



# INDIVIDUAL EFFECTIVENESS

## CREATING THE EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE





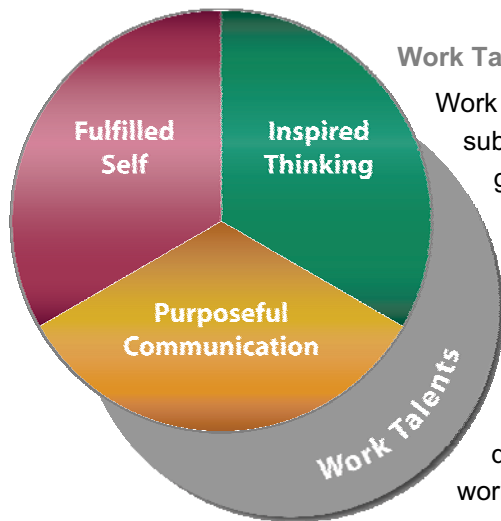
The struggle is the same in all organizations: the brilliant engineer who has the expertise to create major advances in the organization, but is unable to communicate clearly enough to get others in the organization to support his or her ideas. Or the salesperson who is loved by clients and can land the big sale, but when it comes to supporting implementation is unable to plan effectively. Or the customer service representative who knows the product backwards and forwards and can effectively communicate solutions to customers, but who can't handle the stress and conflict inherent in the position.

## CREATING THE EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE: A PERSPECTIVE ON INDIVIDUAL EFFECTIVENESS

It is clear that the effective individual is more than just the sum of his or her technical or professional expertise. In the 40-plus years we have studied individual performance and helped our clients develop their workforce, we have come to believe that, in addition to technical competence, what separates the effective from the highly effective individual is a core set of skills that a person acquires over his or her career, crossing from job to job, role to role. These “transferable skills” accumulate as an individual gains experience, takes advantage of developmental opportunities, and learns from mentors and coaches.

While we often spend years, sometimes decades, developing our work talents, we tend to disregard the importance of developing these transferable skills. Yet numerous studies have shown that these skills account for the majority of differences in individuals' job performance. At Wilson Learning, we have grouped these transferable skills into three core *skill* domains:

- **Purposeful Communication:** Studies of organizational effectiveness, individual performance, and team success have shown that an individual's ability to communicate clearly, concisely, and openly while maintaining positive relationships with others is one of the largest contributors to performance success. The individual's ability to communicate on purpose, with sensitivity and forethought, is Purposeful Communication.
- **Inspired Thinking:** While there may have been a time when Inspired Thinking skills were required only by a few people at the top of the organization, this is clearly no longer the case. Everyone in today's organization needs the ability to collect and organize information, create new knowledge, find innovative solutions, solve problems, and make judgment-based decisions. We believe ensuring that all employees have a broad set of Inspired Thinking skills is vital to organizational success.
- **Fulfilled Self:** The values, personal characteristics, and sense of purpose that effective individuals bring to their lives is the Fulfilled Self. Employees who are fulfilled are more engaged and achieve higher performance levels. The Fulfilled Self is expressed and becomes evident in the consistency of behavior – the degree to which one's actions match one's thoughts and words. Individuals who treat others with respect; know how to manage their own emotions; and act in the interests of others, the organization, and themselves, can be said to have a Fulfilled Self.



### Work Talents

Work Talents provide the tangible means for an individual to make a substantive contribution toward achieving personal and organizational goals. They are the “stuff” of doing good work. A person’s technical or professional expertise and knowledge of his or her own organization and of business practices generally constitute Work Talents.

### Balance and the Effective Individual

Thus, along with Work Talents, the three transferable skill domains of Purposeful Communication, Inspired Thinking, and Fulfilled Self define what all employees need in order to be successful in their work.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the three transferable skill domains in more detail. On the pages that follow, we will explore:

- The core organizing principle underlying each skill domain
- The individual skills and competencies that define each domain
- How these skills can be developed in your organization

## PURPOSEFUL COMMUNICATION

In today’s business world, the importance of Purposeful Communication is unquestionable. Numerous studies have linked Purposeful Communication with organizational performance, productivity, and employee engagement. It is essential that employees know how to communicate effectively!

