

BECOMING A SUPERIOR WORKER

A BASIC BUSINESS VICTORY GUIDE

This book was developed by James H. Saylor

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FORWARD

This book is part of the VICTORY series. For over 30 years, the pursuit of a simple, easy-to-use, proven, inexpensive management system for any organization has been my focus. MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ is this system. MANAGING FOR VICTORY™ system includes:

Visioning creates a common focus

Involving everyone establishes a superior organization

Continuously improving achieves excellence

Training, educating, coaching, facilitating, mentoring develops a learning culture

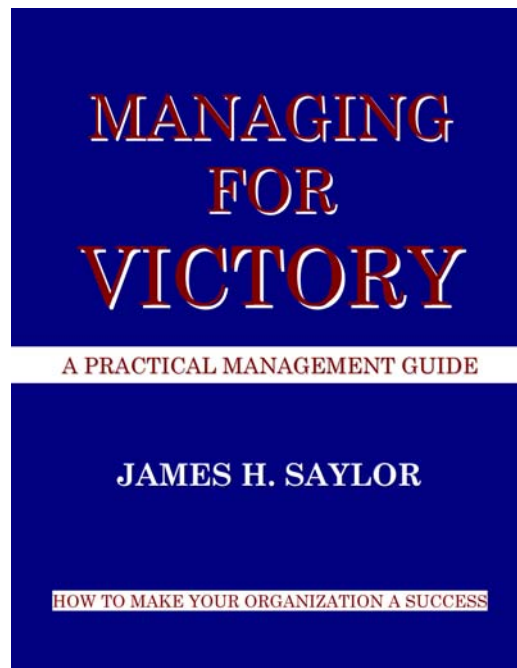
Owning the work fosters empowerment

Recognizing and rewarding builds high performance

Yearning ensures success

Customers drive VICTORY

Progressive Leaders guide VICTORY



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James H. Saylor is the founder of The Business Coach, an organization focusing on helping other organizations achieve their specific VICTORY. He has assisted many organizations in discovering, designing, developing and doing successful management systems. In addition, he has led, managed, coached, trained and facilitated many individuals and organizations in achieving their specific VICTORY. Jim has over 30 years experience in operations, organizational development, sales, marketing, training, project management, quality and logistics. He has prepared and presented many highly proclaimed training seminars and workshops globally. Jim is a widely recognized leading champion of Total Quality Management in the 1980s and 1990s. Jim is the author of the *TQM Simplified*, and co-author of *Customer-Driven Project Management* published by McGraw-Hill. Jim's latest book is MANAGING FOR VICTORY™. For further information about Jim's books, guides and workshops see websites: www.managingforvictory.com or www.thebusinesscoach.org or email coachjim@thebusinesscoach.org.

BECOMING A SUPERIOR WORKER

People provide the power for success in any organization. Many organizations grow people power by building a learning organization. This implies the organization has some responsibility for optimizing the power of people. In fact, much of the literature targets the learning organization's responsibility for educating, training, facilitating and coaching the workforce. However in today's world, there are no guarantees from an organization. Even the best organizations cannot ensure lifetime employment. Therefore, each individual worker must empower his or her self to become a superior performer every day. It is up to each individual to take responsibility and accountability for his or her own success. In addition, each worker must invest in own future. It is not about THEM it is about YOU.

The purpose of this book is the development of a successful worker today and for the future by providing a prescription to be fulfilled by workers from CEOs to frontline associates. The foundation of the prescription is learning. Although there is no agreement on the specific competencies required for success for the workforce of the 21st Century, predominate in almost every study is learning. Although traditional education and training methods still are important to develop knowledge and skills, the superior worker focuses on learning. Learning is a lifelong process that starts with the YOU learning mindset. The YOU learning mindset is different from a traditional learning mindset. Table 1 shows some of the differences between a traditional learning mindset and YOU learning mindset. The table can be summarized into the 10 essential elements for learning as follows:

1. YOU learn with a purpose
2. YOU accept ownership for own learning
3. YOU empower lifelong learning
4. YOU understand learning is critical to success
5. YOU are pro-active in learning process
6. YOU customize and personalize each learning experience
7. YOU discover practical application for learning
8. YOU learn everyday in the workplace
9. YOU target learning for business results and superior performance
10. YOU use a proven learning process

