

Become a quantum business with the 5 Legged Model of Performance

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In the past, many organizations and business leaders used a reductionist view of the way things work inside their companies, adding the sum of parts (i.e., departments, supply chain, etc.) to equal what they thought was the sum of the whole. However, in modern times, many thinkers have developed new processes and ways of thinking about how we look at an organization as a living, interconnected whole — a quantum perspective.

One of the first models of this approach was created by Dr. W. Edwards Deming. Deming's [Total Quality Management](#) included [14 points](#) that lead to a company's success. Other great thinkers, like Joseph M. Juran, Philip B. Crosby and Kaoru Ishikawa, also worked on the same quantum model. One of the more modern, mainstream thinkers to approach this idea of interconnection is Stephen Covey. In Covey's book *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, he looks at the complete person rather than reducing the individual parts of one's life into silos, disconnected from everything else.

In school, specifically in kindergarten through 12th-grade education (K-12), we have to start looking at the whole child and not just the cognitive part that exists inside school walls (or virtual classrooms) as the sole way to improve student performance. My company, Ed Directions, works with schools around the Southeast. When people ask us what helps education, it is as if they are waiting for some sort of reading program or approach to math that is a magic bullet. We start by inquiring about the climate and culture of a school. [Research](#) shows that when kids don't feel safe, they have a harder time learning. Next, we inquire about wraparound services, with a special focus on things like food. Hungry students also have [difficulty concentrating](#), making them unable to access knowledge months later when they are expected to retrieve it for some sort of high-stakes assessment.

We have to look at students as both cognitive and noncognitive beings and understand that what happens outside of school is part of the same biological makeup of what comes into the school in the morning. Social services, mental health, and identifying, unpacking and treating trauma in its many forms and other such noncognitive issues can be as much of a deterrence to education as a learning disability or closing a performance gap.

With these goals in mind, our company has developed the Five-Legged Model of Performance. While created with the intention of helping students, it can also be useful to business leaders for understanding and setting goals for employees.

1. Knowledge: What we must know, such as concepts, tasks, thinking, critical vocabulary and standard operating procedures.

2. Attitude: The willingness to perform necessary tasks and give the best effort. In business, this might be morale, teamwork, accountability and positivity.

3. Perception: Perception is divided into two subcategories: perception of proficiency (PoP) and perception of efficacy (PoE). PoP in business is whether an employee really understands what good work looks like. Is there a gap between what a leader wants and what an employee thinks is acceptable? PoE pertains to the belief of employees in themselves. Does each person believe they have what it takes to be successful?

4. Thinking or metacognition: This concept explores the metadata of how an employee approaches things like initiating a task or project or what processes do they use when presented with a hiccup or issue. This is more how they work rather than what they did. Metacognition refers to a process that, if fine-tuned, is replicable and iterative.

5. Experience: This leg dovetails into Covey's concept of "sharpening the saw." How often do we not just try to do our job but take a piece of our approach and try to make it better? Give someone smaller or noncritical assignments or projects. Tell them to try things outside their comfort zone. Have new teams tackle a few small projects to work out the intrateam dynamics. Are leaders intentional about developing better performers, or will they choose to use them as-is and hope for better productivity or higher quality?

Only 20% of the model is made up of "the stuff one knows" or knowledge. Before getting into the other 80%, it is important to distinguish performance from learning. First, students — or in the business world, employees — must know something (i.e., learning) before they can do something with it (i.e., performance). How do we train? How do we onboard? How do we provide and calibrate expectations of proficient work? How do we give timely critical feedback to shape future performance? We must provide a climate where the learning that we want to impart makes it through sensory memory into short-term memory and finally onto retrievable long-term memory.



Once we've done a good job of training, we need to enable performance. One leg of the five-legged model is to make sure that we've given them knowledge. That doesn't mean that we taught it; it means that they learned it. We must give them translation activities and meaningful work to where they make their own meaning and embed the understandings into long-term, retrievable memory. Now we need to bolster the other four legs of performance: giving opportunities for experience, making sure they understand what proficient work looks like, making sure they feel they have the aptitude to do that proficient work, refining the approaches and processes they use to initiate work, and making sure morale and climate are in place to get the best they have to offer.

For optimum productivity and job satisfaction, we should take the quantum approach and teach our teams what they need to know and then support them on all legs of performance.

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