

**Personal Effectiveness for Career and Business Success**

Dr. Oladele Akin-Ogundeji

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# **PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS FOR CAREER AND BUSINESS SUCCESS**



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One of the important personal growth challenges facing people today is how to sustain personal effectiveness for career and business success. This e-note – covering two major keys – would help you make good progress to handle this challenge.

## **1. Employ the Top Competency Factor**

### **Essence of the Competency Factor**

The drive to have the competencies you need, and to keep updating your competencies, to be on top of things on your job and in the corporate environment is critical to sustainable high performance. This is the competency factor. In essence, it is the drive for excellence in personal, social, and technical competencies. It begins with understanding what excellence means or translates to, in real terms, given the strategic situation of your organization. It then demands your willingness to rise to the challenge and give what it takes to develop these competencies.

### **Top Competencies for Your Key Roles**

If you would continue to be relevant in your career, organization, profession, and in the marketplace develop your horizon for top competencies-not only in the short term but also in the long haul. This is one reason why you need to prepare your personal development plan (PDP) carefully, an issue discussed later in this section.

You should align your values, goals, and performance optimally for personal excellence and self-fulfillment. This, essentially, is about **personal vision** and **strategic drive**, two top competencies you need for sustainable performance. Then a gamut of competencies, such as **focus**, **insight versatility**, and **technical depth** would come into play.

The social and **interpersonal competencies** allow for harmonious relationships, effective coordination, strategic collaboration, and productive functional interdependence.

### **Focused Drive and Versatility**

Corporate success requires focus at all levels. In a world of continuous and variegated distractions and contradictions, **focus** is critical to establishing the significant things on which to develop competencies. In fact, a key challenge of corporate governance in today's pulsating world is to establish the important and necessary things, and then drop every other thing. The depth of your **insight** on the emerging performance needs, gaps, goals, or requirements of

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your organization is critical to your ability to develop this focus. If you develop a knack for seeing far ahead for the future needs for skills, knowledge, and methods in your organization, you would be able to gain from this insight and keep focus.

Yet, focus is just what is required to be on the right track. What facilitate success while on that track include the right competencies, particularly competencies that empower **versatility**. You'll be happier and more fulfilled when you have what it takes to be always relevant; in fact, being indispensable should be a secret agenda of yours- being indispensable based on your increasing value and competencies for the organization's lasting success.

Therefore, ask yourself, 'How can I enhance my ability to add value in my department, unit, or group?' 'In what areas can I be more useful?' 'Am I developing the capacity to be versatile, or am I too narrow or limited in my skill, knowledge or outlook?' 'Am I engaging in a variety of roles that help develop my outlook, skills and knowledge?' 'How well am I developing business and customer development and enhancement skills and orientation?'

Furthermore, **industry** and **resourcefulness** play a significant part in your overall performance and success on the job. A key ingredient is to have a high sense of responsibility- and then to be responsive and alert. Not many people have the personal commitment and performance drive to be this way. This is one way you could enhance your value in your organization. Being ready to see where the need is and pitch in to get things moving or done. Nothing will move until somebody takes the responsibility. Therefore, do not ever shy from taking responsibility in your areas of influence. This is a key element of the principle of industry at work.

Getting the information, resources, helps, and support, you need, rallying peers and subordinates behind a vision of sustainable high performance, and realizing or quickly finding out, what to do in critical situations, require resourcefulness. Thus, in this context, self-directed high performance is a matter of developing and actualizing these critical personal traits for the long-term success of your organization, and for your personal fulfillment and happiness. Any attempt to cut corners on these things, even if it gives you temporary gain, will amount to short-changing yourself in the long haul.

### Personal Creativity and Imaginativeness

If you would continue to make a difference in your organization, particularly under changing competitive situation, step up your drive for creativity.

Creativity starts with interest to do something different and to take up the challenge posed by a situation. Therefore, have an interest to identify what any challenging situation is in terms of the challenge or problem it poses- what it is

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you want to achieve or what you really want out of the situation. What do you currently have and what do you really want in its place? Therefore, don't define a problem situation in terms of what is wrong-in terms of what you don't want. However, define the situation as a challenge- in terms of looking for how to replace what you currently have with what you want. Always think of the outcome you want from the situation. In addition, endeavour to state any problem you want to solve in as many ways as possible. Look at the problem from about six different perspectives; say from the viewpoints of a customer, the human resource manager, the corporate lawyer, the finance manager, a researcher, and the production manager.