Table 1 Learning Mindsets

Traditional Learning Mindset	YOU Learning Mindset
Education and training	Learning with a purpose
Organization’s responsibility	Individual ownership
Organization development	Self development
Organization support	Individual empowerment
Quick fix	Lifetime
Short term punishment or reward	Critical to future success
Passive	Pro-Active
Standard and impersonal	Customized and personal
Instructor-centered	Learner-focused
Concepts and theory	Practical application
Academic principles and concepts	Build on personal work experience
Scores, Grades and Assessments	Business Results and superior performance
Extra work	Part of work
Answer specific	Answer depends
Repeat, Remember, Recite, Remove	Prepare, Practice, Perform, Probe
Class is end	End of class is beginning
Build on weakness	Build on strengths
Knowledge, skill and attitude	Competence
Learning in Classroom	Learning in Workplace

The YOU mindset requires you to make you future PERSONAL. With a YOU mindset, the superior worker takes a planned proactive approach based on achieving specific individual outcomes.

Becoming a Superior Worker Considerations

Becoming a superior worker requires a PERSONAL outlook. YOU must plan. YOU must establish learning objectives and goals. YOU must recognize priorities. YOU must share your plan with others. You must obtain support. YOU must normalize successful actions. You must always keep focus on superior performance. YOU must list progress.

In order for learning to be effective, it is important to make learning personal. The following is an action process for personal learning for superior worker individual development:

Plan learning

Establish learning goals

Recognize priorities

Share plan with others

Obtain support

Normalize successful actions

Always focus on superior performance

List progress

Personal - Plan

The ultimate advantage of any worker comes from competence. A competent worker has the flexibility to adapt to the ever-changing environment. This requires individual competence, as well as, a high degree of organizational competence. Therefore, the target of any superior worker is competence. It is important to remember, competence is relevant within the organizational culture of a specific organization. Specifically, the superior worker strives for organization competence with view toward organization competence in any progressive organization. Figure 1 shows competence as the focus in any learning process. Competence is gained by knowledge, skills, application, and experience.

The ultimate competence is the ability to learn. The greatest opportunity for learning in the workplace comes from experience on the job. In order to become a superior worker there must be a specific focus on learning in the workplace. Therefore, the superior worker uses his or her

learning competence to target other specific competencies for superior performance in the organization and own future success. The superior worker learns to learn by targeting specific competencies. This requires a superior worker to develop a personal learning plan.

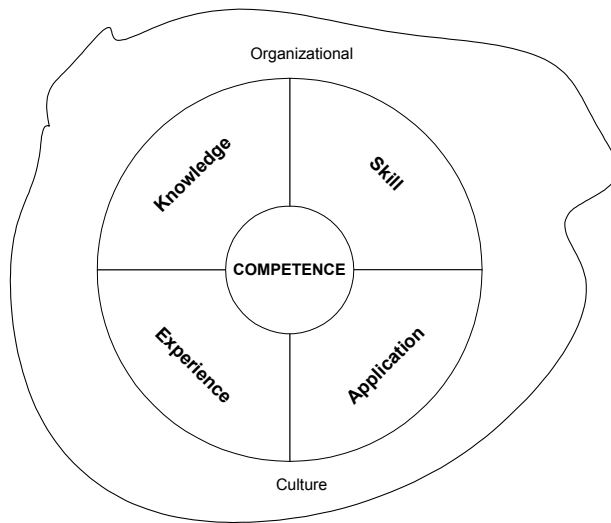


Figure 1 Learning Process.

Plan considerations

Provide understanding of where you are today

Learn where you want to go in the future

Analyze how to get from today to the future

Navigate to get to the future state

Plan - Provide understanding of where you are today

In order to understand where you are today, you need to perform an assessment of yourself, your organization and potential future organizations.

Know Yourself

The key questions are: “how do I learn?” and “what have I learned already?”

The superior worker must know himself or herself to achieve superior performance. In the process of knowing yourself, the individual assesses his or her ability and willingness to achieve superior performance.

