



Playbook: How to Replicate Top Performers at Your Organization

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Managers know high-performing employees are more valuable. Like the all-stars on a sports team, top performers outperform average workers in multiple ways: They close more deals, delight more customers and develop more innovative solutions than their peers.

The statistics don't lie:



In sales, top performers drive about 2.6 times the ROI of low performers.



In manufacturing, top employees outperform average employees by about 50%.



In highly complex occupations, such as software developers, high performers may be up to 800% more productive.

Top performers provide more than just increased productivity: They're the hidden blueprint for organizational success. But how do you understand the secrets of their success and build systems to scale their performance across the entire workforce?

Replicating higher performers isn't about trying to clone your top players. It's about identifying the unique combination of skills, behaviors and motivations that drive their exceptional results. This allows organizations to build a game plan for finding similar potential in new hires and developing existing teams.

Too often, organizations rely on generic job descriptions or easily tracked metrics to understand top performance. This approach misses opportunities to unlock the full potential of the workforce.

This playbook will guide you through a data-driven, human-centered approach to understanding and replicating the behaviors of your top-performing employees. By analyzing the strengths and drivers of your most valuable players, you can build a robust talent pipeline, streamline training, boost employee engagement and transform your business performance.



Step 1: Identify & Assess High Performers

The process begins with scouting to find the high performers in your organization. Because of their relative rarity, this can be challenging. In some companies, top performers make up as little as 5% of the employee population, while in others they constitute up to 30%.

Consider both quantitative metrics such as sales figures and productivity as well as qualitative factors like customer feedback, problem-solving skills and leadership potential.

Keep these tips in mind as you start the discovery and evaluation process:

- » **Gather data from multiple sources:** Look beyond basic metrics. Collect data from performance reviews, customer surveys, peer feedback and other sources that illuminate the behaviors and practices of top performers.
- » **Leverage a variety of assessment tools:** Use a combination of methods to gain a holistic view. Consider psychometric assessments, behavioral interviews and structured observations for deeper insights.

Strategic workforce planning solutions offer powerful insights for identifying and assessing top performers. Here's how you can leverage these tools:

- » **Unlock potential with skills data:** Platforms powered by artificial intelligence (AI) can analyze vast data sets from job descriptions and other sources. This reveals patterns of skills among successful employees and offers predictive recommendations for how to transform your workforce.

- » **Measure what matters:** Go beyond top-level information typically found in résumés and job descriptions. Role assessments generate comprehensive profiles, measuring a range of hard and soft skills, traits, personality, and potential. By analyzing this data, companies discover commonalities behind top-performer success.
- » **Amplify objective learning data:** Track the impact of your talent development programs with platforms that provide insights based on verified skills. Analysis of learning programs provides information about what skills top performers possess and what programs they are engaged in. It also looks ahead toward the initiatives that can later best replicate and scale the skills of star employees.



Step 2: Build the Performance Model

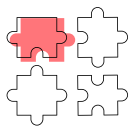
Use your analysis to define success and identify clear criteria for what constitutes a top performer in your organization. Once you've studied the winning plays, you can begin building a framework of what aligns with success in particular roles.

Why? Relying on an objective job model when hiring or evaluating employees for new opportunities helps determine how their traits and skills align with top performers. It also helps eliminate unintended bias. By mapping to objective skills assessments, digital credentials and other metrics, a data-driven model lets you uncover the true skills and traits that are linked to high performance—going further than subjective information from job titles or degrees.

A performance model goes deeper than a job description, mapping the full spectrum of factors that drive exceptional performance. These might include:

- » **Hard skills:** Technical expertise essential for the role.
- » **Soft skills:** Interpersonal, communication and critical thinking abilities.
- » **Attributes:** Personality traits and work styles linked to success, such as resilience and being proactive.
- » **Motivators:** What drives high performers? Is it autonomy, recognition, compensation, the impact of their work or something else?

Remember to take a team approach as you construct your framework. Involve top performers in the model creation process. Their insights and buy-in are crucial for accuracy and adoption. on page 4



Step 3: Put Your Model into Action

Now that you have a structure for success, it's time to leverage it across your talent-management processes. Performance models can be brought in to accelerate workforce optimization in several areas:

- » **Holistic evaluation:** Assess new hires and current employees against your model. This ensures you're considering the full spectrum of factors that drive top performance and workforce productivity.

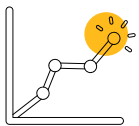
- » **Targeted training:** Assessment results reveal specific areas for growth. For existing employees, you can tailor learning and development (L&D) programs, like short courses with verified credentials, to fill organizational skill gaps through **upskilling and reskilling**. You can also scale successful programs to drive broader success across the workforce.
- » **Effective coaching:** Your model provides a framework for managers to evaluate work processes alongside employees. In scenarios like role-playing sessions or job shadowing, a framework helps the manager pinpoint specific areas for improvement and celebrate successes to create high-performing teams.
- » **Strategic hiring:** Use model-based interview questions to uncover how a candidate's skills and mindset align with top-performer success factors. As you assess candidates, evaluate against benchmarks in the model to understand strength and weaknesses, as well as thinking style, behavioral traits and interests.
- » **Strong onboarding:** Provide new hires with a clear success roadmap derived from your model. Develop measurable benchmarks for progress. Considering that **only 12% of employees strongly** agree that their company does a great job onboarding employees, improving the process is a significant opportunity for most employers.



