



GOAL: Perform Current Job Tasks Better

Contributed by Tom Wright
Escondido Public Library

Introduction

Job performance refers to the way people do their jobs and the results of their work. There is an important link between your job performance and your future professional and financial success. This curriculum will provide you with some educational tools to prepare for job and professional success. This may sound like a tall order, but by becoming more valuable to your employer, you begin to take control of your future.

Getting Started

Are you happy with your job? Or are you employed in a job ill-suited to your aptitude and personality? You may be able to improve on-job performance simply by finding a job that is better matched to your abilities. (See the “Find a job” goal in this curriculum guide.)

If you are satisfied with your present position, two pieces of information are important to have at this point: a comprehensive description of your job and a copy of the evaluation form used for your periodic performance review. If it’s available and you feel comfortable, include a recent actual performance review. The information contained in these documents will be the foundation of creating your “Development Action Plan” or “DAP.”

Books and Materials

Books

Here are some specific book recommendations but you can also ask the reference librarian and/or the literacy staff to help you find something similar:

Sink or Swim: New Job, New Boss, 12 Weeks to Get It Right, Sindell and Sindell, Adams Media, 2006

Key Vocabulary for a Safe Workplace, New Readers Press

Learn the essential vocabulary and gain the tools you need to prevent or reduce accidents and injuries on the job.

Websites

These first three are excellent self-assessment sites. Do these together with your tutor if you have access to a computer:

- <http://www.assessment.com/MappMembers/Welcome.asp?AccNum=06-6379-> - Discover your strengths, your styles for communication, learning and leadership. See what career is best for you.
- <http://www.livecareer.com/default.asp?lp=st04&cobrand=CLEAR> – This career test is designed for anyone who is: looking for a job, considering a career change, re-entering the workforce, feeling "stuck" in their career, in need of career direction, and/or seeking their true calling.
- <http://www.college911.com/express/precog9/index.asp> - Are you stuck in a job that you hate? Looking for a career that will make you happy? Take this test to jiggle your brain and get a few ideas to help you find your life's purpose.

The next three are self-improvement sites. See comments below each site for a description. Again, ideally you would do these in tandem with your tutor:

- http://www.bticonsultants.com/eprise/main/web/sg/bti/en/self_improvement - This self-quiz allows you to measure yourself on various performance attributes, from “setting priorities” to “flexibility.”
- <http://artpetty.com/tag/personal-improvement/> - Art Petty is a personal improvement coach who has devised a Personal Quality Improvement Program and blends personal and on-the-job improvement practices.
- <http://www.articlesbase.com/article-tags/personal-improvement> - If you are interested in comparing personal improvement ideas on the job and off, this excellent site offers a compilation of 15 such articles.

Key Vocabulary

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|--------------|----------------------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------|
| ◆ perform | ◆ performance review | ◆ current | ◆ actual | ◆ aptitude |
| ◆ evaluation | ◆ implement | ◆ mature | ◆ attributes | ◆ conscientious |
| ◆ assessment | ◆ responsibility | ◆ professional development | | |

Reading & Writing Practice

Review Your Job Description. Bring your job description (available through your company's Human Resources Department) to your tutoring session. Also bring any on-the-job policies or procedures that apply to you. Together read through these documents with two different colored high-lighters. With one color, high-light those parts that make sense to you and where you are already successful; with the other colored high-lighter, high-light those parts that don't make sense or where you need to improve. Make a list of those areas where you need improvement and think about the different ways that you could take small steps to improve. Write those small steps down. For example:

Area That Needs Improvement: Providing status report for the next shift

Steps I Can Take to Improve:

- Practice writing notes
- Practice summarizing events
- Review report format
- Practice using punctuation
- Buy an electronic speller and learn to use

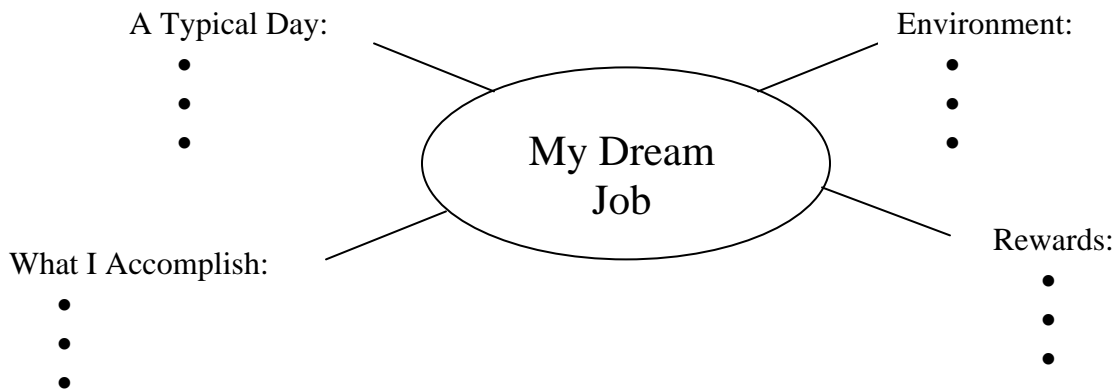
Performance Review. Below are typical comments on a performance review. Pretend to be your own boss and review yourself (as honestly as possible) and check those places where you are doing well:

