

PERFORMANCE culture self-assessment analysis

This Self-Assessment Analysis is provided to help you determine what actions are necessary to cultivate a performance culture in your organization. Once you have completed the assessment you may use the results to establish priorities for those actions.

Your gross score on the Performance Culture Self-Assessment serves as a general indicator of the amount of work that needs to be done in order to reach performance culture status.

Your responses to each individual question in the self-assessment helps to fine-tune future improvement actions. Results from each question provide specific information about where efforts need to be focused.

If you scored between 91 and 100 points, there will only be a few things that you can tweak to raise your score. You already enjoy high-performance culture status. Your challenge will be to decide what actions are required to maintain your status in a dramatically changing world. You can never rely upon the *status quo* for very long.

If you scored 60 or below, most any action that you take related to those twenty characteristics covered in the self-assessment will help you move forward. Look at each question in the assessment. If you scored a five in any area, you should take actions necessary to maintain that level. You should be able to rest easy for a while. If you scored a one, then you definitely need to take action in that area. Scores between one and five indicate the relevant urgency for taking action to move forward.

The twenty characteristics on the assessment follow. Look at your responses to each characteristic to see where you need to take action, and then follow the directions for determining what action(s) to take.

Rating Level	Recommended Attention
1	Give priority attention to improvements in this area.
2	Identify key strategies for moving this rating to a higher level.
3	Identify the strategy most likely to advance the rating level.
4	Identify what action(s) is (are) needed to move this rating to the 5 level.
5	No action required. Consider actions for preserving this rating.

MISSION/VISION expressed in clear and measurable terms

The mission/vision plays a significant role in shaping the organization's success and in making improvements in productivity. The mission/vision is important in that it defines the desired future state the organization hopes to attain. That desired future state is actually the defining factor for organizational success. In order to be an effective guide for the organization, the mission/vision must be expressed in clear and measurable terms so that everyone will know exactly how organizational success is being defined. There can be no room left for doubt.

The mission/vision is a product of the strategic planning process conducted by the organization. This process can be formal or informal. But by whatever the means, the organization's desired destination is established from the beginning. If your organization does not have a mission/vision in place or if it is not recorded in clear and measurable terms, you will need to take immediate action in this area if you desire to build a performance culture. To learn more about strategic planning and the development of a mission/vision visit the Strategic Planning, Developing Mission section of the Performance Solutions website.

MAJORITY know and support the mission/vision

Since the mission/vision defines success for the organization, it is vitally important that everyone in the organization knows and understands how the organization defines success. Once you have a mission/vision in place that is expressed in clear and measurable terms, then it will be necessary to be sure that the greatest majority of people in the organization know and understand it. Therefore, it is important that each person has access to that information.

The first consideration is how many people in the organization have the necessary information? If the percentage is high, there is little that needs to be done. A low percentage means it will be necessary to develop a strategy for communicating the mission/vision to everyone in the organization in a meaningful way.

The second question for consideration is whether or not people support the mission/vision. Not only does the mission/vision point to success, it serves to stimulate a passion or to motivate people to want to reach the business goals. In order for the mission/vision to maximize its effectiveness, it must provide people with a meaningful reason for doing their jobs. Research has shown that people who know the goals and who are passionate about reaching them are more productive.

If people are highly supportive of the mission/vision little else needs to be done. In the event that support is low, a strategy must be developed to increase support.

SENIOR leaders are committed to performance excellence

It is highly unlikely that any organization would achieve significant forward momentum toward becoming a performance culture unless senior leadership endorses the effort. Usually the initiative for becoming a performance culture is born with one or more senior leaders who share a passion for producing remarkable results. Their leadership drives the organization forward. In these circumstances, senior leaders not only hold themselves accountable for maximizing performance, they encourage and support others in the organization to do the same. Without commitment from senior leaders, a performance culture cannot flourish.

If you scored a five on this characteristic, then there is little else to do. If you scored a one or two, then you will need to develop strategies to persuade senior leaders that the organization would greatly benefit from efforts to improve productivity and from finding innovative ways to deliver services better, faster and cheaper. This will probably mean developing a sound business case for moving toward a performance culture.