This can be a self-assessment. Other source of information is performance reviews, letters of recommendation and award certificates. In addition, there are many resources for assessment by third-party such as The Psychological Type Indicator, DISC Personal Style Indicator, Myers-Briggs Personality Indicator Test, MAP (Managerial Assessment of Proficiency), Learning Style Assessment, and so on.

Know You Organization

The key question is “what are the competencies for success?”

Although there are many similar competencies in successful organizations, competencies vary by organization. There is universally accepted list of specific competencies for success. In addition to the variance of competencies in each organization, the competencies are ever changing depending on the organizational environment. This means it is necessary for each individual to constantly grow and develop, in order to maintain remain superior performance.

As a baseline, there are many competency models to use as a starting point. There are numerous resources found on the Internet. The most common competencies include: learning, communication, problem-solving, dealing with others, and working in teams. In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor and Education publishes kinds of competencies and skills that workers must have to succeed in today’s workplace. In this document five competencies encompassing resources, interpersonal, information, systems and technology are outlined with specific characteristics. In addition, skills and personal qualities are described as a three-part foundation. Also, there are many organizations that specialize in this area that can be used for assistance. Further, many professional organization provide list of competencies of specific professions. For instance, The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) provides a competency study “Mapping the Future” for workplace learning and performance professionals. The Project Management Institute (PMI) offers “Project Management Body of Knowledge.”

Competence differs by each organization because the role of everyone in the organization is different in every organization. Executives

take may have a more visionary role. Managers become leaders. Workers add improvement responsibilities. This requires new competencies.

In addition to view toward competencies, you must examine the organization's culture to discover the true nature of the organization's competence. The organizational culture includes: language, behavioral norms, ceremonies, informal and formal social and work process, organizational management style, reputation, image, philosophies, values, attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and traditions. The organizational culture has a major impact on performance of any success effort.

Know the Future Organization

The key question is "what are the competencies for your success in the future?"

The future organization is not predictable. However, the following competencies provide a baseline for success in any progressive organization. Besides learning, the competencies that dominate most surveys are: basic skill competence, communication, problem-solving and making improvement, working with others, and working in teams. Also, common valued competencies include: adaptability, flexibility, dependability, changeability, and accountability.

Most important, the superior worker needs to have a work ethic constantly striving for success by ongoing learning. The superior worker continuously improves by reading current publications. Further, he or she reviews research to establish a view of an organization that he or she can deliver superior performance.

Compile a Current State Report

The current state report provides an understanding of where you are today. It gives baseline information for the remaining processes. This information is used, updated, clarified, and modified as appropriate. The individual must consider all information to determine the "today state." As a minimum, the state of the organization report should include:

- Critical Individual Success Factors
- Individual Assessment
- Performance Reviews
- Organization's view of competencies
- Critical Organization Performance Indicators
- Future research reports

Plan - Learn Where You Want to Go in the Future

Learning where you want to go in the future involves creating perfect view of the future. It is important to visualize this ideal future state. To visualize your future state, close your eyes and make a picture in your mind of ideal future state. What does it look like? What are you doing? What have you done to achieve future state? Once you have a clear view of future state, take a minute to either draw a picture or describe in words the future state.

In addition to picture or word description of future state, a superior worker might want to clarify his or her vision with a focus statement. The focus should be written as a clear, concise statement. The focus statement should convey a sense of purpose. The focus statement should consider the following: (1) what are the most critical success factors for the future? (2) who can help me learn? (3) how do I provide value? (4) what are my strengths (5) what should be my primary focus for future success? If accomplished properly, the focus statement will provide “where you want to go in the future.”

Plan - Analyze how to get from today to the future

Once the individual has focus for learning, he or she must analyze how to bridge the gap from today to the desired future state. This involves combining all the information from the current state with the common view of the future into one focus for learning strategy. Specific strategies start with the focus statement. They answer the question: “How can I achieve my focus statement?”

Learning objectives

Learning strategy should consider the competencies as identified in the previous steps. It is important to identify six to eight competencies as the primary focus to get to the future state.

