

HOW TO BE A STAR AT WORK

Nine Breakthrough Strategies You Need To Succeed

ROBERT KELLEY

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MAIN IDEA

Star performers add more value than average workers. They produce more results, earn quicker promotions and generate greater personal wealth. They also attract a great amount of interest and admiration.

While it is relatively easy to attribute star performance to external factors such as a high IQ, driving ambition or willingness to sacrifice personal interests, a ten-year research study found that these external factors actually have little correlation with exceptional levels of performance.

In fact, the research study identified nine key strategies that star producers base their productivity around. None of these strategies are mysterious or hard to identify. Most of them, in fact, are quite straightforward and practical. When utilized effectively, however, the nine strategies can double the rate of productivity and lay the foundation for sustained increases in value-added productive activities.

In essence, the nine strategies are the foundation for delivering sustainable extraordinary performance.

Part 1 - Star Performance Page 2

Most people who admire star producers -- those who perform at levels of efficiency far above others in similar circumstances -- assume it is the result of:

- A high IQ or an ingrown ability to reason better than most people in a similar situation.
- Exceptional personality factors such as self-confidence, driving ambition or willingness to take a risk.
- Highly refined social factors - being able to gather a team of motivated people to provide assistance.

Yet, when an academic study of star performers was carried out, it was found high producers were very similar to their co-workers in terms of IQ, personality and social skills. In fact, the study concluded it wasn't what the star producers had in their heads that set them apart from the masses -- it was how they used what they had, their key work strategies.

The important implication of this finding is that in today's brainpowered economy, ordinary people can learn to do extraordinary work by applying the same key work strategies star performers use.

Part 2 - The Nine Work Strategies of Star Performance Pages 3 - 7

The nine key strategies star producers use to out perform average workers are:

1. Personal initiative - being prepared to blaze new trails in the organizations unspecified white spaces.
2. Networking - nurturing an array of people who can provide expert knowledge in specific applications.
3. Self-Management - staying centered on the organization's critical path to the creation of added value.
4. Perspective - getting and keeping in focus the bigger picture in all areas.
5. Followership - putting personal ego aside and work effectively to help managers and others succeed.
6. Leadership - being able to effectively influence others in the company towards achieving goals.
7. Teamwork - forming and participating in teams which are productive and effective.
8. Organizational savvy - using street smarts to navigate the corporate power zones.
9. Presentation skills - being able to effectively influence the right audience.

Part 3 - Making the Program Work For You Page 8

The general business myth is that star producers are born, not made. The business place reality, however, is that average workers can retool themselves and upgrade personal productivity by applying the work strategies of star performers.

The key lies in not trying to clone what works for someone else, but in filtering those strategies through your own personality and work style to develop what works for you.

**PART 1
STAR PERFORMANCE**

Main Idea

Most people who admire star producers -- those who perform at levels of efficiency far above others in similar circumstances -- assume it is the result of:

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- Exceptional personality factors such as self-confidence, driving ambition or willingness to take a risk.
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Yet, when an academic study of star performers was carried out, it was found high producers were very similar to their co-workers in terms of IQ, personality and social skills. In fact, the study concluded it wasn't what the star producers had in their heads that set them apart from the masses -- it was how they used what they had, their key work strategies.

The important implication of this finding is that in today's brainpowered economy, ordinary people can learn to do extraordinary work by applying the same key work strategies star performers use.

Supporting Ideas

Almost without exception, researchers have proven everyone has the potential to be a star producer in one field or another. The key to realizing these results in real-world situations is founded on the principle of ongoing productivity improvements.

Many star performers are unaware of the reasons for their success. They utilize key work strategies sub-consciously, and frequently don't take the time to evaluate what they're doing and why. When they do stop and evaluate what strategies they are using, and which strategies they should avoid, their production increases still more.

Avoiding work habits and strategies that are inefficient is particularly important. Average performers tend to have a long list of work habits that are totally counter-productive. Some average performers even believe their counter-productive work habits place them firmly on the road to success, while in reality those habits are moving them steadily in the opposite direction. In these situations, the adoption of productive work strategies can have a dramatic and permanent effect.

