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***OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE™ ASSESSMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS***



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INTRODUCTION TO OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

FORGET PERFECT; FIND OPTIMAL

No individual would be expected to be equally proficient in all skills, or to implement them with equal effectiveness in every circumstance or situation. Optimal performance approach recognizes that nobody is perfect and that each person has different strengths and weaknesses, and that we all struggle at times in our quest to put the organizational values and expectations into action amid the real-world challenges.

Optimal performance avoids EXCESS or DEFICIENCY relative to:

- (1) the organizational MISSION and VISION, GOALS and EXPECTATIONS,
- (2) each person's SENSIBILITIES and CAPABILITIES, and
- (3) the real-world CIRCUMSTANCES faced in the life of the organization.



Optimal Performance assessments built by IEE help standardize organizational assessment and development efforts. They capture what the organizational values and expectations should look like, sound like, and feel like in practice. Each assessment identifies a range of the most typical types of behaviors for each of the corresponding expectations that apply across the organization.

Employees achieve optimal performance when they implement these behaviors and practices consistently, intentionally, and in a way that matches expectations, specific circumstances, and an individual's capabilities. Leaders and mentors ensure consistency across the organization in formation of employees' core attitudes and skills, and in shaping the overall culture of excellence by integrating Optimal Performance assessment and development tools into their leadership or mentoring process.

GROWTH-FOCUSED SELF-EVALUATION

Optimal Performance assessments are essential tools facilitating employee and organizational growth. They can be utilized by employees on their own, independent of mentor, coach, or manager input, as they reflect on their past performance and look for ways to improve. Part 1 of the assessment asks an employee to reflect on their performance over a certain period of time and rate it from *Inadequate* to *Optimal*. The standardized items help employees focus on the important concrete aspects of the behavioral expectations for each organizational value or goal. In doing so, employees gain clarity about the organizational norms and expectations, and their ability to meet them.

Ways to maximize effectiveness of the self-study:

1. Starting with the time period of focus is important. Whatever we choose to establish as the time period, that's what is under reflection. The past six days, or six weeks, or six years? It makes no difference, except for clearly anchoring the reflection.
2. Clarity about the time period helps clarify our benchmarks. First, specific expectations may vary due to business cycles or change in our role within the organization. Second, the circumstances of this time period, such as multiple external factors and events, are important. Complete turmoil and uncertainty or smooth sailing? Once again, neither are bad or good per se, but we should be fair in our performance assessment. We need to reflect on both the specific expectations and the specific circumstances.
3. The individual capabilities and sensibilities make up another benchmark. New employee or twenty-year veteran? Sensitive Sally or Sarcastic Sam? The goal is that everyone be a work in progress in trying to optimally implement organizational values and expectations, while allowing for the fact that we each have things that come to us either more easily or with greater difficulty. We need to acknowledge our strengths, and we need to be honest with ourselves in recognizing and rating accordingly items that require further focus and improvement.

WHAT'S WORKING? WHAT SHOULD BE DONE BETTER OR DIFFERENTLY?

Part 2 of the assessment asks an employee to conduct the next, more in-depth level of Self-Study. Question 1 asks to identify examples when the way they put the value into action was in their estimation optimal or close to optimal. Reflecting on this question, employees make their understanding of what is optimal more concrete and specific. This process helps employees build up their confidence and sense of pride for their capabilities (e.g., "I struggle

with conflict and I've got many examples where I fall short of the optimal, but in these instances I was pretty close to optimal."). When earned through real and concrete examples, self-esteem is a powerful psychological factor leading to a strong positive attitude toward the future.

