

Why is high performance important and how to sustain it

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High performance is an integral part of our culture at Ohr. The following is an excerpt from our DNA statement that outlines our definition of high performance:

We care about creating great work; mediocrity and complacency will not be tolerated.

We are passionate about our work.

Once clear and specific strategies are set, we proactively work towards achieving these without the need for undue control and monitoring.

We plan and manage our own development. We create an environment that allows self-development through experience, observation, introspection, study and discussion.

Why high performance matters

High performance is crucial for consulting engineers as it ensures the delivery of exceptional work, enables the ability to influence the industry, win projects based on merit, and drive positive change within the field.

Excellence is not perfection

We achieve and maintain high performance by fostering a spirit of excellence. Excellence should not be confused with perfection. The key distinction lies in the condition of the heart. Here's what this means:

Excellence	Perfection
Internally motivated; focused on personal growth.	Externally driven; seeks validation and emphasises performance.
Appreciates and enjoys the journey.	Fixates on outcomes and unhealthily strives for them.
Works towards outstanding results, understanding their value and purpose.	Tends to criticise and judge.
Acknowledges the inevitability of mistakes, remaining committed to growth and improvement.	Is intolerant of errors.

Further reading

- 01 Why you should strive for excellence, not perfection — Psych Central
- 02 Excellence vs perfection — Develop Good Habits
- 03 Excellence — Excel at Life

The spirit of excellence

John Maxwell, a well-known leadership expert wrote this:

Excellence is the gap between average and exceptional. It's the ability to exceed expectations and consistently deliver superior quality. In developing habits of excellence, leaders gain influence and stand out from the crowd. By cultivating a culture of excellence, a business attracts customers and wins their loyalty.

This quote encapsulates the spirit of excellence well. Do read the full article and focus on developing the necessary habits. As with anything, it requires aligning our perspectives and attitudes and implementing systems that promote the desired habits.

Practical application

Quality of deliverables

Engineers often prioritize the technical aspects of their work while neglecting the production of high-quality deliverables. If this applies to you, it's essential to cultivate a spirit of excellence in this area:

- 01 Understand why high-quality deliverables are crucial, allowing the "why" to drive you.
- 02 Familiarize yourself with your firm's branding styles and established practices.
- 03 Assess the steps necessary to develop your abilities to produce high-quality deliverables.
- 04 Create systems that support your development and the consistent application of this habit.

Attention to detail

Paying attention to details is paramount in fostering a spirit of excellence. If you struggle in this area, read Attention to Details and implement the given examples. Develop systems that facilitate the cultivation of this habit.

Lifelong learning

Continuously learn, grow and hone your technical and non-technical skills. The pursuit of growth, knowledge, and skill refinement is a lifelong journey shared among professionals across various fields.

The 120% rule

Is it sufficient to aim for 80-20, aim for 80% correctness, accuracy, quality etc? No, it is not.

Settling for 80% is akin to aiming for the treetops rather than reaching for the stars. It breeds complacency and does not reflect high performance. As humans, we are bound to make errors. Thus, if we acknowledge that errors are inevitable and yet only strive for 80%, the actual outcome will be lower than 80%.

The saying goes, "Aim for the stars, and you will land on the treetop." By aiming for 120%, we get closer to achieving 100%. From the perspective of excellence, 100% is not an unreasonable goal or target. Unfortunately, the world's pursuit of perfection has tainted the significance of aiming for 100%.

But is 120% even attainable? Yes, with a spirit of excellence, it becomes a matter of habit and adopting the right mindset. For instance, understanding the whys and deriving enjoyment from going above and beyond expectations.

An interesting fact: When executing martial arts techniques, practitioners aim beyond the target surface (i.e., 120%, not just 100%). This approach necessitates imagination in martial arts, and in our context, it requires the right perspective and attitude. This technique also applies to how we approach high performance. For further insight, read this article which explains the concept with scientific reasoning.

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