The need for Purposeful Communication has increased for a number of reasons:

- Technology changes mean that customers and suppliers expect to speak directly to technical support people, product experts, and other resources. This requires all employees, not just salespeople and managers, to be Purposeful Communicators.
- Reduced cycle times and the need to shorten the period from new product development to launch means that people at all levels need skills to communicate cross-functionally more effectively.
- Increases in global business, international outsourcing, and the “flattening” of the world means that people need improved skills for effective cross-cultural communication.

Several studies have shown the close connection between performance and Purposeful Communication. For example, in 2005 Watson Wyatt found a strong relationship between communication and a number of measures of organizational performance: Companies with high communication effectiveness had 57 percent greater total return to shareholders, 19.4 percent higher market premium, were 4.5 times more likely to have employee engagement, and had 20 percent lower turnover than companies with low communication effectiveness. Griffith (2002) explored communication effectiveness in the global setting and asserted, “Communication underlies the effectiveness of coordinating exchange activities, developing strong relationships, which results in improved performance.” Schmidt (2005) found effective communication to be a critical factor in transforming challenges of organizational crisis into opportunity to gain competitive

advantage. In short, Purposeful Communication is one of the leading indicators of individual and organizational performance.

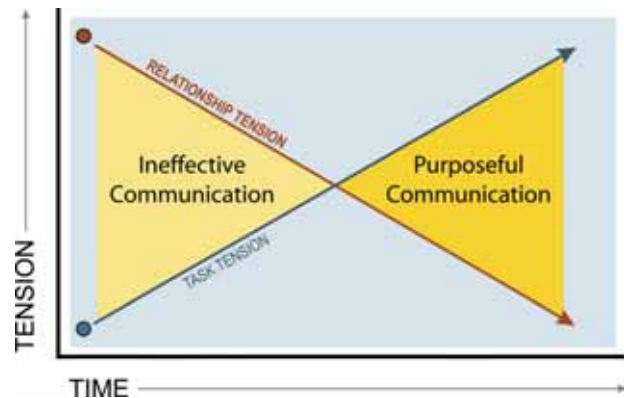
To excel in this domain, individuals need to understand the basis for Purposeful Communication. It is our perspective that Purposeful Communication exists when individuals effectively balance two forms of communication tension: relationship tension and task tension. Balancing these two requires both a desire to communicate effectively, and skills that address each of these forms of tension. If done effectively, our research has shown, communication and organizational performance will improve.

### Task and Relationship Tension

Whenever two or more people engage in a relationship, or even a conversation, there are always two forms of tension present – task tension and relationship tension.

Task tension is the desire or motivation to accomplish a certain goal or task. Something needs to get done or communicated, and until it does, there is tension. Task tension motivates action – the higher the task tension, the greater the potential for productivity.

Relationship tension is also always present in an interaction. Relationship tension is the lack of trust and comfort people feel in an interaction or relationship. High relationship tension causes people to not be as open and to hold back information and opinions. The higher the relationship tension, the lower the productivity.



Task and relationship tension both require energy. Therefore, if more energy is expended in dealing with relationship tension, then less energy will be available for dealing with task tension. In the early stages of communication, there is usually little trust and openness (that is, relationship tension is high). A lot of energy goes into figuring out just how to have the conversation, and the focus is on feeling comfortable. It is important to address and reduce the relationship tension. As the communication moves to the next stage and the relationship grows to a more familiar level, relationship tension goes down and individuals feel more comfortable and more trusting. As a result, more energy can be expended in dealing with the task (increase in task tension), thus creating effective communication.

### Owning the Responsibility for Managing Tension

Managing relationship and task tension in order to communicate purposefully is an ongoing process. That is, a person does not reduce relationship tension in the first minutes of an interaction, then switch to increasing task tension. Balancing relationship and task tension is less a linear process and more like a dance; your reaction depends on the action of others. When you feel their relationship tension rising, you take steps to reduce it. When you see task tension lagging, you take steps to increase it.