- Adapts to change well
- Works well under pressure
- Maintains a positive attitude when under stress
- Is an active listener
- Is someone that can be depended on
- Manages time well
- Seeks out responsibility and follows through
- Pays attention to details
- Constantly seeks professional development opportunities
- Happy to be here
- Demonstrates a high level of self confidence
- Demonstrates a high level of self esteem
- Has a pleasant personality
- Follows directions well
- Accepts responsibility willingly
- Goes beyond the call of duty
- Exceeds expectations
- Demonstrates effective verbal communication skills
- Demonstrates effective written communication skills
- Demonstrates a sense of humor
- Is highly conscientious about the quality of work
- Contributes frequently in meetings and casual gatherings

- Takes an active part in discussions
- Gets along well with co-workers
- Strives to cooperate with all staff
- Is very thoughtful and considerate of others
- Takes criticism well and learns from mistakes
- Demonstrates a strong team playing ability
- Works well independently
- Accepts responsibility eagerly
- Work demonstrates conscientiousness
- Is highly enthusiastic
- Shows great flexibility
- Mature and responsible
- Isn't afraid to ask questions
- Shares information clearly and concisely

Are there areas that need improvement (places you left unchecked)? Highlight those areas and discuss with your tutor why you need to improve in that area. These weaknesses are the basis of a “Development Action Plan” (DAP). This plan should address the gaps between your actual job performance and your job description/performance review. So, for instance, if you are afraid to ask questions, why? What steps can you take to improve in this area? Go through each area that needs improvement and think about the steps you can take to meet with success.

Dream Job. Using a word map, brainstorm about your ideal job: Are you working alone or on a team? Are you very busy or relaxed? Are you at a desk or outside? Are you using a computer or using your hands? Are you working for a big company or alone at home? How are you making a difference? What are the rewards of the job? Here's a sample outline. From this brainstorm, write your ideas into full sentences and even paragraphs:



Games & Activities

- Why not give each other one of the excellent aptitude tests available on the websites listed above? Even if you are currently employed, you may be curious about your true job likes and dislikes.
- Your literacy staff may be able to help you find someone who enjoys their work and has become very successful at what they do (maybe another tutor or learner?). Interview this person and ask what were the factors involved in the person's rise to success? How did s/he find job satisfaction? Prepare some questions ahead of time and then bring a tape recorder to record your interview. You can write about the experience at a later time. If your literacy program has a newsletter, ask literacy staff if you can contribute this story as an article.

Independent Practice/Homework Ideas

- Select a peer at your workplace whom you trust and with whom you have an open and honest relationship. Ask them if they would help you with a homework assignment. Using your job description or performance review, ask them to tell you frankly how you measure up for each of the job behavior requirements.

Milestones

- **Initial Effort** – Review the following documents as a foundation for your plan of improvement: your job description; a blank copy of your performance review and/or a recent actual review by your boss, if available.
- **Making Progress** – You have begun preparing a Development Action Plan, your roadmap to real change in your behavior. You have invested a great deal of time and thought into strategies for improving your performance and have been totally honest with yourself. You have identified actual/ideal performance gaps and have listed ways that you can close those gaps.
- **Accomplished** – You have begun to implement strategies to close the gap between your job description and your actual performance. During your workday you are identifying the old behaviors, noting how they differ from the ideal, and making the necessary changes. As time passes, you are noticing an increase in your effectiveness and perhaps a compliment or two from your boss!

Tips For Success

Remember your tutor is here to help! Hit a snag in your improvement plan? Are one or more parts not working? Think of him or her as your “personal success coach” standing ready to collaborate with you on finding a new path, if necessary. Periodically review your progress. Are some parts working better than others? Maybe a subtle tweak here and there might be the answer. Stay committed!! Any type of change is difficult; behavioral change particularly so. Expect bumps in the road, but realize even though progress may be slow at times, you are building your future.



Contributor's Biography

Tom Wright. Tom has a BA in Business Marketing and is a Field Marketing Manager, retired from a large multi-national oil company. His responsibilities included hiring and performing performance reviews, experience which has helped him in preparing this curriculum.