Furthermore, attitude counts in personal creativity. Approach the challenges you face daily with optimism, excitement, and enthusiasm and a sense of curiosity, adventure, and discovery. Hone your sense of humour. Experts believe that creativity thrives in an environment of laughter and fun. Therefore, loosen up a bit and don't take yourself too seriously. In addition, if you are dealing with what appears to be a serious problem avoid taking it too seriously as that may decrease your probability of hitting on creative and far successful solutions.

Live on a creative thinking mode, always thinking on how you can do things better- however, doing this will require a good dose of self-discipline.

### **The Learning Drive**

If you want to excel in your career, or want to be a star at work, your never-failing key is the habit of continuous self-improvement. You must take personal responsibility for your own personal development. This drive for life-long learning is a key strategy for gaining strategic advantage, within your organization and for your organization.

In a world of fast knowledge obsolescence or knowledge overload, you cannot be content with residual or pedantry knowledge. You must be thinking on how you can continue to be relevant, how you can serve your customers and employers better. Don't leave it to your employers to train you. Don't wait for the career planner to develop your careers.

What personal agenda do you have in your organization? What would you like to achieve for yourself, and on your job, in the next three years? Your personal development plan (PDP) counts! What would be your personal development plan (given your agenda and targets for the next three years? Table 3 shows a format you can use to prepare and update your Personal Development Plan periodically, say annually on a three-year projection

Your personal development plan should flow from the goals you want to achieve, say in the next three years, and focus on building your current

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strengths (skills, knowledge, attributes, and competencies) and developing new skills or competencies in order to achieve those goals.

Your personal development plan should reflect the feedback you are receiving on your periodic self-initiated assessment, the goals you set for yourself in regard to various focus areas which are critical to your personal, social, professional and job success. It should show what you should develop upon in terms of skills, competencies, knowledge, and attributes and the methods, activities, and resources you will be using to develop those skills and attributes.

**Table: A Format on Personal Development Plan**

S/N	Focus Area	Goals	Competencies	Indicators of Attainment	Developmental Activities, Methods and Resources	Completion Date	Review Dates		
		(Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and trackable)		(This may include a rating scale)			1	2	3
1	People								
2	Customer								
3	Professional								
4	Technical/Process								
5	Finance								
6	Communication								
7	Corporate Impact								

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8	Personal Growth								
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Then, you should set your deadline on which you have developed the competencies and the review dates for assessing how well you are doing. Link the review dates to the performance review periods you have put in motion with your performance mentors.

Identify how you would measure or know how well you are doing on the competencies; that is your criteria or indicators for measuring your progress or attainment-how you measure the improvements, you seek- by each review date. Prepare your personal development plan with input and guidance of your performance mentors. In general, design your personal development plan to enable you achieve sustainable high performance and contribute to the high-performance mandate of your organization.

Take your personal development activities seriously and give them the deserving priority. Review your progress periodically- with yourself and your performance mentors- and make the changes necessary to keep you on track for sustainable high performance and self-fulfillment. Reward yourself on the progress you are making after each review.

Constantly strive to improve your abilities, knowledge and skills through such methods as formal educational systems, seminars, reading books, listening to ideas or the thoughts of others, and in any manner that presents itself to you. Be alert to job opportunities that would enable you build versatility. Learn always to be a real professional on your job!

## 2. Embrace Self-Mastery and Leadership for High Performance

### Self Mastery for Sustainable Results

You'd go far with a sense of urgency; passion for excellence and accountability - for overall business results and impact. Continue to remind yourself this

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important question: ‘What do I want to be known for in the organization and in my professional areas of influence?’

You must be totally sold on ‘**why**’ you want sustainable high performance before you can commit to the ‘how’. The ‘why’ must ramify all aspects of what you hold as personal, social, financial, professional, and corporate success, as earlier indicated.

Once you get the big picture of the why, an overarching goal, purpose, or reason you will be committed to take the necessary actions and make things happen. You’ll only continue to attain high performance when you link your thoughts with your own personal and meaningful overarching reason, your **big why** for sustainable high performance. Keep this overarching purpose, this big why, front of your mind always; keep it always in front of you. Align this purpose with the object of attaining high performance on your job-albeit in aspects of your life!