The more I know about me, the more I am able to understand you, and the more I need to be responsible for managing the difference.

Thus, while understanding the relationship between task tension and relationship tension is important for Purposeful Communication, what is more important is owning the responsibility to manage task and relationship tension. You must approach each communication with a positive intention. You must want to

communicate clearly and take ownership for communicating effectively. It is too easy to blame poor communication on the other person – he or she is not being clear or is making you uncomfortable. Purposeful Communication will only occur when everyone acts as if they are responsible for communicating effectively, adapting their communication style to the other person and checking for understanding. If relationship tension is high, take steps to make others more comfortable. If task tension is low, take action to move the communication forward.

### **Skills of a Purposeful Communicator**

Reducing relationship tension and increasing task tension requires a broad set of communication skills. While there are probably countless ways to categorize important communication skills, our research has identified the following critical skills for reducing relationship tension and increasing task tension.

- **Listening to Learn:** This is more than just actively listening. Purposeful Communication requires that you listen in ways that deepen your understanding of the other person's facts, opinions, and interests. Listening to learn reduces relationship tension by showing others that their perspective is valued and that you are interested in their information. It also increases task tension by clarifying interests and desired outcomes.
- **Expressing to Explore:** The ability to explore your own and others' ideas through effective questioning is critical for both reducing relationship tension and increasing task tension. Expressing to explore is more than knowing a variety of question types; it involves knowing how to express yourself in a way that invites dialogue, rather than shuts it off.
- **Establishing Empathy:** The ability to understand others' perspectives and to show empathy helps reduce relationship tension by demonstrating to others that they are valued as individuals. Establishing empathy is the ability to look at issues from others' perspectives, anticipate their questions, and accurately perceive their emotions.
- **Demonstrating Credibility:** Relationship tension is reduced when others consider you a trusted source of information. You build credibility by demonstrating your competence, establishing commonality with the other person, showing propriety, and demonstrating a positive intent.
- **Persuading:** When only a few people in an organization held all of the information and authority, the ability to persuade others was not a great issue. Today it is different. People, without the aid of a title or position, need to influence others and motivate action in order to achieve the organization's objectives. With increased use of collaborative teams, the ability to persuade others in the organization is particularly critical to individual and organizational success.
- **Constructive Conflict:** In a time when new discoveries and innovations cause rapid changes, individuals need the ability to resolve conflicts quickly. Thus, constructive conflict is about knowing how to deal with conflict by encouraging useful and productive feedback and creating a safe environment where the focus is on recognizing, addressing, and resolving the task at hand, while avoiding personal and less productive conflicts.
- **Uncovering Interests:** While it is important to show empathy (an understanding of others' emotions), you also need to show that you understand, and acknowledge, others' needs and interests. By analyzing others' needs, recognizing all of the stakeholders involved, and understanding their interests, you help others know that you share their values and, as a result, build trust and reduce relationship tension.

- **Presenting Effectively:** For many people, few tasks are dreaded more than delivering a presentation to a group. Yet, the ability to deliver presentations is required for an increasing proportion of people at all levels of the organization. To be truly effective, individuals need to create and deliver presentations that not only inform, but also result in a clear “call to action” for the audience. Fundamental to this skill is a confident presentation style, knowledge of how to structure an effective presentation, and the ability to maintain composure when dealing with challenging behaviors or questions.
- **Negotiating:** As organizations adopt flatter structures, it is not enough to assume that managers and executives are the only ones who need negotiation skills. In today’s business world, people at all levels of the organization are expected to negotiate with coworkers and clients. Highly effective individuals know how to focus on problems (not people), generate and weigh options, and work with others to negotiate win-win resolutions to joint problems or issues.
- **Interpersonal Versatility:** The workplace is becoming more culturally, behaviorally, educationally, and philosophically diverse, requiring individuals to be more versatile in their interactions. Interpersonal versatility is the ability to interact comfortably with people in all parts of the organization. Individuals with interpersonal versatility will have the advantage when working with others to create value for the organization and its stakeholders.