KEY objectives are clear and measurable

Another product developed in the strategic planning process is a set of key or strategic objectives that define how the organization will successfully achieve the organization's mission/vision. These objectives represent the thoughtful steps required to overcome barriers to reaching the mission/vision. In similar fashion, these objectives are expressed in clear and measurable terms. While the mission/vision defines success, these objectives define the pathway to success. Clarity is also a must here. Everyone must know precisely what must be accomplished to achieve success and everyone must know how success will be measured. These key objectives must be measurable so that progress can be monitored. Achieving all of the strategic objectives means that the organization will have met the mission/vision.

If you scored high in this area, it is highly likely that your organization has a clear set of business objectives and that they have been cascaded down the

organization into tactical objectives and ultimately to the individual employee level. In other words, key objectives are cascaded down the organization until they have been translated into performance expectations for individual workers.

To learn more about strategic planning and the development of strategic objectives, visit the Strategic Planning section of the Performance Solutions website. If you are interested in learning more about establishing measures or metrics, visit the Metrics section of the Performance Solutions website.

EMPLOYEES value productivity

Some people are naturally competitive. Without encouragement from anyone else, they want to be the best. These people tend to set and reach above average personal performance goals. An organization that aspires to build and/or maintain a performance culture highly values people with this characteristic. So, it makes perfect sense that an organization moving toward becoming a performance culture would make every effort to hire, motivate, develop and retain top performing people, especially in key positions.

If you scored low in this area, you will find it necessary to examine your organization's current practices for recruiting, selecting and retaining top talent. You will want to develop strategies for recruiting or selecting top talent for vacant positions and for retaining people known to be top performers. If you have an interest in recruitment and selection of top performers see Staffing Initiatives on the Performance Solutions website. If you are interested in strategies for retaining top performers once they have entered the organization, visit the Retention section of the Performance Solutions website.

KEY competencies and key positions identified

The strategic planning process yields yet more products - key positions and key competencies. Once an organization establishes its mission/vision, it must identify those positions that are essential to the organization's success. As you already know, some jobs contribute more to the success than others. So, when the strategic planning process has been completed, the organization must create a list of those key jobs in order to plan for having the people needed to carry out those functions.

In addition, the organization must be acutely aware of the competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) that will be important to the organization's successful attainment of its mission/vision. Once again, employees possess many competencies, but the question is, "Are they the competencies needed to get the job done?" The required competencies can vary depending upon the organization. In any case, the organization must determine which competencies are necessary for success.

Top performing organizations pay particular attention to key jobs and key competencies so that these needs can be factored into the workforce planning

process. If you scored low in this area you will need to identify key positions or key competencies which will lead to your organization's success. If you want to learn more about identifying key positions and key competencies as they pertain to the strategic planning process, visit the Development Initiatives, Knowledge Transfer, Step 1 section of the Performance Solutions website. If you want to learn more about workforce planning, visit the Workforce Planning section of the Performance Solutions website.

RESOURCE allocation based on anticipated program contributions

Building and maintaining a performance culture requires an organization to establish priorities. Setting priorities is an essential ingredient to building and sustaining a high-performance organization. In a performance culture, all resources, including human resources, are allocated according to how much the effort contributes to meeting organizational objectives. Not every program contributes the same value to organizational success.

Programs that contribute little to meeting organizational objectives receive only a small portion of the organization's resources, or perhaps, are eliminated altogether. Programs contributing the most to the organization's success receive the greatest allotment of its resources.

Organizations that score low in this area must evaluate how resources are being used and whether or not they are being allocated to the best advantage of the organization. You might consider a quick study of current allocations of resources and the return (expressed in results) the organization gets from those investments. A simple study may give you sufficient information to determine how you might redistribute resources to get a better "return on investment."

