

Definition And Examples

By Dale M. Brethower & Karolyn A. Smalley

The specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for high-quality performance change rapidly when any of three conditions is present:

1. Rapid changes occur in production or service technology.
2. Rapid changes occur in the specific products and services offered by an employer.
3. Rapid changes occur in management style or practice.

All three conditions are present today in many organizations. In addition, performance demands are increasing at the very time that the supply of people who are ready to meet those demands is decreasing. If human resource development personnel in general and performance technologists in particular are to help organizations meet current challenges, it is more important than ever before to assure that training is timely, well-focused, and connected to the actual conditions of performance; otherwise the training will be ineffective. Performance-based instruction provides a paradigm or framework for assuring that the value added to performance by training exceeds the cost of the training.

Performance-Based Instruction

A Definition: Performance

Performance is behavior plus accomplishment (cf. Gilbert, 1978). Performance is not merely the complex of thoughts, feelings, and actions that comprise behavior; it is the behavior plus what the behavior accomplishes. Behavior (as Gilbert reminds us) always has at least one and sometimes two organizational effects: It always adds costs and it sometimes adds value.

A Definition: Performance-Based Instruction

Performance-based instruction is instruction during which learners perform in ways that approximate and progressively approach the ways they will perform on-the-job using what they have learned. Performance-based instruction has the features described in Figure 1. Taken together, the features add meaning and substance to the definition.

Examples Of Performance-Based Instruction

Performance-based instruction, once a few examples are seen, becomes easy to recognize: If you see performance-based instruction you will see performance. There will be models of exemplary products and exemplary processes so that learners can identify the similarities among them; there will be examples of lesser products and processes so that learners can see how exemplary products and processes differed from lesser products and processes. More instructional time will be devoted to guided practice than to presentation of information. The learners will be quite active and the instructor will observe and coach.

Here are two illustrative examples of performance-based instruction developed by the authors.

Example One: The Amway Coaching Seminar

1. **Purpose.** The purpose of the Coaching Seminar is to enable supervisors to improve their coaching performance by using individualized coaching plans and daily coaching processes that enable persons coached to meet or exceed performance standards.
2. **Model.** The model for performance and for instruction is abstracted from the performance of the best athletic coaches. The coaching system used consists of developing and using a coaching plan that

Figure 1. Defining Features: What Performance-Based Instruction Is And What It Is Not

FEATURE	PERFORMANCE-BASED INSTRUCTION	
	IS	IS NOT
Purpose	To improve performance	To provide general knowledge, skills, or attitudes
Model	Performance of best (exemplary) performer	Knowledge base of theorist, subject matter expert, or average performer
Method	Demonstrations of exemplary products of performance and processes for generating the products; guided practice with feedback while producing products and subproducts	Presentations of information that is to be committed to memory and used later
Instructor's Role: Coach	Coach individualized practice to achieve performance standards; debrief exercises demonstrations of performance	Present information; evaluate samples of knowledge acquired; keep (lock stepped) schedule
Learner's Role: Partner	To function as a partner in learning to perform effectively; attempt to do tasks; accept coaching	To function as a passive recipient of knowledge; memorize rules and facts
Scheduling	Flexible to assure that on-the-job performance occurs during or immediately after training	Rigid, dictated by clock and calendar
Evaluating	Answer questions such as: How well does performance match organizational needs? How well do conditions of learning match conditions of performance? How well is performance demonstrated?	Answer questions such as: How much information was presented? How well was information presented? How well was schedule maintained? How much knowledge was acquired?

involves identifying job-related performance goals, collecting data (numbers and examples), delivering that information in a constructive and timely manner to the performer, and providing long-term and short-term recognition for accomplishing performance goals.

3. **Method.** Reading assignments from Fournies' book, *Coaching for Improved Work Performance*, short written handouts about various components of the coaching system, and job-related coaching examples and nonexamples are used to support guided practice in using step-by-step coaching processes. There are regular application assignments in which seminar participants use the coaching processes and report results in the following session. Processes are learned and used as needed, depending upon the interests, skills, and work situations of each participant.
4. **Instructor's Role.** The instructor's role is primarily that of a coach who provides structure within the seminar, demonstrates coaching skills, recognizes and supports good usage of the coaching plan and processes by learners, and suggests alternatives. In short, the instructor models the coaching process that participants learn.
5. **Learner's Role.** The seminar participant's role is to function as a partner in the learning process, actively trying each part of the coaching system, describing what worked and what did not, and practicing improvement strategies recommended by the coach or other participants; each participant selects and practices daily those parts of the coaching system that can create the greatest on-the-job benefit. Learners have many opportunities to practice coaching—both within the seminar and outside of it. Each participant acts as a coach to peers during classroom exercises. There are multiple opportunities to report on-the-job coaching results with direct reports, coworkers, and bosses.
6. **Scheduling.** The Coaching Seminar is scheduled three times a year. Those who take the class have direct reports whose performance they are in a position to coach. Most have one or more performers whose current performance could significantly improve in at least one area. The classroom coach works with learners on a case-by-case basis at their request between sessions and after the class is formally completed.
7. **Evaluation.** Data are collected related to perceived job-relevance, adequacy of examples given, adequacy of practice provided, and aspects of the seminar that participants consider most and least

beneficial. Three to six months after the seminar, learners are asked to describe a significant situation where they used the coaching skills to improve performance. They are also asked to describe the benefits to themselves, the performer, and the organization. Additional data are collected in the process of doing follow-up coaching.