Step 4: Consider Challenges & Considerations

As you put your model into play, be mindful of potential hurdles that can slow efforts to scale top-performing skills. Take the following factors into account:

- » **Consider expanded performance measures:** Traditional metrics, like those based on past performance, often fall short in capturing the unique qualities that set top performers apart.
- » **Account for individual variation:** Not everything about top performance can be easily replicated. Acknowledge the role of individual strengths and personality in success.
- » **Acknowledge the power of data:** Data analytics can reveal patterns and connections that might be overlooked by human analysis alone. A data-driven approach harnesses the insights from verified skills data, advanced analytics and AI to proactively shape a workforce for long-term success.
- » **Scaling skills can be a balancing act:** Strive for a balance between standardization and individualization. Models provide a foundation, not rigid molds for every employee.
- » **Prepare for continuous evolution:** Across multiple industries, Pearson research shows that up to 25% of employees will face significant disruptions in the next five years due to technological and societal changes. Your industry and business needs will change. Revisit and update your model to ensure it remains relevant.
- » **Understand the journey of discovery:** Replicating top performers is more than a pursuit of metrics. It's an exploration of untapped potential and human excellence that requires big-picture views of dynamic work environments.



Step 5: Unleash the Benefits

Replicating top performers is like a rigorous training regimen. It takes investment, but the payoff

is immense – a championship-caliber workforce with higher morale and a winning edge over the competition.

The advantages include:

- » **Making data-driven decisions:** Optimize hiring, training and promotion practices based on your proven model of success. Research shows that highly data-driven organizations are three times more likely to experience significant gains in decision quality.
- » **Fueling workforce agility:** Quickly adapt to changing needs by identifying employees with the potential to develop skills for new roles. Companies that prioritize investment in identifying and developing top talent see significantly stronger financial outcomes.
- » **Promoting engagement and retention:** Motivate employees with a clear path for growth and recognition of their achievements. Companies with strong recognition cultures experience a 31% reduction in voluntary turnover.
- » **Creating a high-performing culture of excellence:** Build an environment where everyone is inspired to strive for the qualities found in your top performers. This ripple effect is powerful: Research shows that adding just a single star performer to a team can elevate the effectiveness of everyone around them by 5-15%.
- » **Producing measurable impact:** Track key performance indicators (KPIs) like time-to-competency, employee productivity and business outcomes to tie return on investment (ROI) to the top-performer model. Companies that prioritize talent as a core part of their business strategy consistently outperform competitors in total shareholder returns.



REPLICATING TOP PERFORMERS

Your Action Checklist

As you build your game plan to increase the number of high performers in your organization, use this checklist to review essential elements.

- **Define top performer:** Establish the specific metrics and qualitative factors you'll use to identify your top talent.
- **Gather data:** Compile performance data from various sources.
- **Choose assessment tools:** Select a mix of assessments that align with your established criteria.
- **Build the performance model:** Collaboratively with top performers, map out the skills, behaviors, attributes and motivators that define success in their roles.
- **Assess against the model:** Evaluate existing employees and potential hires against all elements of your model.
- **Design targeted L&D programs:** Use assessment results to create tailored training plans that fill specific gaps and enhance strengths.
- **Rethink your interviews:** Develop interview questions that probe for alignment with the performance model's key factors.
- **Onboard with success in mind:** Provide new hires with a roadmap to excel based on your model's success factors.
- **Tackle challenges:** Ensure you're relying on the right data and acknowledge the need to balance standardization with individual variation.
- **Track your impact:** Define and monitor KPIs tied to replicating top performers, demonstrating the program's ROI.
- **Iterate and improve:** Regularly revisit and refine your performance model as business goals and your industry landscape evolve.

Invest in Success with Data-Driven Solutions

Replicating top performers is key to a sustainable, productive workforce. By starting with a data-driven understanding of your current stars, you can build a pipeline of future champion performers.

Modern talent management solutions offer transformative potential to drive this process. Here's how a connected suite of tools creates a more strategic approach:

- » **Credly**: Empower your workforce with verified digital credentials. This boosts employee engagement, makes skills visible and offers data valuable for workforce planning.
- » **Faethm**: Understand the skills your future workforce has and will need with market-leading data, insights and AI capabilities. This enables informed decision-making to strategically build a skilled workforce that bridges talent gaps and aligns with business goals.
- » **Pearson TalentLens**: Use assessments to streamline hiring processes and gain valuable insights into candidate potential. This leads to better hiring decisions and helps predict future employee success.

These tools offer a powerful advantage over traditional HR approaches. Their data-rich insights enable you to align your talent development strategies for higher performers with your broader organizational goals, maximizing the impact of your investment in people.



Ready to unlock the potential of your workforce?

Contact us today and discover how we can transform your approach to creating top-performers.

About Pearson Workforce Skills

Pearson is the world's leading learning company. We have a simple mission: to help people make more of their lives through learning. We know the world of work is changing fast. We help workers gain the skills they need to boost their employability and unlock new job and career opportunities. We also help employers understand, maintain, and enhance the value of their most important asset – their people. We're helping companies by offering talent solutions to address global skills gaps and evolving business demands. Empower your workforce and unlock your organization's true potential with Pearson.

[Contact us to get started.](#)