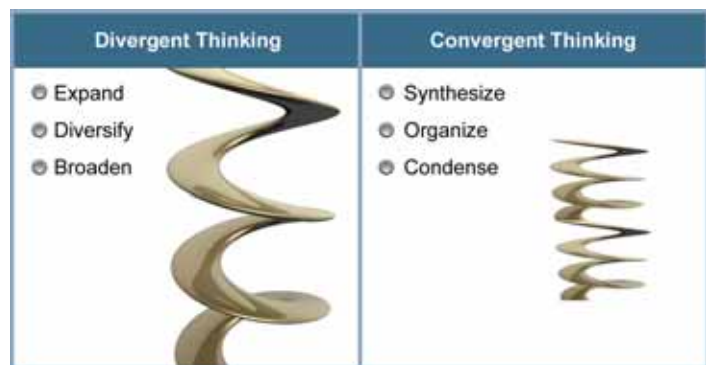
## INSPIRED THINKING

It is widely accepted that there are a number of thinking skills that are transferable from job to job, or situation to situation. While solving an engineering challenge or accounting problem requires detailed knowledge of those fields in particular, it is also true that the problem-solving process used in both situations is actually rather similar. In addition, an individual who has learned an effective problem-solving process in one area can more quickly learn how to solve problems in another area because he or she has acquired these transferable thinking skills.

The true test of a first-rate mind is the ability to hold two contradictory ideas at the same time.

— F. Scott Fitzgerald

Whether examined at a corporate, team, or individual level, the Inspired Thinking domain is critical to success. For example, one study showed that organizations that derived a majority of their revenue from new vs. existing products outperformed their peers. Also, in their research, Christensen and Raynor (*The Innovator’s Solution*) have shown that while innovation is closely associated with organizational success, creativity alone is not sufficient; Inspired Thinking is also a necessary part of the process. Similarly, our own studies of teams show that those with strong Inspired Thinking skills perform better than other teams. Additionally, decades of research by William Miller (*Flash of Brilliance*) have shown that individuals with strong Inspired Thinking skills are more successful.



## **Convergent and Divergent Tension**

What is key to Inspired Thinking? In our experience, the ability to move back and forth between divergent and convergent thinking processes is central. When faced with a complex task or problem, it is important to be open to new information and, at the same time, be able to organize that information into manageable relationships. That is, people need to deal with the tension between divergent thinking and convergent thinking.

Divergent thinking is the ability to create new knowledge and the capacity to expand knowledge. This includes the ability to draw on examples, analogies, metaphors, etc. to broaden options, ideas, information, and choices. Divergence is about being open to all possibilities.

In contrast, convergent thinking is the ability to take a broad set of ideas and compare, structure, group, and organize these ideas into a new reality to reach the best possible solution. Convergence is creating order out of chaos by picking out those few ideas that are most relevant and important to the problem or task.

Moreover, what differentiates the Inspired Thinker from the ordinary thinker is the ability to go back and forth between convergent and divergent thinking – to expand the knowledge and thinking process, then reorganize the information to come up with a new conclusion, then again to expand upon that conclusion, and again contract to a final outcome. Like a spring, the Inspired Thinker can freely move from convergence to divergence in order to end up with the best possible outcome; an ability Michael J. Gelb refers to as “Synvergence.”

## **Skills of an Inspired Thinker**

Moving back and forth from convergence to divergence requires a number of different types of Inspired Thinking skills. In our research we have identified seven skills critical to this process. While different positions require different levels of expertise in these skills, they all are needed, to some degree, to create organizational success.

- **Reasoning:** People rarely have all of the facts needed to make decisions. Therefore, the ability to see links among facts that ultimately reveal new information is a critical process for divergent thinking. The individual with excellent reasoning skills knows that processes such as inductive and deductive reasoning, critical thinking, and logical analysis can help fill gaps in knowledge, leading to more solid and more reliable conclusions.
- **Problem Solving:** The ability to define a challenge, ask the right questions, test assumptions, and draw conclusions is critical to individual and organizational success. The effective problem solver has the attitude of an investigator and the mind of a scientist in following a reliable process of finding new ways to tackle non-routine work challenges.
- **Creative Thinking:** An individual with creative thinking skills knows how to look beyond the obvious to come up with innovative ideas. Generating creative ideas requires drawing upon both facts and intuition, using skills for detailed analysis as well as using analogies, metaphors, and associations to stimulate potential solutions. A core of divergent thinking, the creative thinker understands that finding a solution to a problem sometimes means going out of one’s comfort zone and “looking outside the box.”

