

# Manage Your Own Performance



*...a better way to manage*

the  
happy  
manager

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## HOW TO BE A BETTER MANAGER

# Managing Your Own Performance

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# How to be a Better Manager ...

**Managing your own performance** is one of a series of practical, thought-provoking guides, designed to help you deal with a wide range of management ideas, activities and situations. Whether you are a new manager, or one who wants to hone or develop existing skills, we're sure you'll find something valuable in any of these guides.

This series of e-guides is published by Apex Leadership Ltd. The guides have been developed by a team of professional managers, consultants and educators. The full range of titles is available from [Apex Leadership Ltd](#), or from [the Happy Manager.com](#). Use these guides to benefit from our wealth of management expertise. Let us help you find: **a better way to manage...**

Phil Higson & Anthony Sturgess  
Directors, Apex Leadership Ltd

## Using the guides

Each guide contains information, insight and inspiration on essential management topics. The best way to use the guides is to read through each section in turn, ensuring you pause for reflection wherever you see the "Consider..." points. Be sure to answer any questions posed, wherever they appear - they are there for a reason!

**Consider ...**

**Tools ...**

After you've worked through the guide, read the summary checklist on page 22. This both summarizes the contents of guide, and gives you actions to take to help you use it. Finally, work through the tools. These have been designed to help you make the most of the advice given in the guide.

- Click on the tool buttons where they appear for an in-text hyperlink to the actual tool.
- At the end of each tool you can simply click on the "return" link to get back to your place in the guide.

Both the tools and the summary checklist are simple to use as handy references at the end of the guide, or as convenient memory aids to carry with you.

# Managing Your Own Performance

## 1 What Do We Mean by Perform?

We all know that managing effectively is a balancing act, but before managing the performance of others, there is one critical thing to consider. If you are going to manage the performance of others, you need to give some thought to your own performance, skills and well-being. Ensure your own performance is up to the task!

In this e-guide, we explore a range of critical factors that contribute to your own optimum performance. These factors set an agenda for better performance management. Why? Because people **perform** at their best when they use their **strengths**, when they feel able to **choose** what they do, and how they do it. This allows them to harness their creative **energy** and to **focus** on delivering goals, preferably those related to a meaningful purpose.

The factors are covered in five key themes:

1. **Using your strengths**
2. **Working at peak performance**
3. **Creating more discretionary time (time which *you* control)**
4. **Finding energy sources and using that energy to be creative**
5. **Focusing on delivering meaningful results**

In each of these areas, we examine specific tensions which can affect performance - tensions between work that is motivating, and work that "drags us down". For example:

- Do you feel overloaded or buoyed up by your work? Consider your **workload**
- Are you over-stretched, or at the other extreme, bored by your work? How **easy is your work?**
- Do you feel trapped, with little choice in what you do? How much **discretionary time** do you have?
- Do you feel tired? Have you lost your **ability to be creative?**
- Do you get the *right* things done – are your actions **focused?**

Throughout this e-guide you will find helpful advice on getting your work-balance just right, to help you manage your own performance.

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### 3 How to Get Better at What You Do

The first place to start is to decide to get better at what you're already good at - especially any areas where you're making a meaningful contribution to the organization's performance. Secondly, consider any areas where you have the potential to be good, but which you've not yet explored. This is particularly likely to be the case if you're new to a management or team leader role.

How do you find areas of existing strengths? We have already suggested some key points:

- strengths are best identified by feedback
- they are evidenced based
- you can generally see them in what you have achieved
- they will often be associated with things you enjoy doing

Seeking feedback from people you trust can be a great way to identify your potential strengths. Others may be able to recognise strengths or potential in you, even where you may not. Next look at what interests you. What do you have a passion for, and what things do you love doing or would love to do. These are often initial indicators that you may have some potential strength to offer or develop. We're far more likely to get good at something we're interested in and enjoy. Remember though that not everything you like to do will necessarily be of value at work. Some things may well stay as hobbies or interests. Your strengths need to be valued by your organization.

But how do you get to *be* good at something? And what do managers particularly need to be good at? Ideally, good managers need to develop their abilities in managing: purpose; people; processes; projects; profit; and performance. Of course, as we've already said, nobody can be good at everything, so how do you manage such a range of important areas?

You will need to look at which areas in particular are priorities for you. But first of all you should recognise a more fundamental requirement of what managers need to do. If you have recently moved in to a management role, then the biggest difference you will experience is that you are now responsible for achieving results through others. Whether you are new to a management role or not, it is still the most important distinguishing activity of being a manager. The implications for your own performance are that you need to become good at getting others to perform!

Use Tool 3 to determine where you should focus your development needs. Five areas are particularly important:

1. Setting direction and leading by example
2. Creating the conditions for productive and enjoyable work
3. Planning and implementing
4. Enabling performance
5. Building relationships and networking



**Tool 3**

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## 6 It's Difficult to Be Creative When You Feel Tired

How do you maintain a positive attitude in the workplace? It's very difficult to perform at your best when you feel you lack space and time, or you're overburdened or lacking in energy. However, even addressing these elements will not necessarily help you to be creative if you no longer find your work inspiring. Creativity is probably best enhanced by maintaining a positive attitude in the workplace.

### Take a Step Back

If you're starting to feel uninspired in what you do, then perhaps it's time to take a step back and remind yourself of why you're doing it in the first place. Our attitude to work and life is largely our own business so choosing to feel positive is largely within our own control.