Improvements in performance based on the key work strategies enables workers to change how they perform their jobs, not who they are. This is an important distinction. To be a star performer, a worker doesn't need to clone the personality of someone else. On the contrary. Success in adopting the key work strategies depends on taking the basic strategies and raising personal productivity by molding them to a person's personality and workplace routine. Simply mimicking the personality of other successful producers won't do it.

The advantages of becoming a high performer in the current business environment are clear and compelling:

- Star producers have a sustainable competitive advantage over workers who are less productive.
- High performers are given more opportunities for advancement within the business organization.
- High efficiency workers can spend their free time pursuing their own interests rather than trying to meet work obligations.

- Star performers add prodigious value to their organizations, and can expect their compensation programs to accurately reflect that fact - or they will move to another career opportunity which does

In essence, being a star performer is not simply about avoiding layoffs or staying on an upward career path. Nor is it focused solely on working smarter rather than harder.

The star performer principles are centered squarely on the goal of helping each person be the kind of person they really want to be, and improving their own quality of life (and the quality of life for those they care most about) in the process. That's the true payoff for star performance.

Key Thoughts

"Silicon Valley companies' most important assets have legs and leave every night. Management's most important job is to make sure that those assets walk into your company the next day and not a competitor's."

– Robert Kelley

"We live in an age of possibility. A hundred years ago, we moved from farm to factory. Now we move to an age of technology, information and global competition. These changes have opened vast new opportunities, but they also present stiff challenges. More American are living better lives, but too many of our fellow citizens are working harder to keep ahead, in search of greater security for their families."

– President Bill Clinton, 1996 State of the Union Address

"The P&E is just people. Without intellectual capital, you're nothing."

– Ann Winblad, venture capitalist

"The real point of reengineering is longer-term growth on the revenue side. It's not so much getting rid of people. It's getting more out of people."

– Michael Hammer, author

"In every field and in every company, you will find star performers. Whether it be money managers or people managers, Silicon Valley software developers or Hollywood film producers, scientists opening new horizons or sales people closing deals, about 10 to 15 percent of all people will out perform their peers by a wide margin and rise into the star ranks. Most workers naturally strive for star status in the workplace, to achieve personal bests and to use their star performer reputations to gain more personal control in charting their careers. Also workers want to be more productive in less time so they have more personal control over their lives - more flexibility and less supervision at the office, more leisure time at home. Workers know they can be more productive and are searching for ways to get there. They are not willing to give up the conviction they are star producer material. They want to be in the select "ten-for-one" club whose members' productivity output is worth ten average workers. Your productivity fate rests with you, not with our bosses in the workplace, not with some divine force that bestows grace or misery regardless of what you do."

– Robert Kelley

PART 2
THE NINE WORK STRATEGIES
OF STAR PERFORMANCE

Main Idea

The nine key strategies star producers use to out perform average workers are:

1. Personal initiative - being prepared to blaze new trails in the organizations unspecified white spaces.
2. Networking - carefully nurturing an array of people who can provide expert knowledge in specific applications.
3. Self-Management - managing career choices carefully to stay centered on the organization's critical path to the creation of added value.
4. Perspective - getting and keeping in focus the bigger picture in all areas.
5. Followership - being prepared to put personal ego aside and work effectively to help managers and others succeed.
6. Leadership - being able to effectively influence others in the company towards achieving goals.
7. Teamwork - forming and participating in teams which are productive and effective.
8. Organizational savvy - using street smarts to navigate the corporate power zones.
9. Presentation skills - being able to effectively influence the right audience.

“Just as star performers have work strategies that spur productivity, average performers have a long list of habits that drag it down. There are dozens of business-oriented self-improvement books on the market offering one-size-fits-all programs that will make you a better time manager, a sharper dresser, a Machiavellian power wielder. Not only do they fail to bring productivity gains, they can be counterproductive. At their worst, they create a false sense of being on the road to success. Messy-desk types who are forced to keep clean tabletops, multi-colored files and day-runner schedule books will be miserable and less productive. The night owl expected to hit the ground running at 7:30 am will be unproductive and cranky. Generic formulas almost never work. Our research shows that the biological and personality quirks that make us individuals don't make the difference between the stars and their average coworkers. If you are a messy-desk person, you are better served by learning the strategies of messy-desk stars than by trying to continue as an average worker with a clean desk. The point is that you need to remain true to who you are and retain your basic nature in the workplace. Disrupting that basic pattern will guarantee failure; the star strategies will only be dabbled in, not internalized.”