Example Two: Psychology 197—Learning to Learn

1. **Purpose.** The purpose of Psychology 197 at Western Michigan University is to enable high risk students and other undergraduates who take the course to improve academic performance, thereby getting more value from their educational experiences.
2. **Performance and Instruction Model.** The model for the course is the "master learner," a composite constructed from clinical analysis of the performance of many persons who were especially good at learning specific types of academic material and of scholars whose job is to learn answers to unanswered questions.
3. **Method.** *Exercises in Methods of Inquiry* by Heiman and Slomianko (1988) are used to demonstrate step-by-step processes used by successful learners. The students practice a specific process with sample learning materials, then use the processes with homework assignments for Psy 197 or other courses. The processes are applicable to schoolwork that each student is doing; not all students use all the processes in the learning-to-learn system, at least initially; however, homework assignments in Psy 197 require use of an integrated set of processes applicable to a cross-section of academic courses. Each student has multiple opportunities for one-on-one coaching.
4. **Instructor's Role.** The instructor lectures to provide opportunities for students to practice the skills necessary for learning material presented in lectures; however, the instructor's primary activity as presenter is to demonstrate use of the learning skills. The instructor also demonstrates the process of learning the skills being taught. The instructor/coach and assistant coaches support individualized practice, help each student identify and continue using processes that are working properly, help each student make corrections when processes are not being used effectively, assure that each student has the feedback needed to sustain learning, and help each student find enough value in learning to sustain the effort needed.
5. **Learner's Role.** The student's role is to be an active partner in the process of learning how to learn effectively. The student is asked to try each major learn-

ing skill at least once, inform a coach about successes and difficulties, and try skills again if the skills are those essential in learning the content of courses the student is taking and if a coach can suggest alterations in the way the student is using the process. (The student is not expected to keep trying the same things that are not working.)

6. **Scheduling.** The scheduling of instruction coincides with performance demands in courses the students are taking. The specific learning skills taught are scheduled so that students can put them to use immediately.
7. **Evaluating.** Evaluation is in terms of the extent to which performance improvements match the needs of the university and of the students who take the course. The university benefits by lowered dropout rates (and the tuition revenues generated by the students who remain in school), by having a good story to tell when recruiting nontraditional or high-risk students, and by feelings of satisfaction in

doing something right. The students benefit by earning higher grades, feeling a greater sense of accomplishment, reducing their levels of fear/anger/frustration, feeling greater satisfaction with their performance in school, and feeling greater self-confidence. (Other colleges and universities using Methods of Inquiry, along with the recommended performance-based procedures for using the text, report results similar to those attained at Western Michigan University.)

Conclusion

Performance-based instruction can be developed and used effectively within the constraints that now exist in a human resource development department in a private corporation or an academic department in a public university.

We believe that the performance-based instruction paradigm can be used effectively by performance technologists in meeting current challenges in human resource development. The second article in this series

Figure 2. Performance Exercises

Exercise 1. Best And Worst Instruction

Behavior	Product	Value Check
<p>Set up a table similar to Figure 1 but much bigger. Replace "is" with "best" and "is not" with "worst."</p> <p>Think about the best instruction you've developed or otherwise experienced. Think about the worst.</p>	<p>Fill in the table to describe the best and worst instruction.</p>	<p>Compare the descriptions. Notice how many features of each are similar to features of performance-based instruction. Notice whether important features of "best" fit into the table or not. Notice whether you feel a sense of accomplishment as you complete the table and make comparisons.</p>

Exercise 2. Converting To Performance-Based Instruction

Behavior	Product	Value Check
<p>Set up a table similar to Figure 1, but much bigger, replacing "is not" with "possible revisions."</p> <p>Think about some instruction intended to improve performance.</p>	<p>Fill in the table with entries to describe it as it is. Enter ways the instruction could be made better or more performance based.</p>	<p>Notice whether you find it easy to think of improvements. Estimate whether making revisions would be worth the effort. Notice whether you feel a sense of accomplishment.</p>

will describe how the coaching seminar was converted, over time and without fanfare, from instruction that was related to performance but was not performance based; we will also describe how Psychology 197 was designed and developed as a performance-based course in an educational environment that emphasizes teaching academic content rather than improving performance. The third article will compare and contrast performance-based instruction with two other paradigms the content-based instructional paradigm commonly used in general education and the performance-related paradigm commonly used in vocational education and training. The fourth article will show several parallels between performance systems and instructional systems, thereby showing how to move seamlessly from instruction to performance. The fifth article will focus on evaluating the processes and products of performance-based instruction.

An Invitation

In keeping with the theme of performance-based instruction, we invite you to perform by doing one or more of the exercises in Figure 2. We would benefit, and perhaps you would, too, if you send the products to us for conversation, coaching, or feedback. ■

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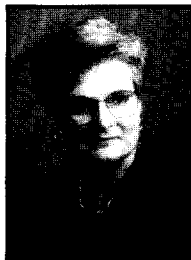
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About The Authors

Dale, a professor/consultant and 20 year member of NSPI, has used performance technology successfully in manufacturing, retailing, and service environments (both public and private sector). His major emphasis is human learning: he has taught "Learning-to-Learn" to thousands of adult learners. He teaches graduate level courses in performance technology.



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