#### Consider ...

**"Everything can be taken from a man or a woman but one thing: the last of human freedoms to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."**

Viktor Frankl

Try applying the following to your work:

- **Re-frame** - even if you can't spend all of your time doing the specific aspects of your job that bring you the most happiness, try to adopt a positive attitude in the workplace to everything you do. Try to "re-frame" how you feel about your work. Positive thinking, looking for the best in people or situations, can work wonders if you just give it a try.
- **Re-ignite** - what did you once enjoy about your work? Try to rekindle your enthusiasm. Remember what it was that you once enjoyed and make a conscious effort to feel that way again.
- **Re-charge** - is it time for a break from what you're doing to get some space or some rest?
- **Re-fresh** - is it time to start something new, accept a new challenge?
- **Re-think** - what you're doing for your customers (both internal and external). Think about the overall contribution your organisation makes to its customers or to society in general. Focus on your own input to this contribution. Is there something new you can do for your customers? Is there a new way of looking at what you currently do?. For example, are you managing people, or helping them to grow and achieve?



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## Summary Checklist: Managing Your Own Performance

Summary Checklist:	Managing Your Own Performance
<b>What do we mean by perform?</b>	People <b>perform</b> at their best when they use their <b>strengths</b> , when they feel able to <b>choose</b> what they do, and how they do it. This allows them to harness their creative <b>energy</b> and to <b>focus</b> on delivering goals, preferably those related to a meaningful purpose.
<b>Finding your best</b>	<p>Find and use your strengths - things you do consistently and well. Focus more on the things you're good at; delegate or dismiss work which you find difficult; re-negotiate workload with your manager; use staff development to improve any deficiencies in skills or knowledge stopping you from making the most of your strengths</p> <p>Address factors reducing effectiveness of strength: lack of discipline or even laziness; poor behaviours; de-motivation; disruptive factors.</p> <p>Peak performance comes from being in flow; identify work inspiring "effortless concentration"; create and manage enabling conditions.</p>
<b>How to get better at what you do</b>	<p>Know yourself; your business; your customers; your colleagues.</p> <p>Practice activities which at an appropriate level of difficulty &amp; well-defined; seek feedback for correction of mistakes.</p>
<b>Creating more discretionary time</b>	Be aware of & try to manage time constraints imposed by your boss, colleagues, yourself or a system.
<b>How do you feel about work?</b>	Try to reduce burnout by managing: workload; choice; relationships and energy. Think about workload in relation to energy: sourcing; sapping; saving; supplying; sustaining.
<b>It's difficult to be creative with you feel stale</b>	<p>If you think you're feeling stale in what you do, remind yourself of why you're working. Our attitude to work and life is largely our own business so choosing to feel positive is largely within our own control</p> <p>Avoid becoming stale: re-frame; re-ignite; re-charge; re-refresh; re-think.</p>
<b>Getting the right things done</b>	<p>"There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all."</p> <p>Ask yourself: are my goals clear; do they reflect what you want to achieve; are they motivational; are they challenging; are they specific; are they worth achieving; are they geared towards personal growth, connection, contribution, and interesting?</p>
<b>Now do the same for your team</b>	Think again about each of the five key themes in this guide: performance; strengths; choice; energy; focus. Think about how you can use them to manage better performance <i>in your team</i> :

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## Tool 5: Action Plan to Eradicate Busyness

So, how do we deal with busyness? Before you can manage it in others you must first consider your own use of time. Use the 10 steps in this tool to deal with busyness.

Firstly ask yourself four questions to clarify your own working practices:

1. **Are your objectives clear, unambiguous and SMART?** - specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bounded.
2. **Is it clear which activities deliver results?** - in relation to your objectives.
3. **Does the task/activity need to be done?** - does it add value to your organisation?
4. **Does the activity do anything meaningful for your customer?** - do they value it?

**Now you are clear about the nature of the work you're doing, put some practical steps in place to combat busyness:**

5. **Be clear about what you are doing** - so that you can be clear about what you don't need to do.
6. **Ask "why?" (nicely and often)** - both of others asking you to do something, and of yourself in what you do.
7. **Say "no"!** - as often as is needed to keep busyness under control.
8. **Prune and review regularly** - stop busyness creeping in by remembering: anything run by human beings will tend towards complexity.
9. **Don't get too busy!** If the day is *filled* with activity then it is *too* full.
10. **Don't confuse activity with productivity** - or allow others to do so either.

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## HOW TO BE A BETTER MANAGER

### Updates

For more information on the content of this e-guide, and other related topics, visit:  
[www.the-happy-manager.com](http://www.the-happy-manager.com)

Join the community: subscribe to the Happy Manager Newsletter for regular updates and advice on better ways to manage.

Join the conversation: bookmark the Happy Manager blog.

([www.the-happy-manager/blog](http://www.the-happy-manager/blog)) Leave any comments, suggestions or examples of your own experiences for the benefit of other readers.

### Titles available:

How to be a Happy Manager  
Have a Good Workday  
How to Build a Happy Workplace  
Workstyle, Lifestyle

Build a Better Team  
Team Building Exercises  
Team Health Check  
The Problems with Teams  
Why is Teamwork Important?

Leadership Essentials  
Defining Leadership  
Leading with Style and Focus  
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Managing Time and Priority  
Extreme Thinking: Unlocking Creativity  
SMART Goals, SHARP Goals  
Making Better Decisions  
What's the Problem?

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### Notes