– Robert Kelley

Strategy #1

Personal Initiative:

Blazing new trails in the organization's white spaces

The common perception of taking an initiative is simply to volunteer for something which is outside a normal job description in the hopes of drawing attention to yourself or getting on the boss's good side.

Star performers, however, use their initiative more selectively to:

1. Seek out added responsibilities which are directly applicable to work projects they are involved in.
2. Find additional projects which will help coworkers.
3. Follow a project all the way through to completion, rather than assigning it to the “too hard” classification.
4. Take some personal risks in accepting new assignments that will require new skills to be bought to bear.

Taking these ideas and applying them to real-world situations, star performers take the following steps in applying personal initiative:

1. They focus firstly on doing their current assignments well. There's no use trying to do more if they're already unable to do everything they're currently assigned.
2. They stop and evaluate who will derive the benefits from their new initiative. A new initiative has to have added-value to someone else, otherwise they're just doing their own jobs well.
3. Any new initiative has to ultimately result in added-value for the company's customers, otherwise it is a waste of time to start with and worth avoiding. The new initiative has to either reduce costs or increase revenues.
4. Look for a local initiative that can later, if successful, be scaled up to company wide implementation. That maximizes the impact of the new initiative.
5. Star performers calculate the odds of success. They evaluate whether they can afford the time and energy for the new initiative, and whether the payoff will be worth it for each new initiative they are considering.
6. Star performers are prepared to cut their losses and move on to another project whenever an initiative is no longer worth pursuing, without any problems.

Star performers develop a keen sense for initiative within their organization, and understand the hows and whys of how people can exercise initiative in their own jobs - much more so than average performers.

They create an environment in which new initiatives can be undertaken firstly by learning how to perform their current duties as efficiently as possible. That leaves them with the time to pursue new initiatives.

Strategy #2

Networking:

Knowing who knows what within the company

An average performer looks at developing a business network as a way to keep up with all the latest gossip and to socialize with people in influential positions.

Star performers, by contrast, build networks of experts who are willing to share knowledge, particularly worthwhile knowledge about critical path tasks. In other words, a star performer's network isn't simply the office grapevine - it is a carefully nurtured group of people with varying skills and backgrounds who can provide specialist knowledge for specific situations.

To build star performer quality networks:

1. They realize the fact different members of the network will have differing expectations of what they hope the network will provide, and look for ways to accommodate everyone's requirements.
2. Stars also form networks shrewdly - they selectively add people with worthwhile and unique backgrounds.
3. Stars build their networks before they need them - not when they're facing one deadline or another.
4. Stars are polite in their requests for information, and acknowledge the time demands of other people in the network as well.
5. Stars do their own homework first before going to an expert source. They don't expect the expert to solve things they are able to sort out for themselves.
6. Stars go out of their way to publicly and privately acknowledge the input of someone from within their network. They give credit fully and generously rather than acting as if they came up with everything by themselves.
7. Stars find ways to put more back into their networks than they take out, especially when new and everyone is going out of their way to contribute. Stars find meaningful ways to return in kind the value they extract.
8. Stars expect to contribute to their network of associates far more often than they receive. They also develop a reputation for thoroughness, and for following through on every request that is made.

Star performers realize that in the current knowledge economy, specialized information is critical. Nobody can hope to know everything about every field, but stars effectively leverage their personal knowledge by forming high value-added networks with other people who have specialist knowledge in their individual fields, and who are willing to give and take a little.

"The best possible situation in life is to know that you know. The second-best is to know what you don't know. The third-best is to not know that you know. The worst situation in life is to not know that you don't know."

– Arabic proverb

Strategy #3

Self-management:

Managing your career choices effectively

An average performer views self-management as primarily organizing one's daily schedule effectively and keeping an eye on time management.

Star performers, however, use self-management to increase their productivity by focusing on critical path activities that generate the greatest amount of added value to their companies. Instead of focusing on accomplishing the items on their daily to-do lists, they concentrate more on which items get on their to-do lists in the first place.

