

PERFORMANCE BREAKTHROUGHS, INC. (PBI)



Guiding Your Journey to Excellence

DO YOU HAVE “ORGANIZATIONAL EXCELLENCE”?

“What’s the best organization you’ve ever been in?” “Why was it so good?” “What was done to build it? ... Sustain it?” Most organizations focus on pieces of this challenge, but few address it holistically and directly.

HPO: Performance Breakthroughs, Inc. (PBI) advocates the concept of becoming a High Performance Organization (HPO) or achieving “Organizational Excellence.” What is an HPO?

- (1) It is being the best it can be.
- (2) It is having all required the elements.
- (3) It is ensuring all the elements are integrated with each other.

As shown on the right, we use a puzzle framework to describe the six major levers of an HPO that need to be aligned with and support customer needs and wants ... leading to maximum mission/vision accomplishment and ongoing staff commitment.



POSITIONING: The High Performance Organization is a “means” to grow/strengthen your organization – thus positioning it for desired “ends” related to mission, vision, and values. Still, you need to execute. Project and Portfolio Management approaches can then help you take that positioning and work it to the desired results.

ASSESSMENT: A first step in the HPO journey would be to assess your organization against the above framework. Give yourself honest letter grades (A – F) on each of the puzzle pieces. Note that the customer piece deserves two grades – one for external and one for internal customers (their view of you). If you score an A or B on all pieces, we would say you are a High Performance Organization. Scores of C or lower need to be worked on. The severity of your lower scores should help you prioritize your efforts.

JUSTIFICATION: Why should you become a High Performance Organization? Well, that is for you to decide ... and it is one of the most critical pieces of this journey. Without a serious commitment or a high level of organizational pain, most efforts in this direction will be incomplete or only temporary. Take the time to define what we call the Pain/Gain issues and why you would commit to this FOREVER.

BENEFITS: Another way to characterize the HPO or organizational excellence is to describe it in results-based terms. We recommend that this be one of your early steps since it both increases the motivation levels and clarifies the picture of success. Here is a short list of our HPO outcomes:

- The organization retains its “all-stars,” and these all-stars feel both valued and equipped for excellence.
- Our employees bring energy, commitment, and “their whole self” to the organization.
- Our all-stars bring more all-stars into the organization.
- Clients feel delighted (with the outcome and the experience) and bring the organization new business (extending/expanding their contracts or giving referrals to others).
- The organization has/uses a vision and strategic plan to guide its management and budgeting philosophy and decisions.
- The organization’s Core Values drive its behavioral/social norms to achieve the desired culture.
- The organization’s reputation and financial standing are solid and enduring.

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HPO DESCRIPTION: Below is a brief overview of the HPO framework (illustrated earlier):

- **CUSTOMERS:** We believe in Customer Delight (maximizing the customer's outcome and their experience). Customers are the centerpiece of our Organizational Excellence framework as THEY are the reason that organizations exist ... and thrive or even survive. Organizations need to know who their true customer is (often this is not clear or there may be several competing entities) and those customers' needs and wants. High Performance Organizations not only delight the customer for current needs and wants, but they also anticipate and deliver on future or unrealized needs.
- **VISION/STRATEGIC PLANNING:** High Performance Organizations KNOW where they are going. They have clearly defined their Vision (picture of success for 3 – 5 years ahead), their Mission (why they exist), and their Strategies (levers for accomplishing the vision). In addition to describing the target for mission/business success, they have clearly articulated their Core Values (the organization's behavioral and social norms) and use those in their recruitment, screening, hiring, orientation, and performance management systems.
- **LEADERSHIP:** Leaders define the vision for the organization and the path to get there. We hope that this is done in an inclusive manner with all major voices represented in the discussion. Leaders also help shape the culture – by their words, their actions, what they choose to focus on and support, and what they avoid. Finally, leaders guide the organization with their philosophy and decisions – targets to pursue, resourcing of plans/initiatives, etc. Managers help execute the vision – through effectively balancing the accomplishment of projects/tasks and meeting the needs of the workforce. Obviously, there is much more involved in this piece!
- **EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT AND COMPETENCE:** We use the terms employee and workforce to apply to ALL levels of the organization. Commitment is the “willingness.” Competence is the “ableness.” When you maximize both ... you will maximize your workforce's performance. We believe that measuring “commitment” is more powerful than measuring morale or satisfaction. We use a “Continuum of Commitment” (from “compliance” to “commitment”) that helps managers and employees identify where they are on that commitment line and how to move that “X” to the right (high commitment). A new discipline called Performance Consulting uses the framework below to diagnose or prevent workforce performance problems.

Performance Equation



Organizations with “Organizational Excellence” invest in this systemic approach to improving performance.

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- **PERFORMANCE MEASURES:** Organizations create and use measures so that they can manage better. A clear, specific strategic direction and path to get there makes it easier to determine what measures will accurately track progress and accomplishment of that direction. “What gets measured, gets done” and “What gets rewarded, gets done.” If you really want to influence employee (and leader) performance, look at what your organization measures and rewards. Most organizations are good at defining and gathering data on operational and tactical issues (number of calls received, number of students trained, etc.). We advocate creating measures that matter – ones that are more strategic and managerial and that “map” to the outcomes you identify in your vision/strategic plan.
- **CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION:** This is all about winning hearts and minds for the change effort - which could be the implementation of a major piece of software, a new policy or direction, or a change in organizational structure. Our work with clients is often described as helping them on their journey from “Good to Great” or “dysfunction to good,” but always from the “current state to the desired state.” Change efforts should leverage the driving forces already in place and minimize the resistance forces. None of those, however, can come close to the power of trust. Distrust or the absence of trust is often a near guarantee of failure for this implementation. We believe that:

Better Communication → More Collaboration → Improved Trust → Higher Performance

Your people must know that you have the organization’s, the customers’, and the employees’ “best interests at heart.” They must believe you are sincere and that your support for the change will be active and visible, and that the change will be fully resourced. When people find a WIIFM (What’s In It For Me?), they’ll usually buy-in and get onboard. Leaders must be able to articulate how the change will affect them before this can happen.

WHAT’S NEXT? So ... where is your organization right now? What’s the pain level? What are the potential gains that can come from committing to this journey? How would it be if your workforce was excited to come to work every day and “brought their whole self” to the table? Even if you can’t “fix” the overall organization, you can help your department or team become an “island of excellence.” We hope you find something in here to help your journey to Organizational Excellence.

*Performance Breakthroughs Inc. helps organizations, teams, and individuals achieve excellence.
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