



# Understanding Performance and Productivity

An Online Continuing Education Course for Engineers

**Course Number: BS-1013**

**Credit: 1 Hour / 1 PDH / 1 CPD**

# Understanding Performance and Productivity

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## Course Overview

This course will help you understand the “why” behind work performance principles and help you develop the “how” that is best for your situation. There is a significant difference between being busy and being productive and a simple way to make sure your employees are always productive.

Additionally, participants will learn to define productivity and identify the difference between work pressure and work stress. Additionally, they will discover how to reduce a lot of the stress in their daily activities by asking for clarification of expectations.

Finally, it prepares them to design tools to measure performance effectively and objectively, and to show other how easily it can be done.

## Learning Objectives

Students taking this course will learn to:

1. Compare and contrast productivity with just being busy.
2. Clarify their expectations with elements of quality, quantity, and time.
3. Explain why much workplace stress stems from poorly defined expectations.
4. Reduce much of their workplace stress by asking leaders for clarification of expectations.
5. Explain what SMART goals are and why they are important
6. Write their own measurable performance goals and help others with theirs.
7. Identify the critical elements necessary for productivity.
8. Define and construct “feedback loops” for their work setting.
9. Contrast the advantage of sharing information with employees instead of hoarding it to make them seem indispensable to the department.

## What are Performance and Productivity?

One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. *“Which road do I take?”* she asked. *“Where do you want to go?”* was his response. *“I don't know”,* Alice answered. *“Then”,* said the cat, *“it doesn't matter. When you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there.”* (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass or the Adventures of Alice in Wonderland*)



The Cheshire cat's response is a model for much of the difficulty with defining performance in the workplace today as employees hear phrases like these:

- “Make it look very professional”
- “I know you will do a great job!”
- “Make sure they get their money's worth.”
- “I will need that report in a timely manner.”



Think about this...

What vague directions do you hear daily?

How do you know when you have met their expectations?

How do those vague directions make you feel?

By the time you finish this course, you will be able to define your performance expectations very clearly, have no doubt in your mind (or the other person's either) if they have met your expectations, and feel very confident that you will get exactly what you are expecting.

## The Elements of Performance & Productivity

Nearly every article written about performance always includes the concept of SMART goals (From Paul J. Meyer's "*Attitude Is Everything*") According to Meyer's viewpoint, goals should be **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**angible.

While that certainly encompasses the overall concept of performance and gives people another acronym to use even when they are not sure what it all means, it leaves out a critical component: **how do we measure subjective items or activities such as:**

- Teamwork
- Communications skills
- Customer service
- The best cake in a baking contest
- The best picture in a photography contest

In this course, we will not mention performance without associating it with productivity because productivity is why employers pay people for work. They do not pay for just doing things ("performance") but for doing things *with a purpose in mind* – productivity.

This goes back to the Cheshire cat's comment to Alice: *when you do not know where you are going (predefined productive outcomes), any road will take you there.*

We will provide a more practical definition of performance than just telling you to set SMART goals and show you how to create your own measurement systems. After we introduce the elements of performance and productivity, we will give you examples of how to create a measurement system in your workplace.

Will they be foolproof and fit every situation? No, not perfect but if you understand the 'why' of what we present, you will know how to create a useful means to measure performance until someone comes along with a better one.

## The Critical Trio



Just as there are three critical elements necessary for fire (fuel, heat, and air), there are three critical elements necessary for **productivity** (which is much different from just “being busy’): **quality, quantity, and time.**

Occasionally in this course we will abbreviate them into QQT.

**Productivity** means people clearly understand how error-free it must be (quality), how many you require (quantity), and by when (time.) An additional benefit for the leader who defines expectations using QQT standards, it is extremely difficult for an employee to explain their failure to perform with say, “I didn’t understand.”



Think about this...

How many of your current performance expectations can you redefine using the quality, quantity, and time components?

Could you comfortably say whether you have been busy or productive today?

If you could not, are you putting yourself into some measure of career risk?

Would you want to have your job defined more clearly with elements of QQT? (If it were clearly defined with QQT, even if your boss isn’t your biggest fan, there is no doubt whether you completed the assignment or not. This is just like when you were in school: the teacher may or may not like you but they couldn’t argue with your good grades!)

## It's Showtime

Another aspect of performance is **allowing the employee to work alone to master the skill**. You must also be willing to let them fail as part of the learning process. **(NOTE: "Letting them fail," means you still provide a safety net, so they do not harm the organization, someone else, or their career.**

Still, many people learn best from a trial-and-error approach. If you do not believe this, what is the first thing most people do when they slip on a banana peel? "Caution: Wet Paint!"



Think about this...

How does your boss react to failure? Do you learn from it or are you deathly afraid of failure?

If you are afraid to fail, how does that affect your productivity? If you were not so afraid of your boss' wrath (or someone else's in authority), would you be able to work much faster (and probably just as accurately?)

Many times, we learn more from our failures than from our initial successes!

To view the remainder of the course material and to take the quiz for PDH credit, you must purchase the course.

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