



# ISPI VANCOUVER ORIENTATION TO PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT ARTICLE

## Using the Standards of Performance Technology

by Roger Chevalier, PhD, CPT

### HPT, CPT, and the Standards

Human Performance Improvement is also known as Human Performance Technology (HPT). It can be defined as the systematic and systemic identification and removal of barriers to individual and organizational performance.

A set of ten Standards of Performance Technology was developed in a two-year project led by Dr. Judith Hale, the then-president of the International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI). Her team consisted of over thirty performance improvement professionals from industry, government, and academia. The **ten standards** they developed consist of **four principles** and **six steps**.

Many organizations and individuals now use the Standards of Performance Technology to guide their performance improvement work. The demonstrated ability to apply the standards in one's work in an effective and ethical way is the basis for the Certified Performance Technologist (CPT) designation. Certification is available through ISPI in affiliation with ASTD.

### Standards 1–4: The Four Principles

The first four standards are **principles** underlying the human performance improvement approach.

#### 1. Focus on outcomes.

Focusing on **outcomes** —on results — allows for questioning, confirming, and reconfirming that the people doing the performing share the same vision and goals; that the job procedures support productivity, efficiency, and quality; and that the people have the knowledge, skills, and motivation they require.

The basic question is this: where is there an opportunity or performance gap, a difference between the current and desired levels of performance? Sometimes the performance technologist needs to challenge the assumed answer or the expected kind of intervention and instead focus on the business/organizational need or accomplishment that is the client's true priority.

Focusing on outcomes and stating them has the ongoing effect of enabling the results of the selected intervention to be measured. This makes it possible to determine whether performance has sufficiently improved.



Besides promoting human performance improvement, Roger Chevalier promotes and practices heart health. After triple-bypass surgery in 1999, he has kept fit by cycling 5,000 miles a year near his home in the Wine Country of Northern California. When Roger visits Vancouver, he loves cycling around the Stanley Park seawall "with its incredible views."

## 2. Take a systems view.

It is vital to be **systemic** because organizations are complex systems that affect the performance of the individuals that work within them.

It is important to distinguish a systems approach from a process model. Processes, which are typically included in systems, contain inputs and outputs with feedback loops. In contrast, the term *system* implies an interconnected complex of functionally related components. The effectiveness of each unit depends on how it fits into the whole, and the effectiveness of the whole depends on the way each unit functions.

A systems approach considers the larger environment that impacts processes and other work. Besides inputs, the environment includes pressures, expectations, constraints, and consequences.

## 3. Add value.

Since the added **value** is for the clients, it is important to identify the kind of added value they want. Performance technologists should offer clients a process that will help them to fully understand the implications of their choices, to set appropriate measures, to identify barriers and tradeoffs, and to take control.

While the HPT approach requires a focus on intermediate goals (such as improving quality, customer retention, and cost reduction), its success in adding value is measured in improvements in desired business/organizational outcomes (such as sales, profitability, and market share). Alignment of individual performance to intermediate and business/organizational outcomes is critical to the methodology. Measurement of results at both of these levels serves two important purposes: communicating the importance of what is being done and assessing the amount of performance improvement.

## 4. Establish partnerships with clients and other specialists.

Performance technologists work in **partnerships**. They involve relevant stakeholders in the decision-making process, and they involve specialists in their areas of expertise.

Working collaboratively includes taking shared responsibility for decisions about goals, next steps to take in the process, and implementation strategies. Partnerships are created through close listening to clients and colleagues. This approach requires trust and respect for each other's knowledge and expertise. Establishing partnerships enables the performance technologist and clients to make the best choices about goals, priorities, and solutions.



## Standards 5–10: Six Systematic Steps in Performance Improvement

You have seen that Standards 1–4 are **four principles** that underlie the human performance improvement approach. Standards 5–10 are **six systematic steps** that are critical to the approach.