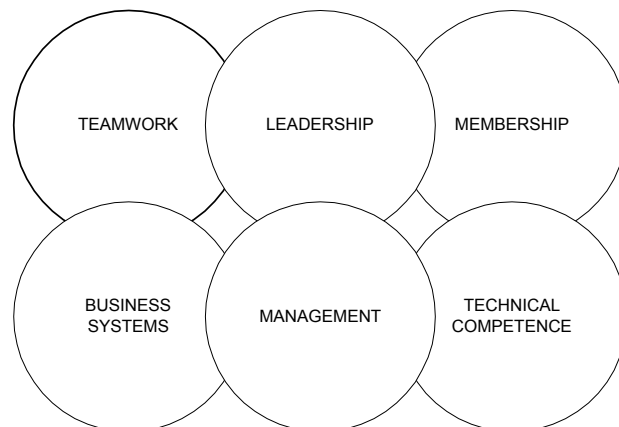


Figure 2 Areas for Learning

Plan - Navigate to Get to the Future State

Once the development needs are identified and the organization enables development, the individual can focus on development actions through action planning. The Action Plan ensures that specific actions are accomplished to become competent within the organization. The actions are the result of defining the gap between where the individual currently is and where the individual needs to be for future success. The action plan should emphasize both short-term and long-term development needs. Short-term needs are categorized as development needs, and long-term needs are growth areas. These needs should be included in an individual development action plan. The action plan provides the what (actions), when (milestones), and how (education, training, coaching, mentoring, or on-the-job training). Figure 3 shows a personal learning action plan worksheet.

Personal Learning Action Plan Worksheet

Development Objectives	Development Method	Develop	Growth	Status
Communication	Training/experience	X		
Customer Orientation	Training/experience	X		
Systems Thinking	Education		X	
Goal Setting	Training	X		
Working with others	Coaching/experience		X	
Business Results	Experience	X		

Figure 3 Personal Learning Action Plan Worksheet.

Personal - Establish learning goals

As part of the planning process, you need to establish learning goals. Goals focus on your individual success within the organization. A goal is the specific desired outcome(s) of some activity. Goals are important to know exactly where you are going. Goals provide clear direction and focus. Goals establish the short-term look—“each step along the way.” Goals also tell how you are doing. This is critical to staying on-track and making necessary adjustments. Goals help you monitor progress, evaluate situations, and make improvements.

Goals should be specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time bound. The goal should be clear. Set a reasonable goal but do not set sights too low. The goal should be in the middle range. It should not be unattainable or too easy. Set a goal that will be a challenge. An easy goal is not a worthwhile endeavor. Orient goals toward specific measurable results. Make sure there is specific feedback on the goal outcome. Ensure goals are linked to objectives or learning outcomes. YOU set your own goals.

Goals Considerations

Gear to specific results—defined within parameters

Observe by measurement—be able to check outcome

Attain success—challenging, but realistic

Limit to specific time—include time boundaries

Set by YOU

The following goal statement is not an effective goal according to the guidelines:

Improve order-processing time in customer service.

The statement above is more of a mission statement. It should be rewritten as a goal as follows:

Improve the time to process an order from order receipt from 3 days, to order ready for delivery to 6 hours in 30 days.

Personal - Recognize priorities

Today, it is extremely important to focus on the high priority learning requirements. Simply, you will accomplish what you decide to focus on. This requires you to align your priorities to find the vital learning opportunities.

This may require the assistance of others inside and outside the organization. Of primary importance for maintaining support and establishing priorities in your current organization is your immediate manager. Other sources of information include professional, industry organizations, and government agencies.

Finally, you must continually maintain focus. There will be numerous distractions, diversions, and digressions from your critical priorities. Your focus will determine your success.

Align priorities

Involve others

Maintain focus

Personal – Share the plan with others

You cannot learn without others. It is absolutely necessary to share your plan with others. You need others support, encouragement, feedback, and sometimes a gentle push. You cannot completely learn new competencies without others. This is true of everyone. You can benefit from the experience of others. They offer another perspective. They can provide advice. Further, they can give a pat on the back or bring you back in focus

In addition, you may need to get input from others to help prioritize development activities. In addition, it is good to share the plan with others to ensure progress toward the right objectives. Beside your immediate manager, this can include peers internal and external to the organization, Human Resources personnel, and other stakeholders in your success. Further, you can recruit successful people as advisors to you becoming a superior worker. Last, you should never forget to include family members as the biggest stakeholders in your future.