Stars manage their careers effectively by:

1. Finding out what the critical path is for their organization and stay on that critical path by adding value.
2. Choose projects that will allow them to leverage their talents, personalities and work skills productively.
3. Regularly work at increasing their own personal effectiveness and efficiency by whatever systems they feel comfortable with.
4. Readily use techniques and methods for self-management they've observed working elsewhere.
5. Aren't afraid to experiment with their work routines to develop more productive habits.
6. Develop systems to minimize interruptions and maximize productive work time.
7. Structure projects with mistake-recovery time and damage-control plans so as to minimize crises that soak up all available time.
8. Cultivate work habits that overcome any tendency to procrastinate.
9. Build down-time into their schedules so they have time to recharge their personal batteries and relax a little.
10. Work closely with their managers to change any job descriptions or workplace regulations that reduce their effectiveness.
11. Structure the rhythm of projects to suit their styles if possible.

Above all, star performers take responsibility for their own productivity seriously. They don't have to be managed, but their value-adding achievements will be driven by personal pride, and the development of an impressive portfolio of personal knowledge and skills.

"Knowledge-based companies are competing in winner-take-most markets. Managing becomes redefined as a series of quests for the Next Big Thing. In this milieu, management becomes not production-oriented but mission-oriented. Hierarchies flatten not because democracy is suddenly bestowed on the workforce or because computers can cut out much of the work of middle management. They flatten because, to be effective, the delivers of the next-big-thing-for-the-company need to be organized in small teams that report directly to the CEO or the board. Such people need free reign. The company's future survival depends upon them. So they will be treated not as employees but as equals in the business of the company's success."

– W. Brian Arthur, professor, Stanford University

Strategy #4

Perspective:

Keeping the big picture in focus

Average performers tend to look at the world solely from their own point-of-view.

Star producers always look at projects or problems from a larger than normal perspective -- that combines the viewpoints of customers, competitors, co-workers and managers. They also leave a little room for creativity to be blended into the mix.

Looking at each of these broader perspectives in turn:

1. **The Co-Worker or Colleagues Perspective**
People who are familiar with your field of expertise but who are not part of your immediate work group can provide worthwhile feedback. Instead of feeling threatened by this type of feedback, star producers use it to improve their work, to build their professional reputations and to catch flaws in logic or strategy that would not otherwise be picked up on. As an added bonus, actively soliciting peer-review builds professional reputation and helps in the formation of key strategic alliances.
2. **The Customer Perspective**
Star producers find ways to see their work through their customers eyes, and taking into account the customer's needs and motivations. Instead of trying to develop something that will impress other experts in their field with all of its features, star performers pay the greatest amount of attention to their customers point of view.
3. **The Competitor Perspective**
Keeping an eye on what competitors are offering and objectively assessing how their company and their products measure up to competitive products is another skill star performers cultivate. This assessment process can be formal -- benchmarking, for example -- or informal.
4. **The Company or Management Perspective**
Star producers make it their business to find out what their manager's goals are and what their company's vision for the future is. They do this by analyzing all the available materials - the company's annual reports and regulatory filings, mission and strategy statements, internal measures of performance, how the compensation program is structured and discussions with managers on their personal priorities and critical areas. All of this information is worthwhile.
5. **The Creative Dissonance Perspective**
Star producers often make breakthrough progress by applying ideas from outside their specialist field. They actively look for successful ideas from non-related commercial fields that can be adapted to their own industry - in effect, looking outside the box for ideas that can make an intuitive leap from one application to a completely new one.

"The brainpowered economy is like a casino where part of the game is to choose which games to play, as well as playing them with skill. Over at this table, a game is starting called multimedia. Over at that one, a game called Web services. There are many such tables. You sit at one. How much to play? you ask. Three billion, the croupier replies. Who'll be playing? We won't know until they show up. What are the rules? Those'll emerge as the game unfolds. Bill Gates is not so much a wizard of technology as a wizard of precognition, of discerning the shape of the next game."

– W. Brian Arthur, professor, Stanford University

Strategy #5

Following and Supporting Management: Being able to help your managers succeed

Average performers expect to toe the line at work, to take orders, avoid threatening the leader and sticking to their job descriptions.