### 5. Be systematic — needs or opportunity analysis.

Use **needs** or opportunity analysis — performance analysis. Examine the current situation at any level or levels (society, organization, process, work group, or individual) to identify the external and internal pressures affecting it. This process determines the performance gaps, the deficiencies to be remedied. Based on the examination, the human performance technologist determines whether the situation is worthy of action or further study.

The output of the needs analysis is a description of the current state, the projected future state, and the rationale or business case for action or non-action.

### 6. Be systematic—cause analysis.

Determine why a gap in performance or expectations exists: identify the **cause**. This involves being systematic in analyzing the work and workplace to identify the factors that limit performance. It goes beyond recognizing obvious causes, such as new hires' lack of the skills required for the expected task. This step in the systematic process determines what should be addressed to improve performance.

The output of this step is a statement of why performance is not happening or why it will not happen without intervention.

### 7. Be systematic — design.

**Systematically** design the solution or the specification of the requirements of the solution. In other words, identify the key attributes of the needed interventions.

The output of this step is a detailed description of one or more solutions, specifying what resources will be required and explaining why a particular solution is preferable.



### 8. Be systematic — development.

**Development** is about the creation of some or all of the elements of the solution. It can be done by an individual or by a team.

The output of this step is a product, process, system, or technology. Examples include training, performance support tools, a new or re-engineered process, the redesign of a workspace, and a change in compensation or benefits.

### 9. Be systematic — implementation.

**Implementation** is about deploying the solution (the interventions) and managing the change required to sustain it. It is about helping clients to adopt new behaviors or use new tools.

The outputs of this step are behaviors that are expected to produce the anticipated beneficial results.

### 10. Be systematic — evaluation.

**Evaluation** measures the degree to which the chosen solution is producing the desired results. It is an ongoing step that identifies and acts on opportunities throughout the performance improvement process, not just at the end.

In HPT, evaluation is primarily concerned with Level 3 (Did behavior change?) and Level 4 (Was the desired business outcome achieved?).

The outputs of this step are evaluations of the efficiency and effectiveness of both the solution and the implementation process.

