



What makes a High Performer? Focus

How well do you do it?



What makes a high performer? Why do some people achieve greatness and others are left floundering?

People who work with elite athletes, SAS soldiers and high-profile people notice some clear characteristics that set high performers apart. **How they plan, organise and execute their work each day has a strong impact on their performance.**

The most common characteristic that sets high performers apart is their **ability to focus deeply** on the tasks that they perform in a day. As a society we are losing our ability to focus as we are interrupted throughout our day, with each piece of information demanding our attention. There are three main contributors to this.

1. Our Mindless Attention to Daily Habits

When we don't review our daily habits they begin to sap our ability to focus. For example, many people leave their email notifications active, and lose attention each time a notification arrives. Our phone beeps, or our smart watch vibrates. We forget to turn our phone to silent when writing a report or need to focus on an activity. These and similar habits are distracting and reinforce habits of poor focus.

2. Information Obesity

This has been the result of shifting from a physical economy to a digital economy. We are overloaded with information and have many demands on our attention. As a result, the amount of information can become overwhelming and difficult to process.



3. Multi-tasking

The greatest enemy of focus is multi-tasking. Multi-tasking suggests that you can focus on many things at once. The reality is that multi-tasking is a very inefficient process – all you are doing is delaying action on a number of tasks rather than focusing well on one.

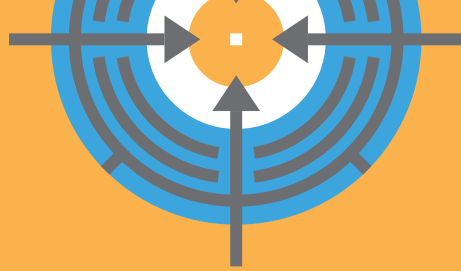
A Simple Four Step Solution

So what is the solution and how do we improve our focus? There are four simple techniques that you can use to build the focus required of high performance.

Step
1

Control Your Environment

Set up your external world to support focus. Turn off email notifications, put your phone on silent when necessary, and educate your staff about the times you are not to be interrupted. Push back on the environment – don't be a slave to it.



“The good news is that it is not all about talent, ability and potential.”

Step 2

Formal Practice

An example of a formal practice is meditation.

There is a view that meditation is for tree huggers, yet a huge amount of evidence shows that meditation has a beneficial impact on our cognitive ability. It helps to calm the mind and focus on one task. It is this, and the ability to sustain a meditation practice each and every day, that results in higher performance at work.

Meditation is not the only practice that brings focus. Research alternatives, and find a practice that suits you and your lifestyle.

Step 3

Plan Carefully

In order to be focused, we need to be clear about our goals, clear about what we are working on today, and the relationship between the two.

Practice yearly, monthly, weekly and daily planning. Establish yearly goals, and at the beginning of each day, week and month, ask yourself – what is it that I need to achieve this day, week or month to meet my yearly goals? A Planning Habit establishes focus, and the practice of daily reviewing your goals ensures that you maintain a focus on what is important.

Step 4

Be Present

During the day practise focusing your attention on your current task. Lose yourself in whatever you are doing. If you are writing a report, focus entirely on that report without thinking of the things you still need to do. When you are having a conversation with someone, totally immerse yourself in that conversation and don't let your mind drift. We often have conversations where we are not totally present. Business is built on relationships. The greatest compliment we can give another person is our undivided attention. We sense when people are not truly engaged with us – some believe that *being present* is the key to team building.

Companies spend millions of dollars a year helping employees to build better relationships within an organisation. The first step should be helping employees to **engage and be present** with others. The next step is to use employee assessments that can help bring awareness to individual methods of working and interacting with people, and to target areas for focus and development.

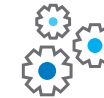
Psychologists say that people are creating fewer and fewer memories, because memories are created in the present. Without focus, memories are not being laid down. How sad!

These are the first steps towards high performance. Make the first move, make memories, build performance, and focus!

Indra Process and Performance Consulting works with you to achieve change and build performance.



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PO Box 3081, Melbourne St, North Adelaide, 5006

PH: 0421 474 685

EMAIL: info@indraconsulting.com

HA: indraconsulting.harrisonassessments.com

www.indraconsulting.com