Star producers, by contrast, look at work as an opportunity to become actively involved in helping the company succeed by exercising their independent judgment to work cooperatively with their leaders.

The skills required to succeed in working cooperatively with managers in work situations are:

1. Seize the initiative and be proactive, especially during the planning stages. Exercise some independent thinking to identify potential problems that may arise, and bring those areas of concern to everyone's attention.
2. Become a fact finder. Don't provide any input based on wishy-washy foundations - gather the facts and make your case grounded on solid information which managers may not have had the time to ferret out for themselves.
3. Seek advice from people who can provide a fresh outlook. Without sharing anything confidential, seek third-party views and perspectives. Their informed judgment may help keep everything on track and avoid mistakes.
4. Follow the systems and protocols established by the company. This is especially true in respecting the chain of command within the company. Star performers always want to be viewed as part of the solution working along the proper lines rather than a loose cannon blasting away for its own purposes.
5. Develop persuasive communication skills. Use the language and processes established within the company and exemplified by its managers. Star performers don't attempt to intimidate their managers but to persuasively influence them.
6. Realize there may be times to act courageously, especially if there is a crisis of conscience with your manager. If you think an action is seriously wrong or criminal, you may have to be prepared to take your case to a higher level of the company or an outside authority. (This is not for personal gripes or differences of opinion, but for genuine cases of ethics and so on.)
7. Star performers anticipate well. They plan on either being identified collectively with the group, or they take practical steps to stand alone, even if that will require a career change.

"The brave carve out their own fortune."

– Cervantes, Don Quixote

"Brainpowered followership means being actively engaged in helping the organization succeed while exercising independent, critical judgment of goals, tasks, potential problems and methods. Star followers have the ability to work cooperatively with a leader to accomplish the organization's goals even when there are personality or workplace differences. They are key players both in planning courses of action and in implementing them in the field. They use other productivity-model skills to choose the manner and timing."

– Robert Kelley

Strategy #6
Teamwork:

Effective participation in successful teams

Average performers view teamwork as a skill for getting on teams and for pulling your weight once on a team.

Star producers take the concept of teamwork further, developing the basic principle into a series of skills that encompass creating joint ownership of achievements, contributing positively to team dynamics, dealing with problems or conflicts and assisting others to solve problems.

Before joining any team, star producers:

1. Consider whether the company's management genuinely use teams or just make noises about them. The key issue is how closely the team's assignment is aligned to critical path, value-adding activities.
2. Look at whether other high producers in the organization work most effectively alone or through teams. That will be a good clue to the general corporate culture.
3. Evaluate what level of teamwork skills are available throughout the entire organization, and how those skills will be made accessible to the proposed team.

Once they commit to a team, star producers try to contribute productively by:

1. Ensuring the team's objective is clearly defined for every participant. Ideally, this mission statement will also include the criteria by which results will be evaluated, and ways to monitor progress on a regular basis.
2. Self-managing their assignments from the team, and ensuring they're completed to a high standard on schedule and within budget.
3. Keep an eye on overall team operations, and work in to assist people who are struggling with their assignments or whatever else is required. Most star producers tend to pull more than their own fair share of the grunt jobs.
4. Become immersed in the team's group dynamics. They try to exert a positive influence on the team commitment level. They try to suggest viable solutions to conflicts. They closely monitor the group's mood, participation level and general enthusiasm pools, making changes as required.

Star performers, once committed to a team, find ways to become active, participatory members. They do whatever they can behind the scenes to influence the team's progress towards worthwhile goals and objectives. That input can take numerous forms, according to the requirements and circumstances of the team at hand.

And, importantly, star performers also keep a healthy perspective. They try not to take themselves too seriously, and encourage the rest of the team to do likewise through effective use of humor and other means.

The very best star performers also manage to downplay their own roles, and credit every accomplishment to the team effort.

Strategy #7
Leadership:

Being able to influence others to achieve common goals

Average performers look at business leadership as the power to make key decisions, to delegate what you don't like and to ultimately end up on the cover of a business magazine while cashing in vast amounts of stock options.

Star producers tend to be more accomplishment motivated, and view workplace leadership responsibilities as an opportunity to bring a group together, to secure the necessary resources and to guide a project through to completion.