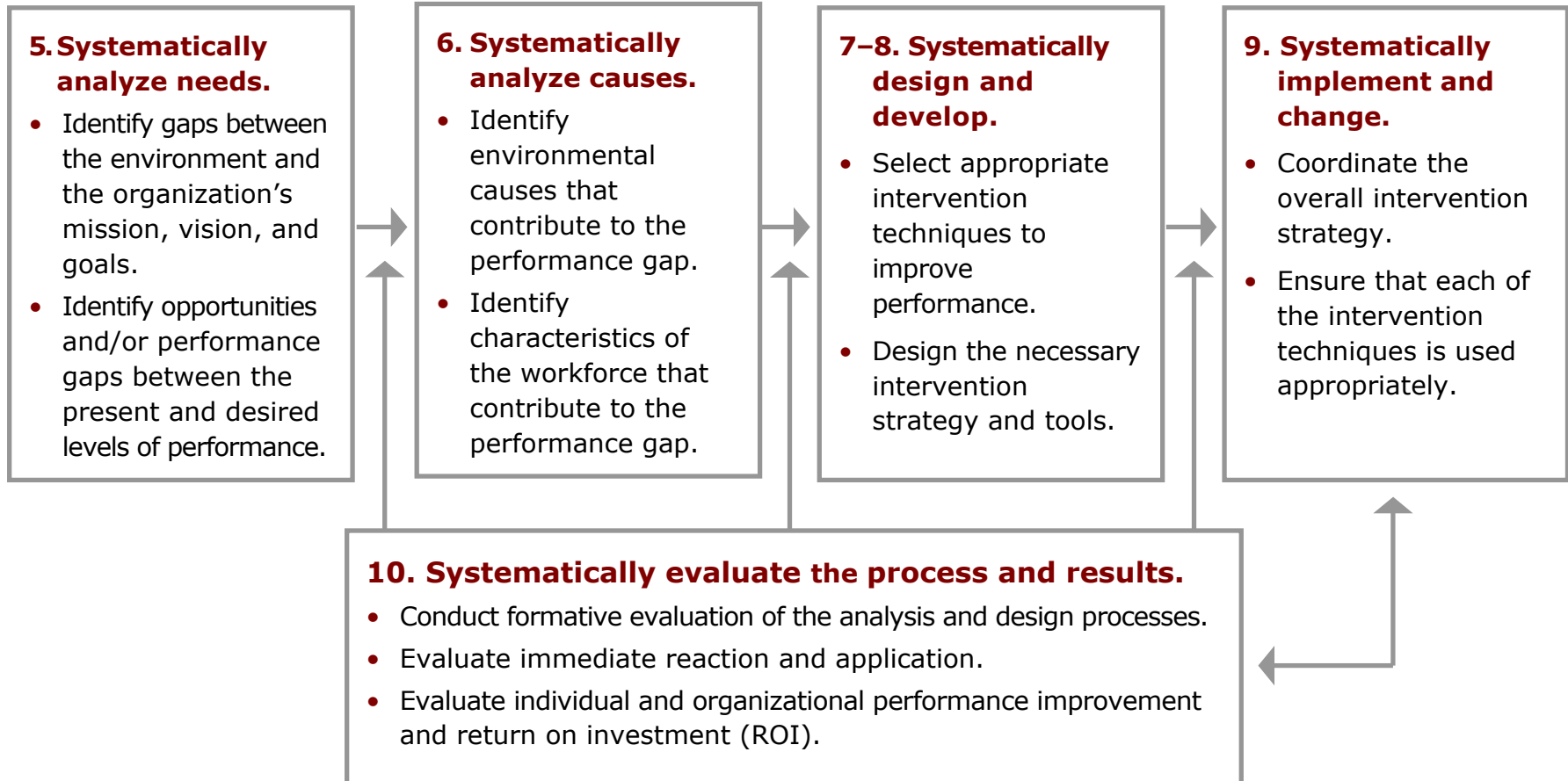
## An Integrated Model

The diagram on the next page attempts to integrate the ten standards — the four principles and six steps. It shows a systematic approach, including a process, that one can use in order to improve performance. The item numbers in the diagram identify the standards that are related to the particular parts of the performance improvement approach that is shown.



**To improve performance:**

1. Focus on outcomes/results, starting with the end in mind.
2. Take a systems view: think systemically.
3. Add value for the business/organization.
4. Establish partnerships.
- 5-10. Use a systematic process — as shown below.



## Conclusion

The ten Standards of Performance Technology describe both the principles and the systematic steps used by performance technologists. With a more comprehensive analysis and a wider range of interventions to choose from, Human Performance Technology — Human Performance Improvement — complements traditional training interventions, increasing the possibility that behavior will actually change and that performance will actually improve.

**Roger Chevalier, PhD, CPT**, is the Director of Information and Certification for ISPI, the International Society for Performance Improvement. He is a former vice president for Century 21 Real Estate Corporation's Performance Division and a former training director for the U. S. Coast Guard's West Coast training center. He is a member of the faculty for ISPI's Human Performance Technology Institutes, a regular presenter at ISPI and ASTD annual conferences, and a sought-after speaker for many other ISPI, ASTD, and corporate events. Dr. Chevalier may be reached by email at [rogerc@ispi.org](mailto:rogerc@ispi.org) or by phone at 707.584.7160.



For more information on the Certified Performance Technologist (CPT) credential, visit the [Certified Performance Technologist site](#), [ISPI site](#), or [ASTD site](#).

This article is derived from the lengthy Performance Technology Standards document available from the Certified Performance Technologist site at [www.certifiedpt.org](http://www.certifiedpt.org).

This article was developed by Roger Chevalier, ISPI Director of Information and Certification, in collaboration with Jim Wright, 2004 Co-President, ISPI Vancouver.

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