- **Pattern Recognition:** Convergent thinking requires the ability to collect, sort, order, and classify information in meaningful ways. Thus, the ability to map out concepts and systems, to see order in what appears to be chaos, and to construct knowledge from data are all elements of the pattern recognition skill.
- **Decision-Making:** Converging on a single best decision is a critical skill for individual and organizational effectiveness. Inspired Thinkers have skills to effectively weigh evidence, evaluate sources, and judge the relevance of information to reach and implement a decision or action.
- **Planning:** Everyone needs to know how to effectively plan. Whether planning strategy, a project, or just the day's work activities, Inspired Thinkers have the ability to sequence activities, anticipate potential problems, develop contingencies, and estimate resource and budget needs.
- **Thought into Action:** Putting these thinking skills into practice is the only way ideas can create organizational value. Too often, an individual with a wonderful idea that could help solve an important problem is unable to convert that idea into action. It becomes just another good idea without any value. The ability to use and apply the other thinking skills in order to achieve a goal is the core of Thought into Action.

## FULFILLED SELF

For many years, organizations have tried to increase employees' engagement and fulfillment by focusing on the elimination of things that make people unhappy. Companies removed poor working conditions, changed unfair employee policies, knocked down barriers to career advancement, and addressed inequities in compensation. However, today we recognize that, while these barriers may prevent engagement and fulfillment, their removal is not sufficient to create engagement and the Fulfilled Self.

Decades of research by people such as Seligman, Bandura, Snyder, Csikszentmihalyi, Salovey, and Mayer have shown us why this is so. All of the actions mentioned above are external to the individual. Studies by these noted scholars have shown that true fulfillment comes from within. One's virtues, strength of character, resilience, and sensitivity to one's own and others' emotions are what enable a person to flourish.

People who regard themselves as highly effective act, think, and feel differently from those who perceive themselves as ineffective. They produce their own future, rather than simply foretell it. Self-belief does not necessarily ensure success, but self-disbelief assuredly spawns failure.

— Albert Bandura

Excelling in the Fulfilled Self domain translates to improved organizational performance. Numerous studies have shown that an individual's Fulfilled Self image predicts higher performance for a wide range of occupations, from machine operators and retail store managers to U.S. Navy officers and CEOs. Additionally, studies have shown that up to 28 percent of individual work performance can be accounted for by a person's feeling of confidence and self-efficacy.



### Personal and Social Awareness Tension

Task and relationship tension define Purposeful Communication. The tension between divergent and convergent thinking defines Inspired Thinking. The Fulfilled Self is also defined by a tension, in this case the tension between personal awareness and social awareness.

We all know people who are very grounded in who they are and what they stand for, but who lack sensitivity to others' feelings and needs. We also know people who are so highly attuned to the needs, feelings, and expectations of others that it is difficult to know where they stand or what is important to them.



Fulfilled Self is defined by a balance between personal awareness and social awareness. Highly effective people have their eyes focused both inward to their personal values and outward to society and others. Most of us know at least one person who serves as a role model for Fulfilled Self – someone who demonstrates a true interest in others, who maintains a calm presence most of the time, and who always seems to make decisions based on a profound clarity of purpose and intent.

Personal awareness encompasses those skills and characteristics that allow people to manage themselves. It is a person's awareness of his or her own values and purpose in life. It is the ability to stay calm and decisive in the face of adversity, to adapt to the situation, and to effectively manage one's life. A person's values shape what is meaningful and motivating to him or her. People with high personal awareness know how to connect with their inner selves and draw strength from this.

Social awareness encompasses skills for creating effective working relationships. Showing others respect, demonstrating compassion, and valuing individual differences are all elements of social awareness. People who are high in social awareness know how to connect with others and can work collaboratively toward goals. They value the opinions and perspectives that come from differences in style, culture, and background, and they show respect and compassion in their interactions with others.