Star producers tend to gain leadership roles through voluntary agreement of their coworkers. Broadly speaking, this agreement comes about for at least one (and sometimes more) of the following areas of expertise:

1. Knowledge Quotient
Star performers have greater expertise or have demonstrated sound judgment in other relevant situations. Therefore, the work group is inclined to accept their directional input because they have the credibility of having been there and done that before.
2. People-Skills Quotient
Some star producers are effective leaders because they have consistently proven their coworker's goals are aligned with their own. Therefore, coworkers will voluntarily work with them, because it is in everyone's best interests. And importantly, star performers with strong people skills will ensure everyone has a chance to contribute meaningfully, and apportion credit for a successful outcome throughout the entire team rather than basking in personal aggrandizement.
3. Momentum Quotient
For some projects, the leadership role is taken simply by coming forward and by getting things on track and moving towards an objective. In these situations, star producers become leaders simply by virtue of the fact they provide the initial and sustaining momentum. In these situations, leadership means taking care of administrative matters, representing the group to other parties and following through to ensure things are ultimately completed.

Leadership, formal or informal, to a star producer always focuses on creating successful value-added outcomes. High performers are generally willing to assume a leadership role if it will mean getting the job done right, and if by doing so, they can leverage their achievements through a collective group effort.

Effective leadership doesn't always need to come from people in formal positions of company leadership. It can be required in temporary, transitional situations just as often. It can also be required in mundane, ordinary areas that will attract little attention outside the company.

"The great leaders always stage-manage their effects, while the real leaders are down in the ranks, quietly changing the world."

– Charles de Gaulle

Strategy #8

Organizational Savvy:

Using street smarts in the corporate power zones

Average performers tend to think of organizational skills as brown-nosing or schmoozing.

Star producers look at organizational savvy as the ability to manage competing workplace interests to promote an idea, to resolve a conflict and, most importantly, to achieve a goal.

To develop organizational savvy:

1. Get to know the lay of the land within the corporate organization - first, using formal organizational charts and then finding the unwritten but real power relationships workers always develop amongst themselves.
2. Develop a feel for the organization's personality - the day-to-day quirks that every organization follows openly or subconsciously. That enables star producers to work without confrontations or internal dissent.
3. Find a high quality mentor - someone with experience and knowledge who's already succeeded in a similar career path.
4. Actively take advantage of any opportunities to work temporarily in other parts of the organization. This is an excellent way to broaden perspective and form alliances throughout the organization.
5. Build value-for-value relationships throughout the organization with people in key positions, or who work on key projects. These relationships have to be cultivated over a period of time, and should obey all the rules of organizational etiquette that are applicable.
6. Star producers tend to be better than average workers at resolving internal conflicts within an organization. Resolving conflicts is almost always more productive than forcing an opinion. High performers even go so far as to work towards creating an environment in which internal conflicts are less likely to arise.
7. Star performers tend to create a niche for themselves that distinguishes them from everyone else in the organization, and that they can use to market themselves internally. They find something for which they can become well known, and for which they add value to the organization.
8. The final pieces of organizational savvy are integrity and credibility. Without these factors, star performers will be considered internally as flash-in-the-pan or lacking staying power. Integrity proves that you are genuine in working to add value to the organization, and not simply following some cookbook recipe to success. Credibility is generated from dependability and reliability - from consistently bringing productivity enhancing skills to bear on the organization's objectives over extended periods of time.

Strategy #9

Presentation Skills:

Persuading an audience with the right message

Average performers never give much attention to their presentation skills.

Star producers realize the ability to articulate a viewpoint persuasively and with impact is an important way to become associated with high visibility projects, both internal and external. Therefore, they work hard at complimenting superior technical skills with cutting edge presentation skills.