CLEAR and measurable work plans

In many organizations there is no direct line of sight between an individual's work plan and the successful achievement of the mission/vision. Many work plans in state government are built on subjective performance expectations that may only be remotely connected with the organization's success. In top-performing organizations there is a direct and measurable relationship between individual work plans and the achievement of organizational goals. Strategic goals are cascaded down the organization until they are captured in individual work plans in clear and measurable terms.

If you desire to build or sustain a performance culture, you must be able to demonstrate how each job contributes to meeting key organizational objectives. If you scored high in this area, great job. If you scored low, you will need to develop a strategy or strategies for linking individual work plans with the achievement of key business objectives, in clear and measurable terms. If you have an interest in how you might build an employee work plan that is linked to

key business objectives, refer to the Performance Management portion of this site.

NEGATIVE consequences follow a failure to meet performance expectations

One consistent observation from state employees is that there is no real consequence of poor performance. In other words, poor performance is tolerated. Many supervisors and managers say they get little or no support for addressing poor performance. In organizations that are recognized for high performance, failure to meet performance brings prompt action. Once identified, a performance problem is addressed and an improvement plan is developed. Failure to improve can quickly lead to termination.

Any state agency aspiring to be recognized for remarkable performance must send a message that the failure to meet performance expectations will not be tolerated. One way for senior leaders to send the message that they are serious about delivering remarkable results to the taxpayers is to demand prompt corrective action for performance problems.

If you scored low on this area, it is important that you find ways to take corrective action that effectively eliminates performance problems. Several questions come to mind for assessing what you might do.

Does your organization have a process in place that is effective in correcting poor performance? If not, begin by determining what can be done to strengthen the weaknesses in your current process or redesign the process.

Does the will to correct performance problems exist in your organization? Do most of the managers and supervisors have the will to maximize performance? If not, what must you do to move them in that direction? Are managers and supervisors held accountable for dealing effectively with poor performance?

Do managers and supervisors know how to deal effectively with poor performance? Do they need training?

If you want to learn more about addressing poor performance and performance management, visit the Development Initiatives, Performance Management, Counseling and Addressing Performance Problems section of the website.

SIGNIFICANT rewards and/or recognition follow performance excellence

If you were to do a poll of state employees right now, you would find that the greatest majority feel that there is no meaningful reward for superior performance. They will tell you that the only reward for hard work is more work. State government has never been known for high paying jobs and many state employees continue to work hard because they are motivated to serve the citizens of this state. That is not to say that money is not important, but to make the point that it is the lack of differential in treatment that causes the problem here.

Top-performing organizations make a significant distinction in how they reward and recognize performance excellence. They make extra efforts to ensure that those who make significant contributions to the organization's success are recognized and rewarded accordingly. Superior performance receives superior recognition and rewards. Research clearly shows that employees who perceive a greater return on investment of their time and talents will perform at higher levels.

If you want to learn more about improving employee engagement, visit the Motivation Initiatives, Work Environment, Employee Engagement Tools section of the website. If you want to learn more about recognizing and rewarding high performance employees, visit the Motivation Initiatives, Rewards and Recognition section of the website.

EVERYTHING important to success is measured

If you scored a five in this area, you probably already know how well the organization is performing and what progress has already been made toward reaching key business objectives. Knowing this information is vitally important to successful achievement of the mission/vision. You must know if you are on-course or off-course if you are to reach your desired destination. You cannot take corrective action after the journey is concluded.

If you scored low in this area, there are several possibilities that result.

If you do not have an organizational mission/vision, you would not have identified a clear business destination. It is not likely that you would have clear and measurable key objectives to guide your way. In that event, you would not have anything meaningful to measure. If this is the case, you would need a strategy for determining what meaningful measures should be instituted.

If you have a mission/vision and key business objectives in place, then you already have meaningful measures in place. The low score may mean that collection of data has not been instituted. If this is the case, you must develop a strategy or strategies to gather this information on a regular basis. This may mean assigning responsibility to a person or group to gather this information.

Research has shown that top performing companies regularly and routinely monitor things that are important to their success. If you want to learn more

about establishing meaningful measures or metrics, visit the Metrics section of the website.