### The Being and Doing of the Fulfilled Self

There is always tension between serving yourself (personal awareness) and serving others (social awareness). Understanding this tension is important, but more important is accepting the personal responsibility to balance these two forms of tension and owning the responsibility to serve others and serve yourself. This choice is what we call the *Being* of Fulfilled Self, and is the first step to excelling in this domain. Once you have made the choice, you also need the skills to fulfill that promise – this is the *Doing* of the Fulfilled Self.

### The Skills of the Fulfilled Self

Accepting the responsibility to balance the tension between serving others and serving yourself is a first step. However, you also need skills to be open and sensitive to your own and others' needs. In our research we have identified a number of characteristics that define both personal and social awareness.

#### **Personal Awareness**

- **Personal Development:** Today's business environment is characterized by constant change. In response, individuals must not only develop core competencies; they must also develop skills that allow them to change and adapt to the business environment as it changes. Assessing strengths and needs,

planning development, and taking action to learn and apply new skills are elements of Personal Development.

- **Self-Management:** Managing time and emotions is critical in today's chaotic work environment. People with effective self-management skills can deal effectively with job-related stress and remain focused and productive in spite of adverse circumstances.
- **Drive and Initiative:** Recognizing when actions are needed, then taking action promptly and persevering through completion, are important elements of Drive and Initiative.
- **Risk-Taking:** A quickly changing work environment requires a degree of risk-taking. There is never enough information or time to be certain about actions. Organizations need people who are aware of their risk tolerance; who know how to calculate risk and weigh the costs and benefits of actions; and who can initiate unconventional, uncommon, or risky action.
- **Courage:** Recent business scandals and failures clearly point out that organizations need people, at all levels, who will stand up for their principles and values even in the face of organizational or business challenges. A willingness to sacrifice for what is right and good is at the core of Courage.

### **Social Awareness**

- **Integrity:** Knowing when to make promises and commitments, and keeping them once made, is a critical skill. Integrity today is as much about knowing when and how to say no to a request as it is following through on commitments once made.
- **Compassion:** Everyone is compassionate, but some are better at expressing it than are others. People with a strong Fulfilled Self know what gets in the way of expressing their concern for others, will pause before judging others' actions, and will appropriately balance positive and corrective comments.
- **Valuing Diversity:** Today's work environment is much more diverse than it was in the past. Add the increased global nature of work and the frequent need to interact with people from a variety of cultures, and it is easy to see that all people in an organization need to value the diversity of individual backgrounds, cultural experiences, and beliefs.
- **Contributing to Teams:** Given today's business demands for effective teamwork and collaboration, effective individuals need to demonstrate the ability to play the role of contributor in cross-organizational collaborations.

## **WORK TALENTS**

Despite the emphasis that many American business authors place on other domains (communication, thinking, self-fulfillment), it is important not to ignore the critical value of work talents.

Many years ago there was a popular cartoon published in a Japanese magazine. The drawing showed two men in business suits, one American and one Japanese, sitting on a commuter train. Both were reading books. On the cover of the book held by the American man was the title of a book that was popular in the U.S. at the time: *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*. On the cover of the book held by the Japanese man was the title *All I Really Need to Know I Learned by Studying Hard in Advanced Engineering Courses*. As this cartoon clearly points out, the value of work talents is at least equal to the value of the three transferable skills.

All people bring unique and specialized skills to the work environment, and they are essential to accomplishing the mission of the organization. By definition, Work Talents are specific to a profession, industry, company, and position. To try to delineate all of the skills required would be futile. However, the kinds of unique skills required of individuals tend to fall into four major areas:

### **Business Acumen**

In the past, it was sufficient for a company's leader to understand how the organization worked. In today's complex business environment, everyone needs to have some understanding of business processes and operations.

### **Organization Knowledge**

In addition to general business acumen, it is also important for people to understand what makes their organization unique. This includes knowledge of the organization's products and core values, as well as the organization's key performance indicators and how they are managed.