Many—if not all—of the most important skills (such as communication, time management, collaboration, leadership) require positive attitude. But they also need vigilant and persistent effort, an intentional focus on seeking out ways to get better. When we fall short of optimal this doesn't necessarily mean we're a bad person—it may simply mean we have high expectations and some challenging circumstances. The important question to ask and answer for both attitude and effort is: *what do we intend to do better or differently?*

Question 2 in Part 2 prompts employees to come up with action steps for what they can do *better or differently* in the future to put the value into action in a *more* optimal way. This section is an opportunity for employees to plan for growth and goal achievement. They can start by identifying specific things they need to do differently or better. They need then to plan for deliberate practice—ways in which they intend to improve their knowledge or skills. They also need to plan for ways to get the external support and expertise.

For a mentor, coach, or leader, this is a key section for determining and shaping an employee's true self-knowledge. Does their understanding of what caused less-than-optimal performance make sense? Is it thorough and accurate? Does their plan for ensuring optimal performance in the future make sense? Is it real and meaningful?

Thus, the Optimal Performance Self-Studies integrate **assessment** of past performance with **development** toward future growth and improvement.

MENTORING: SUPPORT & CHALLENGE

Optimal Performance assessments are most effective when used in conjunction with feedback provided to the individual by a mentor, coach, or manager — a 180-degree assessment and development process. By filling out the same form as used by their mentee and reflecting on the mentee in doing so, and then sharing and discussing it with the mentee, mentors provide the **Support & Challenge** essential for personal growth and improvement.

Ways to maximize effectiveness of the Optimal Performance process in mentoring:

1. Feedback from mentors needs to include both **praise** and **polish**: praising the mentee's successes and improvement helps build up morale, whereas challenging to do certain things better ensures focus on excellence.

2. Reflections about what to do better or differently are greatly enhanced when self-studies are accompanied by **Other-Study** examples. Mentors can strengthen the feedback process by providing additional definitions, indicators, and examples of what the target value or competency looks, sounds, and feels like in action. They can use examples from across the organization, from their own experiences, or from “aspirational” or “model” individuals or organizations. Other-studies can also include examples of behaviors to avoid.
3. **Excellence with Integrity Tools** can be used as guides for targeted behaviors or practices. EWI Tools are checklists that condense theory and research into a set of concrete steps or actions that can be followed for improvement.
4. Feedback should focus on **specific** changes and improvements (for example, “You can improve communication by asking questions that verify and clarify; by using “I”-statements and avoiding “You”-statements.”). Mentor insights also need also include suggestions for **deliberate practice** around particular skills targeted for improvement.

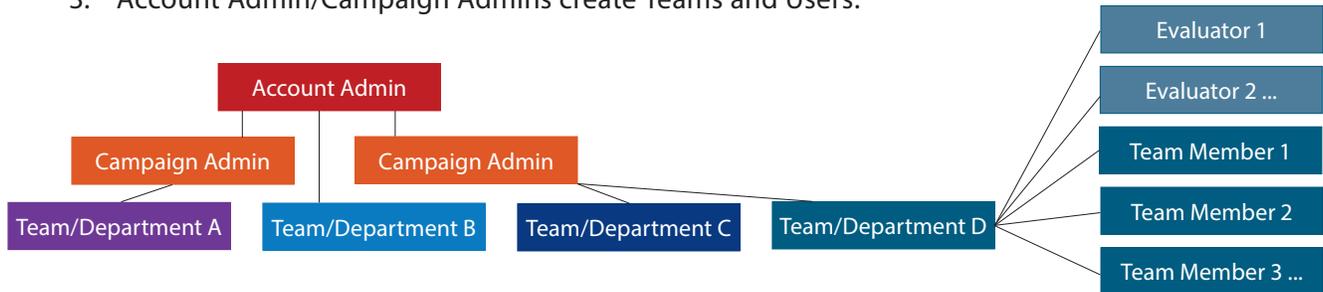
The best coaches and mentors thrive because they avoid destructive attacks of the person, and instead focus specifically on the instructions of what to do better or differently and why. They *name it* (“take a look at this particular idea or behavior or skill...”); they *frame it* (“when facing this particular circumstance or situation...”); they *explain it* (“it must be done *this way*, not *that way*, because...”); and they *practice it*.