GOALS and progress toward goals are openly communicated

In a high performance culture, any important information related to the business is communicated openly and honestly both inside and outside the organization. In this age when citizens are demanding more and more transparency and accountability from state government, open communications are vitally important. Inside the organization, open communication is important to track progress, productivity and to make decisions about corrective action.

If excellent progress is being made, the organization or the individual employee needs to know so that they can continue what they are doing. If poor progress is being made, corrective action can be taken to make improvements in progress or productivity. If you scored a five in this area, you need not take any action. In the event that your score was low, it would be important to identify a communication strategy that will provide this vital information throughout the organization.

HIRE, motivate, develop and retain top performing employees

Success in building and sustaining a performance culture is dependant on the organization's capacity to staff each position with high performing employees. That is especially true in key positions. High-performance organizations put forth extra effort to be sure that they are getting the right person in the right job at the right time. Performance excellence can never be achieved without a workforce that will rise to the occasion and "deliver the goods."

If you scored high in this area, it is likely that managers and supervisors are mostly satisfied with the employee they are able to hire and retain in the organization. A high score might also reflect success at achieving remarkable results. In the event that you recorded a low score in this area, you might want to check out the tools and strategies included on this website to hire, motivate, develop and retain top performing employees.

A low score related to a need to improve the recruitment of quality candidates for employment might cause you to be interested in the recruitment section of this web page. If this is true, visit the Staffing Initiatives, Recruitment section of the website. If you are having difficulties selecting the right candidates for filling vacant positions, visit the Staffing Initiatives, Selection section of the website. If you are experiencing problems with turnover, you might want to explore ideas for retaining employees. If so, visit the Retention section of the website.

CAREER development is encouraged

Employees, in many respects, make decisions much like an organization. Employees want to know that their hard work will provide a meaningful “return on investment” for them and/or their respective families. As mentioned above, financial rewards for delivering remarkable results is one way of motivating employees. In addition, career development had been shown to be a meaningful motivator for employees. Effective career development programs have been shown to improve employee engagement and to reduce turnover.

In addition to money or some other tangible form of recognition, employees want to know that the place where they are employed cares about their future. Organizations that find effective ways to encourage and support employees in their individual career development planning recognize the rewards of increased employee engagement.

If you are interested in learning more about developing an effective career development program, visit the Development Initiatives, Career Development section of the website. If you would like to know more about employee engagement and getting the most out of your employees, visit the Motivation Initiatives, Work Environment, Employee Engagement Tools section of the website.

BARRIERS to productivity are identified and eliminated

One of the most effective and least expensive ways of improving performance and productivity is a process for identifying and removing barriers to performance. This is a key characteristic of a performance culture. Efforts to remove performance barriers must be instituted at every level throughout the organization and must be ongoing.

If a poll of state employees were to be conducted today, a high percentage of the responses would indicate there is little encouragement for employees to identify problems or to make innovative suggestions for eliminating them. In many cases, state employees fear negative repercussions for identifying problems or making suggestions.

In top-performing organizations, employees are encouraged, and in many cases, rewarded for identifying performance barriers and offering innovative ways to eliminate barriers and to improve performance. Taking that actions leads to improved performance and increases in employee engagement. Building and maintaining this process strengthens the relationship between employees and senior level management.

If you have an interest in learning more about employee engagement, visit the Motivation Initiatives, Work Environment, Employee Engagement Tools section of the website. If you would like to learn more about improving the work environment, visit the Motivation Initiatives, Work Environment, section of the website.

FORMAL operating rules are minimized

State government, like most government, is known more for the bureaucracy than for flexibility in getting work done. State government cannot confront 21st century challenges using a personnel system that has evolved over time and developed to address the problems from 50 years ago.

Top performing organizations do not permit cumbersome personnel policies to hamstring their operations. Research has shown that the greatest number of people employed by government exercise good judgment when it comes to carrying out their duties. Top-performing companies minimize the formal rules and deal with employees as mature adults. It can be argued that many state personnel policies were formulated to prevent something rather than to encourage or promote performance. Those policies exist to establish boundaries for the few employees who fail to exercise good judgment or who try to take advantage of the system.

