

# THE DNA OF A HIGH PERFORMER IN THE WORKPLACE



Being a leader isn't easy.

Between the many hats and responsibilities, the essence of your job is to inspire and influence action in others.

With the right people onboard, your organisation can achieve great things. Ultimately, a leader's role is to hire great talent and keep them engaged.

That's no small task.



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“Great leaders don’t simply hire top talent. They are continuously committed to ensuring their people are engaged, happy and productive at work.”

- Cynthia Harris, Heart Talent

Heart Talent is deeply committed to supporting you to tackle the most critical challenges facing all leaders: **Engaging, retaining and attracting the right talent.**

You can transform your organisation with the people you hire. But we know the story doesn’t end there. A highly engaged employee is **44%** more productive than their peers.



Scientific research shows that a high-performing employee can deliver 400% more than their average peer.

That's right. High performers have 4 times the output.

That's according to Personnel Psychology, a journal of research centred around people at work.

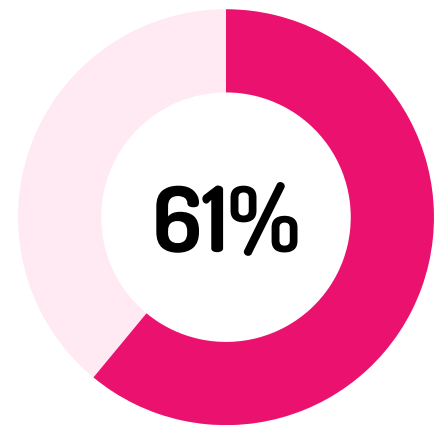


# WHEN IT COMES TO PERFORMANCE, ALL EMPLOYEES ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL.



Controversial? Possibly. But the science is clear, and so are the world's leading businesses. Both Apple and Google have reported a significant gap between high performers and average employees.

A recent study showed leaders consider top performers to be three times more valuable than their peers and responsible for 61% of their department's work.



High performers can have remarkable impact. They create and sustain great businesses.

So how do you identify these future superstars and ensure you only hire the best?

In supporting our clients to hire top talent, we interview hundreds of people each year. We've read all of the perspectives, the research studies and various books on high performance. Let's begin by saying this: this is a big topic.

A future superstar employee might look slightly different in each business, but it doesn't matter which sector you work in or the size of the team you lead, high performers have several key traits in common.



WANT TO HIRE  
YOUR NEXT RISING STAR?

A FUTURE LEADER?

AN AGENT OF CHANGE?

SUPERSTAR TALENT?

# WHATEVER THE A-TEAM LOOKS LIKE FOR YOU, WE KNOW HOW TO IDENTIFY AND ATTRACT THE PEOPLE WHO WILL DRIVE YOUR ORGANISATION FORWARD.

“High performance is succeeding beyond standard norms over the long term.”

Brendan Burchard

Burchard is the world's leading high performance coach. In his book *High Performance Habits*, he outlines the 6 key habits of high performers, referred to as HP6.

- 1 Seek clarity
- 2 Generate energy
- 3 Raise necessity
- 4 Improve productivity
- 5 Develop influence
- 6 Demonstrate courage.





# UNPACKING THE DNA OF A HIGH PERFORMER IN TODAY'S WORKPLACE



1

**HIGH PERFORMERS  
SEEK CLARITY**

High performers are epic question askers.

Remember that kid at school who was always asking questions? Perhaps they asked questions no one else thought of or the questions everyone else was too afraid to ask?

That kid wasn't just playing teacher's pet. They were probably a future high performer.

Constantly seeking clarity and asking questions is a sign of high performance.

After spending more than a decade observing high performing employees, Google's former

Head of Human Resources Laszlo Bock identified asking questions as one of the top two behaviours of high performers. The other? They actively seek feedback.

There is one critical question high performers always ask. They want to know about their own performance.

Being open to feedback is one thing, but actively seeking it and really listening to the answers is something that sets high performers apart from the pack.

These two simple behaviours are considered so powerful that Google created a way to teach new employees to do both.

The results were incredible, raising revenue by \$400 million in a single year.

You don't need to be a leader in a business on the scale of Google to see that employees who constantly seek clarity can have a profound impact.

In an interview, you can expect a curious high performer to ask lots of questions. But not the standard "What is your recruitment process? How many people are you interviewing? What benefits do you offer your employees?" questions.

High performers will seek clarity throughout the interview process by asking probing, insightful questions that demonstrate their ambition and show they have a growth mindset.

Modelling these high performance behaviours in their employees increased the productivity of Google's new hires by 2%, the equivalent of \$400 million revenue in a single year.





2



**HIGH PERFORMERS  
GENERATE ENERGY**

We've all met high energy people in the workplace and in life. They're often unmistakable, upbeat, enthusiastic, confident and highly extroverted. They have a positive, forward-looking mindset and effortlessly share their energy with others.

High performers can be introverted too and bring their energy in less obvious ways. It could show up as an intense level of focus on their work, remarkable attention to detail or holding themselves to high standards.

Wherever they get their energy from, high performers always show up, take initiative and are passionate about what they do.

They don't despise Mondays, count down until Friday afternoon or complain about being too busy or tired.

Thomas Edison once said  
“Everything comes to those  
who hustle while they wait.”

Is there any better way to describe energy, drive and ambition?

What goes hand-in-hand with a high performer's energy is their resilience. Unlike their peers, high performers are focused on the journey rather than a fixed destination.

This brings an unwavering ability to turn setbacks into comebacks and keep moving forward, no matter what roadblocks they come across.

