

PERFORMANCE THAT MATTERS

DIGITAL
**SUMMER
FORUM**

JUNE 9

DIGITAL WORKSHOPS
JUNE 14

IN PERSON
**DRUCKER
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NOV 17-18

HOFBURG PALACE
VIENNA

FOURTEEN THINGS WE STRONGLY BELIEVE ABOUT PERFORMANCE,
AND SOME OF THE QUESTIONS THEY INSPIRE ...

by Julia Kirby & Wolfgang Lassi

1 Performance is about Outcomes

- a. When people label an organization, team, or individual “high-performing,” what are they talking about? What outcomes get celebrated at each of these levels? What outcomes should be celebrated more than they are?
- b. What’s the game enterprises are trying to win, and how is it scored? Can anyone play their own game in today’s interconnected economy? Should everyone be playing their own game?
- c. Have organizations shifted so far to input and process measures that they’re neglecting to deliver the outcomes they should?
- d. In the nonprofit sector, how have donors’ increasing calls for “evidence of impact” transformed how institutions are managed? What needs to be done better?

2 Performance Starts with Purpose

- a. What does it take to define a mission that people can take pride in and act on with initiative?
- b. Are organizations today defining their purpose too narrowly – or too broadly? How much does performance depend on focus? [Drucker wrote: “One has control by controlling a few developments which can have significant impact on performance and results. One loses control by trying to control the infinity of events which are marginal to performance and results.” (Management, 499).

3 Performance Depends on the “Spirit of Performance”

- a. This was Drucker’s phrase. Relative to enterprises of the past, do enterprises today need even more “spirit of performance” in their people to succeed? Are they more likely to see it?
- b. What makes it harder to cultivate the spirit of performance in the 21st century workforce? What makes it easier? Whose examples can we learn from?
- c. What does the growth of the gig economy mean for the spirit of performance, and for enterprise performance overall?

4 Performance Improvement Efforts Should Be for the Long-Term

- a. We know that performance metrics and pay-for-performance schemes can create perverse incentives — is the problem getting worse? Or are performance management systems improving?
- b. What short-term moves that get celebrated do most damage to performance in the long term?
- c. How do some decision-makers resist the temptation to boost short-term performance at the expense of long-term health?

5 Performance Demands Discipline

- a. The whole point of management is deliver performance. Are we training managers to deliver it?
- b. What vital aspects of performance do enterprises tend to be least disciplined about managing?

6 Performance Varies Dramatically with Leadership

- a. What can we learn from cases where leadership changes affected performance for the better — or the worse?
- b. What does it mean to be a high-performing leader? Do different styles or types perform better in certain situations?
- c. How much does cultivating the spirit of performance in a group come down to how leaders model and motivate attitudes and behaviors?

7 Performance Isn’t the Enemy of Well-Being

- a. How does personal high-performance link to enterprise-level high performance?
- b. Has meritocracy become a dirty word, and if so, why?
- c. What are the relationships of stress, competitive anxiety, burnout, and other negative emotions to performance? Does sports performance research yield relevant insights?

8 Performance at the Level of Society Depends on Performance of Enduring Institutions

- a. What is the role of private sector and nongovernmental institutions in a thriving society? What do they protect us from? What do they have to do well? What important functions are uniquely theirs to perform?
- b. Are our biggest and most powerful institutions serving us well in that regard? Have they improved their performance over recent decades?
- c. Have any institutions deteriorated, or even become toxic to the societies they are supposed to serve?

9 Performance Soars When the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Sparked

- a. Do societies with more entrepreneurial dynamism really perform better? Where is it greatest? Where is most lacking?
- b. How much does an established, large-scale enterprise need entrepreneurial spirit to survive?
- c. What conditions, incentives, talents yield more entrepreneurial behavior?

10 The Jury Is Still Out on Pandemic Performance

- a. This worldwide crisis created a natural experiment. Whose political/ socioeconomic system performed best and why?
- b. Many companies reported surprisingly good bottom-line performance in the depths of the pandemic. Was it all due to unsustainable sales or savings – or will the gains remain?
- c. As supply chains floundered, and in some cases proved resilient, what was learned or changed to achieve higher performance in the future?

11 High-Performing Teams Have Attributes Others Can Copy

- a. What does the latest research on high-performing teams reveal about the secrets to their success?
- b. How much diversity serves a team best, and along what dimensions? Does this vary with the mission of the team?

12 Taking Individual Performance to the Next Level Is a Constant, Mindful Process

- a. Is energy management more important than time management?
- b. How can you get more out of formal training? How can you learn most from experience?

13 Performance Rises with Worthy Competition

- a. Is competition ever destructive to performance?
- b. Is competition the greatest motivator? Or only in some realms?
(Or never at all?)
- c. How should an enterprise define its competitive set?

14 Performance starts with a strong sense of responsibility

- a. What is needed that employees take ownership of their work?
- b. How do we promote a culture of responsibility and accountability in organizations?
- c. How do we reward those who went the “extra mile” and how do we make them visible?
- d. How do we promote a leadership culture based on being a role model instead of on power and hierarchy?