLA basketball player, talking about the approach to preparedness that former UCLA head coach John Wooden used that led to multiple NCAA basketball championships.

So focused was coach Wooden on preparing his teams on fundamentals from the ground up that he began each season by teaching his players the proper way to put on their socks. Indeed, in basketball as in life, winning and losing happens to everyone. But dogged preparedness provides peace of mind over the result.

The best and most accomplished people in any field are those who devote the most hours to what is called "deliberate practice." This is activity that is explicitly intended to improve performance. **Deliberate practice** is designed to be **just beyond one's level of competence**, provides specific feedback on results and typically involves high levels of repetition.

"If I don't practice for a day, I know it. If I don't practice for two days, my wife knows it. If I don't practice for three days, the world knows it."

--Vladimir Horowitz, famed concert pianist.

Nike says "Just Do It." Though there is a lot of meaning in that tagline, it is not always that simple or easy. There is both an art and science to preparing for success, and a fundamental understanding of what it takes to "get there" is critical. The game plan, the carefully crafted preparation, is the key to execution.

Elite, world-class athletes practice their sport to be physically and mentally prepared to play at a peak level. They make sure that their performance can be as “automatic” as possible through practice, so that anxiety is lessened and external pressure will have little to no effect.

Peak performance also requires **mental preparation and imagery** in which one visualizes realistic and relevant situations and their successful performance. Proper imagery increases confidence and motivation by **allowing the individual to see themselves successfully executing and achieving the “game-plan”**. The imagery should be practiced often and involves rehearsing the proper sequence for success as well as the positive outcome.

It is also constructive to utilize imagery to view what could go wrong, so you can prepare responses to a variety of possible situations. Preparing for potential scenarios can reduce stress and anxiety and prevent mishaps. Just as athletes might imagine a scenario in which an opponent calls an unexpected play or defense, a businessperson might anticipate a challenge to a presentation point or remark. Such mental preparation and imagery allows **peak performers to build a critical crux of every game plan: a “Plan B.”**

ACTION TIPS:
“BUILDING THE GAME PLAN”

- Go through a “dry run” for your role in the next staff meeting, sales presentation, or coaching session with an employee. Get critical feedback and try it again.
- Have your direct reports practice a sales call or a board meeting and see how they perform and give them direct and constructive feedback about their performance.

STEP 4: EXECUTION

"It takes five guys understanding what we're doing, understanding a game plan and sticking with it."

--Tim Duncan, NBA San Antonio Spurs

Peak performers are experts at following the game plan that has been developed and rehearsed to perfection. Since the game plan provides the guidance and the route to success, a significant commitment is required in creating an effective game plan. Details must be developed. If the game plan is detailed, researched and carefully evaluated, then execution can be flawless. Peak performers closely adhere to their game plan and understand that execution of the game plan is crucial to success.

The most successful businesses typically are those that are **committed** and **diligent** about executing their game plans flawlessly. Those businesses that fail are often the ones that neglect their game plans, choosing rather to make rash decisions or modifications at the first sign of failure. Often, in business, developing a game plan is short-circuited, since many organizations feel much pressure to plan their long-term actions carefully. Other organizations rely on "natural talent" to perform well. Either way, performance and execution are too often sacrificed for expediency.

In the world of sports, Bill Walsh, architect of the successful championship run of the NFL San Francisco 49ers, was the first to systematically script in advance the offensive plays he would call early in a game. Walsh felt that all the planning could be mapped out in the office during the week instead of on the sidelines during the anxiety and on-field chaos and frenzy of a game.

With a script, the offensive players could devote more study time to plays that definitely would be applied in the game, as opposed to learning an entire game plan that invariably included a host of plays that would never be called.

Almost every team in the NFL currently uses some form of scripting. Walsh used to map 25 plays; now most NFL teams script approximately 15 plays. There are, of course, some misconceptions about scripting. While there might be a long script of plays, they are not called blindly in order. Walsh can recall games in which the script worked to absolute perfection. Other times, Walsh had to adapt to what the opposing team was doing defensively.

In the NFL as well as corporate America, those that **develop a solid game plan and are committed to successful execution are mostly likely to thrive.**

ACTION TIPS:

“EXECUTION”

- Bring your team together and discuss a detailed game plan for the next sales meeting or sales presentation. Work as a team to determine the best strategy for the sales meeting, pinpoint roles for each team member, identify stumbling blocks or potential pitfalls for success and write down the game-plan as specifically as possible, finally collectively agreeing to each step of the game-plan (identify accountabilities and dates for execution).
- Take that game plan and execute it as designed, deviating as little as possible.
- As a developmental activity, allow your direct reports come up with a game plan for their next opportunity without your input. Encourage the team to practice the game plan on their own and let them critique themselves with a template that they determined ahead of time (which you can approve).

STEP 5: REVIEW AND DEBRIEF

Once any plan has been executed, it is essential that the **results be evaluated**, that the **process is analyzed**, and that the game **plan is carefully scrutinized**. A comprehensive debriefing process is vitally important for learning and improvement, in order to result in an improved product and improved outcome for the future.

The review process must include what went well and according to plan, what needs to be changed or improved, and what needs to be eliminated. Just as football teams devote extensive time to reviewing game films the day after the game, so must businesses review their successes and failures for **practical learning opportunities**.

ACTION TIPS:
“REVIEW AND DEBRIEF”

- Find a baseball, football or basketball coach who uses the technique of reviewing game films and talk with him/her about their method of evaluating the game films.
- Incorporate what you can from that discussion to determine how to give feedback and evaluate performance on a regular basis on your department or team.
- Consider using a day-to-day approach for giving feedback and evaluating short-term performance in your department or team.

The following review sheet should be used daily and consistently to maximize your peak performance.

DAILY PEAK PERFORMANCE REVIEW SHEET

1. What were my objectives for today?
2. What did I accomplish today?
3. What did I anticipate well today?
4. What did I fail to anticipate?
5. What did I learn today?

****** Most importantly:**

6. What changes have taken place in my mind-set, knowledge, game plan, and execution skills?
7. What additional assistance do I need to succeed?

Knowledge/Information	
Support	
Feedback	
Resources	

PUTTING TIPS TO THE TEST:

ARE YOU A PEAK PERFORMER?

Answer this checklist honestly to see how you stack up. The follow survey is an indicator of an individual's ability to be productive and sustain a high level of performance over time. Please rate yourself from 1-5 with 1 being low (or never) and 5 being high (always), regarding how descriptive you think the statement is:

1. I am confident in my abilities. ____
2. I have a clear vision of my short and long-term goals. ____
3. I anticipate and prevent problems, crises and emergencies from occurring in my personal, professional, and sporting life. ____
4. I plan and organize my activities effectively. ____
5. I follow-through on my plans without major disruptions, distractions, and modifications. ____
6. I carefully and meticulously practice when presented with opportunities to perform my duties and responsibilities. ____
7. I review and evaluate my activities after a major project or assignment is completed. ____
8. I maintain a positive and realistic mental mind-set. ____
9. I bounce back quickly from failures and setbacks. ____
10. I get the most out of my talents, abilities, and potential. ____

Scoring:

A score of 46-50 is excellent and highly correlated with peak performer attributes.

A score of 41-45 should result in frequent success in your professional life.

A score of 36-40 suggests an adequate to good set of peak performance skills.

A score of 30-35 suggest a bit of improvement is in order.

Any score under 30 suggests some need for building basic peak performance skills and consideration of installing a peak performance systems approach to provide some structure to your daily activities.

PEAK PERFORMANCE BEGINS HERE.™



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