In sum, the Optimal Performance Assessment and Development Process incorporates consistent **Self-Study** of optimal performance behaviors and employees’ action plans toward meeting organizational expectations and personal goals. **Support & Challenge** from mentors, or organizational leaders, ensures accountability and expertise, enhanced by **Other-Study** models of what and how to do better or differently. Ultimately, optimal performance is achieved via employees’ **Deliberate Practice** within the real-world circumstances focused on concrete and significant improvement.

OPA APP AT A GLANCE

STEP 1: SETUP — ACCOUNTS, TEAMS, AND USERS.

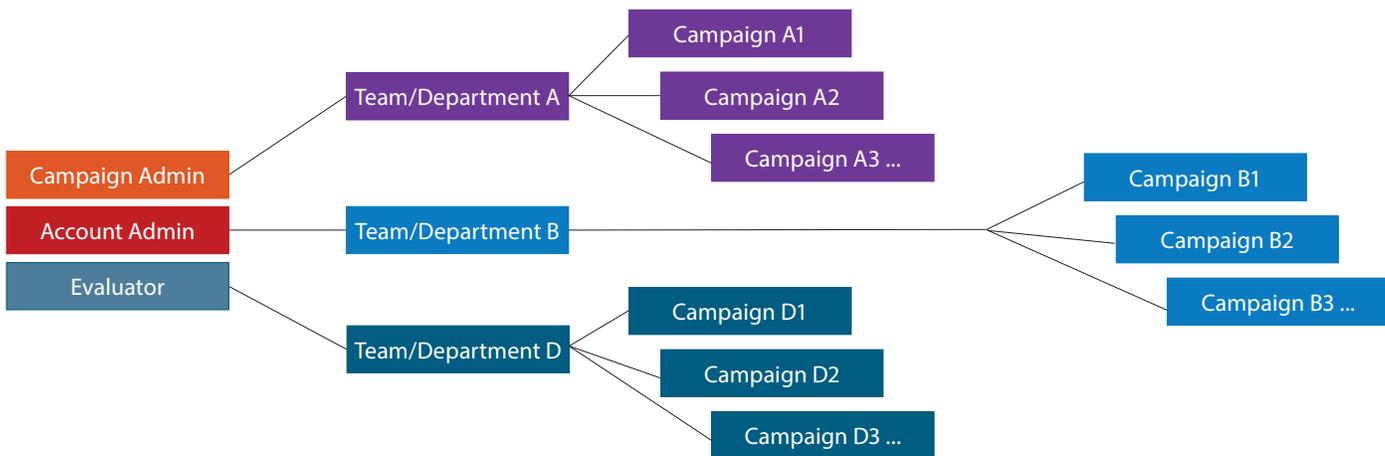
1. IEE creates organization's Account and assigns Account Admin.
2. Account Admin creates Campaign Admins, or performs #3 themselves.
3. Account Admin/Campaign Admins create Teams and Users.



STEP 2: ASSESSMENT — CAMPAIGNS

A Campaign is an assessment of individual *Team members*, on a specific *OPA Topic*, for a specific *Performance Period*—by both a team member and their Evaluator (mentor/coach/manager/leader).

1. Campaign Admin/Account Admin/Evaluator creates and runs a campaign by selecting
 - Team (or individual members on a team),
 - OPA Topic,
 - Performance Period, and
 - Campaign Start/End Dates.
2. Each Team Member receives email with invitation url and completes their self-evaluation.
3. Each Evaluator receives email notification, logs in into the system, and completes evaluation of each team member listed on the Evaluations tab.
4. Evaluator reviews and prints a report for each team member.



STEP 3: FEEDBACK — REFLECTION AND DEVELOPMENT

Evaluator (Mentor/Coach/Manager/Leader) meets with their mentees to review the results, make a plan for performance improvement, and schedule follow up steps.

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