Show your plan to others

Have others provide assistance

Allow differing perspectives

Recruit successful advisors

Engage family members with your plan

Personal - Obtain support

Besides the obvious sources of support as mentioned above i.e. manager, human resources, family, friends, and professional organizations, it is helpful to improve your chance of success to have a mentor and/or learning partner. A mentor is usually someone with the wisdom of experience. A mentor can help you with moving forward, refocusing efforts, and offering encouragement. In addition to a mentor, a learning partner is a good idea. The learning partner is a peer. The learning partner can be critical in understanding your situation and holding you accountable for progress. Both a mentor and learning partner require a formal commitment to support your pursuit of success. This formal commitment requires regular contact. As a minimum, you need to meet with your mentor quarterly and with your learning partner monthly. Ideally, you should have access to your mentor and learning partner whenever you need support, with contact with your mentor monthly and your learning partner weekly.

Have a mentor

Engage a learning partner

Listen to mentor and/or learning partner

Plan regular contact with mentor and learning partner

Personal - Normalize successful actions

It is up to you to take successful actions. You need make successful actions a habit by incorporating learning into day-to-day activities. You must constantly be engaged in learning. However to internalize the learning, you must plan when to do learning activities. The learning activity can be simply reflecting on the learning of the day and/or more formal education, training, coaching and experiential activities. Regardless of the learning activity, it can be normalized by setting aside a certain time each day, or specific days and times to do learning activities. If you spent 15 – 30 minutes a day, you could develop your expertise in any area in a short period of time. Therefore, it is essential to make personal learning a habit.

Have a plan for the day

Act on the most important learning goals

Be consistent

Include time to expand your knowledge

Take time to reflect on the day

Personal - Always focus on success

You must select learning activities that will lead to achieving success in the future. This process provides the focus for your success. In order to maintain a constant focus on your success, you need to examine your learning objectives and goals daily, weekly, quarterly, and yearly.

At the beginning and end of each day, you should review your daily activities. At the beginning and end of each week, you should update the status of weekly targets. In addition, each quarter you should analyze progress toward quarterly goals and yearly objectives. Finally, every year you need to review yearly objectives and you should revise and add new objectives as appropriate to remain focused on success.

Personal - List progress

It is important to list progress. Each individual should document the specific details of his or her learning for continuous success. As a minimum, the individual needs to document his or her progress on paper. In today's world, it is easy to list, check, modify, review and change learning progress on a computer or personal data assistant (PDA).

Each individual needs to decide the specific details needed to track his or her individual learning. The information in the individual development action plan provides a starting point. In addition, the individual should consider tracking daily activities, weekly targets, quarterly goals and yearly objectives. Further for each objective, the individual might construct an action plan with these elements: learning goals, the purpose for striving to achieve the goal, development activities with current status, support resources required, potential restraining forces and driving forces to achieve goal, and visible measure or indicator of success.

Some people find a journal useful as a learning tool.

ACTION PROCESS

The action process below targets developing individual competencies

Define competencies for success

Establish development requirements

Validate development needs

Enable development

Learn to learn

Observe progress

Pursue lifelong learning

1. Define competencies for success
 - a. List six to eight competencies required for your success in your organization 2 to 3 years in the future.

2. Establish development requirements
 - a. Determine all the requirements for success in your job.
 - b. List the items that can be developed through training, education, coaching, etc.

3. Validate development needs
 - a. From the list of development items for success on your job, establish items for your specific development. Write your list of development items.
 - b. Prioritize the list above to determine the top one through four items for your development.
 - c. Review with other stakeholders your top-priority development items.
 - d. Select one item to develop to competence in your organization.
 - e. Determine how you will know you are competent in your selected item. Remember, this can be a measure of success on-the-job or observable behavior (yours or others).

4. Enable development
 - a. Determine an action plan to focus on development of your top-priority item with a goal of competence within 60 to 120 days.

5. Learn to learn
 - a. Complete your action plan by learning through one or more of the following: training, education, coaching, and experience.
 - b. Determine through your experience in developing competency, your specific restraining and driving forces for learning.

7. Observe progress
 - a. Keep a log on progress toward developing competency. Make sure you reflect daily, weekly, monthly and at completion.

8. Pursue lifelong learning
 - a. Establish a plan for lifelong learning as a result of your experience developing competency.