Your dominating thoughts tend to decide who you are. They shape your habits and the outcomes you attain. You cannot be insipid and actualize your inner drive for self-fulfillment. Therefore, be more conscious of the thoughts flowing through your mind and decide to control your behavior with dominating, positive thoughts. Commit yourself to developing emotional intelligence-in terms of emotional sensitivity, control, and balance. Decide to carry out your duties with life, fervor, and enthusiasm. Put cheerfulness, energy, and warmth to work in your job performance and corporate behavioral style.

### **Make it a habit to create and repeat positive attitude phrases**

A surefire way to maintain a positive attitude is to make it a habit to repeat positive attitude phrases. Choose or create a positive attitude phrase and repeat it aloud many times each day. In a few days, you will notice that your attitude will become more positive.

Here are some examples:

“I am reaching my performance goals every day.”

“I have it in me to excel on my job every day.”

“I have the team to overcome any obstacle on the job.”

“Every day, I am becoming happier on my job.”

(Add more to reflect your organizational and work situation)

### **Nurture Positive Attitudes**

1. Make a deliberate decision and commitment to bring joy to work daily and to radiate joy and uplifting fun in your work environment.

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Optimistic attitude, cheerfulness and enthusiasm add spark to your work life and can be infectious in the workplace- with your colleagues, superiors, and customers. Look for the good things in your job, your organization, and the people you work with and work for, including customers. Make a deliberate and committed choice to look at yourself, your work, and your organizational setting in a constructive and optimistic way no matter what is going on around you.

The true test of your attitude is not when you have a positive attitude when everything is going your way, but when you have a positive attitude when faced with adversity. There are times you must perform your work in the face of adversity.

Sometimes you could remove the hindrances or go around them. However, there are times you meet inevitable circumstances that you can't do anything about, but to focus on moving forward and doing your best despite the difficulties and barriers. In essence, when you can't control a situation decide on being positive and look for seeds of opportunities for progress or future improvement.

Try the following tips:

- Don't worry about the things you can't control.
- Focus on what you can control.
- Concentrate your energy on pursuing your goals and on engaging in positive interactions.
- If there are resources to help control what you can't, use them.
- Control what you can, learn to accept what you can't.

### 2. Be a 'GEM' believer.

A renowned Sales expert once counseled that for the salesperson to maintain the enthusiasm necessary for job success, he or she must be a 'GEM' believer. This same principle applies to any individual whose job requires frequent and continuous contact with people, particularly customers, and whose performance is largely measured by how well he or she handles these customers and visitors.

What is 'GEM' and who is a 'GEM' believer? 'GEM' stands for **goods** (products or services), **employers**, and **men** (women, people). Your enthusiasm and optimism could only last to the extent that you believe in the goods (products or services) of your company, you believe in the reputation and capability of your employers (company) to bring about what the company represents, and you believe in the ability and skills of the key people you work with-colleagues and immediate superiors.

### 3. Be confidently calm

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Confident calmness is a powerful attitude to have. This is particularly important when dealing with difficult people or in crisis. When people are being difficult, the natural reaction is to react or pick up the gauntlet. However, when you are calm and then take controlled steps that show good judgment, you can disarm many difficult people. When you have calm assurance that you have the capacity to handle whatever situation your job throws up or that your organization has the capability to handle its daily challenges, you will be sending a powerful signal to your customers and colleagues.

### **4. Expect the Best**

Successful executives have an attitude of calm, confident, positive self-expectation. They feel good about themselves, and they have absolute faith that everything they are doing is contributing toward their inevitable success. They are cool, relaxed, happy and cheerful about their lives and their careers. They also expect the best for their colleagues and employers.

### **Develop Positive Work Habits:**

Here is a simple approach to develop positive work habits:

1. Decide three work habits you want to develop in the next 30 days and list them in order of importance, listing the most important first and the least important last.
2. Concentrate on learning and mastering them in the next 30 days.
3. Begin with the first one. Simply repeat it every day for at least seven days.
4. Monitor your progress daily.
5. Then move to the second and repeat the process; then do this for the third.
5. Reward yourself after you have mastered the three positive habits.

## **FEEDBACK, PLEASE!**

If you've found this e-note on 'Personal Effectiveness for Career and Business Success' helpful, please let us know.

In addition, let us know which topics or issues in the arena of personal growth or personal development you'd want us to cover in future e-notes.

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