In an interview, an energetic high performer will be able to demonstrate previous examples of overcoming adversity and challenge, probably without losing their trademark positive mindset or energy.

High performers have a  
bias towards action.

They'll talk about setbacks and problems in the context of opportunity and what they learnt, rather than focussing on failure or missed goals.

A high performer might also ask you during an interview what key challenges they would face in the job. Don't be confronted by this or afraid to answer honestly.

An authentic, transparent dialogue is key to an effective recruitment process.



3

**HIGH PERFORMERS  
RAISE NECESSITY**



Consider the countless hours it takes to learn new skills, master something new or settle into a new job.

Just as they have a bias towards action, high performers know that achieving great things takes time. They never waste a moment. Getting started now is a necessity.

Not only do they feel this necessity on an intellectual level. They have the emotional drive to make it happen and will hold themselves accountable for achieving whatever they set out to.

In the workplace, this trait could show up as incredible focus, discipline or audacious goals that others wouldn't dream of setting.

High performers thrive on challenges and solving problems. They're not afraid of failure. They view it as an opportunity to learn and grow.

They may even appear fearless in the face of challenge.

Don't be surprised if a high performer asks you questions during an interview that you don't have all the answers to. They're already thinking about the future and imagining themselves in your team, wanting to achieve great things.

**A word of warning to leaders about a high performer's drive: don't underestimate it.**

Once a high performer masters a new skill, task or job, they won't be satisfied with slipping into cruise mode.

Not only will a high performer achieve great things (and make you look good too), they'll probably be clipping at your heels in no time, hungry for their next challenge and keen to raise the bar again and again.

Read more about how to identify a high performer's growth mindset in our guide to high-impact interview questions.

**For a high performer, being excellent isn't a preference. It is a necessity that demands they take action.**



A close-up, shallow depth-of-field photograph of a person's hands typing on a laptop keyboard. The person is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. The background is blurred, showing a desk, a chair, and some indoor plants, suggesting an office or home workspace environment.

4

**HIGH PERFORMERS  
IMPROVE  
PRODUCTIVITY**

The science of high performance clearly demonstrates the results at an organisational level.

## High performers deliver 400% greater output.

At an individual level, productive high performers are collaborative, natural problem solvers who are highly motivated, efficient and effective at managing their own time. They rarely waste time (or energy) and have superior prioritisation skills.

Along with their killer work ethic, high performers develop their own systems, personalised ways of staying organised and focused and ensuring they always deliver.

Remember the 80/20 rule?

80% of consequence comes from 20% of cause. Because they are incredibly productive, 20% of your employees (the higher performers) can generate 80% of organisational output.

Better still, high performers are force multipliers, meaning they can raise the bar for people around them, making their peers progressively more productive, just by their presence.

In an interview, a productive high performer will demonstrate excellent critical thinking and analytical skills and a knack for solving problems rather than getting stumped by them.

They'll be able to demonstrate an ability to prioritise and delegate tasks and handle a significant workload without getting overwhelmed or stressed.



5

**HIGH PERFORMERS  
DEVELOP  
INFLUENCE**





High performers are people smart.  
Their social skills are second to none.

While most top performers have exceptional cognitive intelligence (IQ), their social and emotional intelligence (EQ) is what really sets them apart.

Research shows that EQ is one of the most important predictors of human performance and potential.

Naturally collaborative, high performers typically develop and value strong, healthy working relationships. They effortlessly build networks inside and outside your organisation.

As natural communicators, they can easily influence and inspire others. Most top performers have a strong internal compass, meaning even if they aren't classically extroverted,

Research shows that EQ is one of the most important predictors of human performance and potential.

they have an ability to confidently and objectively speak up when necessary.

In an interview, an influential high performer will demonstrate self-awareness, integrity and empathy for others.

Learn more about how to identify these traits with our guide to high-impact interview questions.

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“Overall, social skills – such as persuasion, emotional intelligence and teaching others – will be in higher demand than narrow technical skills. You will need to supplement specialised capabilities with strong social, creative and collaboration skills”.

Amanda McIntyre,  
pwc Australia



6

**HIGH PERFORMERS  
DEMONSTRATE  
COURAGE**



Perhaps the most inspiring trait of a high performer is their courage.

They're curious, open-minded and fearless. They've learned to be comfortable taking risks, being challenged and feeling uncomfortable because they know that's where the magic happens.

High performers are not afraid to get out of their comfort zone, push boundaries or take the path less travelled.

High performers are always pushing upwards and looking forward. They're the people who come up with unconventional solutions and can influence others to come on that journey with them.

While this high performance trait can yield incredible results for your business, it can sometimes be challenging to lead.

Courageous high performers like to take risks and often aren't constrained by job titles. This could mean they'll punch above their paygrade and also are the first to put their hand up to help others.

You'll never hear a high performer say "That's not in my job description." That mindset simply isn't in their DNA.

High performers aren't afraid to challenge the status quo. Publicly, they're respectful of authority and policy, but behind the scenes, their courage and energy will drive them to push for more, better or what comes next.

In an interview context, a courageous high performer might ask bold questions which challenge you. But they'll also ooze adaptability, emotional intelligence and a mindset of growth.

Learn more about the best interview questions to use to identify these traits in our guide to high-impact interview questions.



High-performing employees create and sustain great businesses.

You can transform your organisation through the people you hire.

As part of our commitment to helping leaders to hire the best talent, we are constantly evolving and improving our knowledge and processes. We hope you find this guide to high performance useful and look forward to hearing your comments and feedback.

Please get in touch with Cynthia Harris at [cynthia@hearttalent.com.au](mailto:cynthia@hearttalent.com.au) or 0432 044 527.





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