### **Technical/Professional Expertise**

What more can be said? Everyone needs to bring a unique talent or capability to the job.

### **Working with Technology**

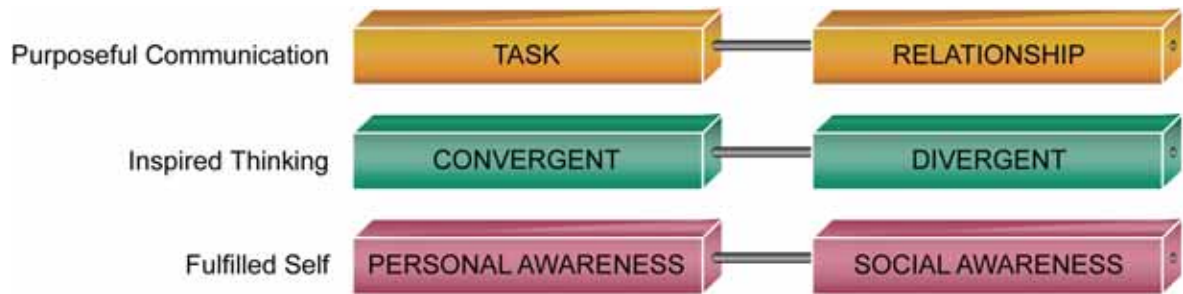
In the modern workplace, knowledge of advanced technology is required of almost everyone. Whether it is computer applications, Internet functions, phone and telecommunication systems, or specialized electronic equipment, almost all employees utilize some technology on a daily basis.

## **BALANCE AND THE EFFECTIVE INDIVIDUAL**

As may have become apparent, central to the three transferable skill domains is the concept of balance. In our research into these three domains, the concept of balance between two opposite tensions repeatedly occurred. It is our conclusion that individual effectiveness exists in a zone between two different and opposing forces. These forces create a source of energy that propels an individual to new heights of effectiveness.

Some people associate the word "tension" with "stress" and give it negative connotations. From our perspective, tension actually plays a central role in creating value. Tension is what makes a rubber band work. Tension on a machine's belt or chain allows that machine to function. Tension makes things work!

Each skill domain has its own form of tension. In each there is a natural tendency for an individual to move toward one source of tension and away from the other. The highly effective individual has learned to recognize this pull and consciously makes an effort to maintain a balance.



In summary, we believe that the four domains (Purposeful Communication, Inspired Thinking, the Fulfilled Self, and Work Talents) are critical elements to individual effectiveness. That does not mean that all employees require all of the skills to the same degree. Different situations and positions will require a different mix of these skills. For example, people in more direct contact with customers or the public (salespeople, customer service representatives, public relations specialists) may need to better develop the Purposeful Communication skills than others, while people in technical positions (designers, scientists, accountants) may need to focus on developing the Inspired Thinking skills.

Nevertheless, everyone needs to develop skills from the four domains to at least some degree. Customer service people need Inspired Thinking to help them come up with effective and sometimes creative approaches to customer problems. Technical employees need to communicate their ideas and collaborate with others to generate creative solutions.

***The Effective Individual***

Purposeful Communication	Inspired Thinking	Fulfilled Self	Work Talents
Accepting responsibility for managing both relationship and task tension in communications.	Freely moving between convergent and divergent thinking processes to determine the right action at the right time.	Acting on the type of individual you want to be by balancing personal and social awareness	Bringing unique and valued skills to the job.
KEY COMPETENCIES			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Listening to Learn</li> <li>■ Expressing to Explore</li> <li>■ Establishing Empathy</li> <li>■ Demonstrating Credibility</li> <li>■ Persuading</li> <li>■ Constructive Conflict</li> <li>■ Uncovering Interests</li> <li>■ Presenting Effectively</li> <li>■ Negotiating</li> <li>■ Interpersonal Versatility</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Reasoning</li> <li>■ Problem Solving</li> <li>■ Creative Thinking</li> <li>■ Pattern Recognition</li> <li>■ Decision Making</li> <li>■ Planning</li> <li>■ Thought into Action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Personal Development</li> <li>■ Self Management</li> <li>■ Drive and Initiative</li> <li>■ Risk-Taking</li> <li>■ Courage</li> <li>■ Integrity</li> <li>■ Compassion</li> <li>■ Valuing Diversity</li> <li>■ Contributing to Teams</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Business Acumen</li> <li>■ Organization Knowledge</li> <li>■ Technical/Professional Expertise</li> <li>■ Working with Technology</li> </ul>