State personnel policies are beyond the scope of individual managers and supervisors. However, those people are vitally important in identifying barriers to performance that are created by outdated and ineffective rules and regulations. If you scored a low number in this area, you might consider strategies to identify and correct performance barriers related to policies and procedures.

EMPLOYEE development builds key competencies

When we looked back toward the strategic planning process and the creation of a mission/vision and key business objectives, we looked at the need to identify key jobs and key competencies. Maintaining a workforce that can sustain an innovative approach to getting remarkable results requires that those key competencies are developed or improved.

There are two important views to consider when we look at the employee development characteristic in a performance culture. Employee development plans are important to employees as they go about carrying out their career development plans. Employee development opportunities become a step in an employee's career development plan. The other view involves what the organization needs in order to successfully meet performance objectives. In this case, the organization's needs are the primary focus.

If you scored low in this area, it might be because there is nothing in place to guide decision-making regarding development needs for individuals or the organization. Determine what strategies must be developed and implemented to bring development to a place where it meets individual or organizational needs. If you want to know more about development, visit the Development Initiatives section of the website.

DATA drive the organization toward stated objectives

If you have not yet reviewed the section entitled “**Everything important to success is measured,**” you may benefit from going back and reviewing that section. Data collected by measuring everything that is important to the organization’s success must be used in a meaningful manner to bring about adjustments that will improve performance. Top-performing organizations make decisions based upon facts rather than emotional responses to a particular set of circumstances.

If you scored low on this characteristic, it is probably because of a lack of data. If this is the case, you will need to follow the recommendations found under that section. In the event that data are available and that important information is being collected, low numbers may be due to the lack of a plan for using those results. If this is the case, you will need to develop strategies for putting that information to work. If you are interested in how you might maximize the use of metric information, visit the Metrics section of the website.

INNOVATION replaces traditional methods of operation

Tradition abounds in state government. Many aspects of government activity have not changed over the years. State government is only adrift on a sea of change if we fail to abandon traditional methods where more effective results can be attained through innovation and thinking outside the box. In a performance culture, innovation is a way of life. Failure to adopt an innovative approach to state government can have some pretty serious consequences. People inside and outside state government agree “the wheels of government turn slowly.” In years gone by, those traditional methods of conducting the state’s business were acceptable. But in today’s world of rapid change, effective government must be responsive to the environment around us.

If your organization scored low in this area, you will need to focus on what you might do to encourage and support the use of innovation in those areas where it might add the most to improving productivity and provided those necessary results that maintain or improve the life-styles of North Carolina’s citizens.

ORGANIZATIONAL recognition for achieving remarkable results

If you have not yet been recognized for remarkable results, it is not likely that you scored high on this characteristic. A true performance culture consistently gets attention. A performance culture is always client- or customer-centered, and meeting or exceeding customer expectations is always the goal of a performance culture. In the case of state government, our efforts must be directed toward producing results that maintain or improve citizen life-style. Citizens and other stakeholders are, then, the ultimate judges of whether or not a state agency meets or exceeds their expectations. Every state agency must be able to discern

how the citizens view what they do and whether or not it contributes to giving them a better life.

If you scored low in this area, it is likely that you must direct your attention to one or several of the following possibilities.

Do you know how the results produced by your organization actually benefit the state's citizens and/or stakeholders? Can you see how the work that you perform actually produces a benefit for them? If not, you will benefit from defining how your work benefits their needs.

Do you know what the citizens and/or stakeholders expect from your organization in terms of results? Do you know precisely what they consider to be satisfactory results? Do you know what they would view as remarkable results? If not, you will benefit from a study to determine what results produced by your organization the citizens or stakeholders of the state value.

Do your results help to maintain or improve the quality of life for them? If you do not know the answer to that question, then you will need to develop some way to find out.

You can see that developing a performance culture is not easy. It is a complicated and complex goal to be achieved through commitment and hard work. Our hope is that you will be inspired to cultivate a performance culture in your organization.