To enhance and refine presentation skills:

1. Know your audience.
Star producers focus on the core process - taking information, selecting key points and organizing them in a logical way so they can be shared with others. They then learn how to mold this process to the make-up of the group they are speaking to - whether it's two people or hundreds of people, the process remains the same.
2. Craft your message to that audience.
In addition to delivering a message effectively, star performers learn how to persuade listeners to accept the message. Sometimes, that will require deflecting criticism. At other times, it will require molding and shaping the message to fit the audience. It may also require holding a series of presentations, with small amounts of progress being made each time instead of one huge leap of faith.
3. Make your message relevant and interesting.
Star producers realize that organizing the material around the needs of the audience is far more important than organizing it to suit the requirements of the presenter.
4. If at all possible, convey the message in rich, human terms rather than in purely technical terms.
Star presenters frequently convey information with stories rather than lectures. A compelling story has an intriguing plot, human drama (with twists and turns of fate intertwined), fascinating characters, tension, conflict (that ultimately gets resolved), humor and vivid images that capture the imagination.
5. Use props and other presentation equipment to enhance the message, not to replace an effective presentation.
Star producers realize all the latest presentation equipment such as laptop computer projectors is a means to an end and an opportunity to capture attention if properly used. However, they won't replace the absence of a well prepared message, and can even draw attention to a lack of real substance rather than compensate for it.

One potential idea for effectively using technology is to buddy up with someone who is very strong in the technology. They can concentrate on getting everything working properly for you while you focus on the more important elements of the presentation. If you pick the right buddy, you can also create a synergetic type of situation in which both yours and your buddy's effectiveness is enhanced.

PART 3
MAKING THE PROGRAM
WORK FOR YOU

Main Idea

The general business myth is that star producers are born, not made. The businessplace reality, however, is that average workers can retool themselves and upgrade personal productivity by applying the work strategies of star performers.

The key lies in not trying to clone what works for someone else, but in filtering those strategies through your own personality and work style to develop what works for you.

Supporting Ideas

The following points should be kept in mind while working towards internalizing the work strategies of star performers:

1. Always keep both feet firmly on the ground while you reach for the stars.

The strategies are not a cure-all for a bad work situation. To fully apply the nine strategies, you may have to find a new job or a new manager within your existing organization to work for. Don't stay locked into a situation where your personal star can't shine brighter even if you produce ten-times more than you ever did before. Find somewhere else to work so you can move forwards instead of treading water.

2. Realize increasing productivity takes time.

There is no magic pill that will suddenly and mysteriously increase your personal productivity. Rather, gains will come incrementally as you become more and more familiar with the strategies. Expect the process to take up to a year before you've come completely up to speed on utilizing all of the strategies of increased productivity.

3. Keep in mind all nine strategies are interrelated.

To build any of these strategies into your work routine, you effectively have to work on all of them to one degree or another. In addition, companies and organizations will rank each of the nine strategies differently. There may be one or two strategies that will take priority over all the others first, but to deliver consistent star performance levels, you'll ultimately need to implement all nine of the strategies.

4. Anytime you change companies, careers or departments, you have to start at the beginning again and earn star performer acknowledgment.

Star producer status is non-transferable. Whenever you move into a new operating environment, whether it is a different division of the same organization or an entirely new organization altogether, you have to revalidate your right to star status. You effectively have to demonstrate your personal productivity to a new audience. The process, however, is important and worthwhile to you and your co-workers.

5. Never confuse effort and results. The objective is value-added productivity.

The objective of applying star performer strategies is not taking action for its own sake, but to produce more -- to add more value to the organization for which you work. Added value is always located along the critical path, and it is on these activities you should focus. If it's not possible to measure added value quantitatively, look for qualitative measures, and ask your closest work colleagues to provide you with feedback on these types of measures.

6. Keep looking for supplementary ideas and resources.

Without becoming caught up in the current management fad of the day, actively search for people who are producing star level performance in their specific career areas. Work your way into their networks. Evaluate how they have adapted and applied the nine strategies. Ask for tips and insights they can provide. And try some of their ideas in your own career.

Key Thoughts

"You have the potential -- the fundamental talents -- to be a star performer. I have supplied the productivity secrets -- the everyday work strategies the star performers use. Now you must turn that dream into a reality. Hundreds before you have done it and given us their candid evaluation. It is never too late to improve your productivity. If you have been an average performer for more years than you care to remember, you can still be a star. Whether you are just starting out or you are a grizzled veteran, with the requisite core cognitive abilities and technical competence for the job, the only thing standing between you and star performance is your applying the productivity secrets -- nothing more, nothing less."

– Robert Kelley

"If you want to be a late bloomer, don't die early."

– Dick Hayes