**CREATING AN EFFECTIVE WORKFORCE**

Some have suggested that many of these skills cannot be learned – that when it comes to things like creativity, risk-taking, and communication skills, people either have them or they don't. To the contrary, research shows that not only can these skills be developed, it is essential that organizations provide opportunities so their employees can learn and apply them.

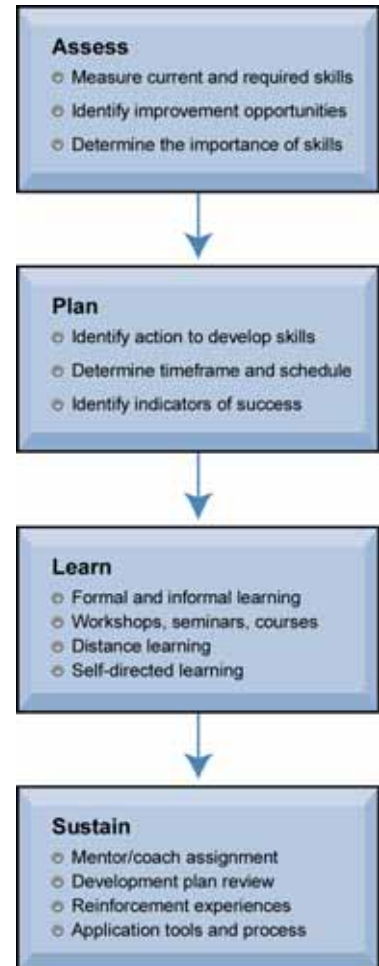
While there are multiple ways to approach development, many of our clients have found that a simple four-step process is the most effective method for developing new skills for existing employees. While any one organization may not implement all steps in this model, following the basic process below has reduced the time to proficiency and increased the sustainability of these skills in the workplace.

**Assess:** Any development effort should begin with an assessment of current strengths and developmental needs. There are a number of methods for assessing skills: job simulations, tests, and multi-rater (360- or 180-degree) feedback are some of the most common. At the completion of this step, both the individual and the organization will have a good understanding of this person's needs for development.

**Plan:** We are all familiar with the expression, "people don't plan to fail as much as they fail to plan." This is also true when it comes to developing skills. A large amount of development in organizations is haphazard and unfocused. This ultimately wastes people's time and the organization's resources. Having a clear plan that defines what each individual will do, when he or she will do it, and what the intended result is, provides a focus to learning and development activities.

**Learn:** Learning occurs in many places and in many ways. Learning needs to utilize both formal and informal development activities, such as on-the-job learning activities, as well as classroom-based learning.

**Sustain:** The vast majority of learning in organizations is lost, forgotten, or never applied in the work environment. Thus, the final step is to ensure learning transfers to the workplace and is sustained in the person's job performance until it becomes a repeatable habit. Providing manager support, supplying a mentor or coach, encouraging follow-up reinforcement learning, and giving employees tools to help them apply the skills on the job are some examples of how you can sustain learning and its use on the job.



## A FINAL NOTE

It is not surprising that the concept of balance is at the core of individual effectiveness. Balance has been at the center of life purpose and value for centuries. Whether it is the "Yin-Yang" of Taoism, the Korean "Kwae," or Buddha's "Middle Path," balance is intertwined with fulfillment, enlightenment, and engagement.

Highly effective people maintain a balance in their lives, in their communications, in their approach to thinking through problems, and in their relationship between themselves and society. While some people will achieve high performance within an unbalanced life, these achievements are often, maybe always, temporary and fleeting. When you think of the people you know who consistently produce high performance throughout their lives, you will likely think of these people as well balanced in their lives, in their relationships, and in their sense of self.





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