



Issue 267 – October 2026

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERFORMANCE



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PERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The Confidence Illusion



WHY COMPETENCE DOESN'T ALWAYS FEEL LIKE CONFIDENCE

You know how to do the job. You have solved difficult problems, handled challenging conversations, and learned from mistakes. Yet, when the moment arrives to speak up, decide, or step into something unfamiliar, you may still wonder, ***"Am I really capable of this?"***

This is the confidence illusion: competence and confidence do not always rise together.

Confidence is not a direct measurement of ability. It is influenced by how we interpret our experiences. A successful presentation might become evidence of capability for one person, while another thinks, ***"I got lucky this time."***

Why Confidence Fluctuates

Our sense of confidence is shaped by more than what we know. Comparison, perfectionism, past criticism, uncertainty, visibility, and high expectations can all affect how capable we feel.

Imposter syndrome can add another layer. Even with clear evidence of competence, people may discount their achievements, attribute success to luck, or worry that others will eventually discover they are ***"not as capable"*** as they appear. A promotion, new role, or high-profile assignment can sometimes amplify these feelings rather than eliminate them.

Competence can also make confidence more complicated. The more we understand about a subject, the more aware we become of what we don't know. Confidence can also be situation specific. Someone may confidently lead a familiar project but hesitate when presenting to senior leaders.



Instead of asking,
"How confident am I?"

ask, **"What is influencing my confidence in this situation?"**



One-Week Confidence Practice

Day 1 BUILD YOUR EVIDENCE BANK

Write down three things you have handled well at work, including the situation, what you did, and the result.

Day 2 CATCH THE CONFIDENCE STORY

When self-doubt appears, write: What happened? What did I immediately tell myself? What evidence supports that thought? What evidence challenges it?

Day 3 SPEAK ONCE

In your next meeting, make one deliberate contribution: ask a question, share an observation, or build on someone's idea. Don't wait for the perfect contribution.

Day 4 MOVE AT 70%

Choose a reasonably reversible task where you're waiting to feel completely ready or perfect. Ask: **"What is good enough to move this forward?"**

Day 5 PRACTISE CONFIDENT UNCERTAINTY

When you don't know something, say: **"I don't have that information yet. I'll check and come back to you."** Confidence can include saying, "I don't know."



Day 6

ASK FOR SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Ask a colleague or manager: "What's one thing I do effectively that I should continue, and one thing I could make more effective?" Look for behavioural feedback, not reassurance.

Day 7

TURN EXPERIENCE INTO EVIDENCE

Complete:

- I am more capable of _____ than I thought.
- My confidence tends to drop when _____.
- Next time, I will _____ instead of waiting to feel confident.

The goal isn't to become confident in seven days. It's to collect real evidence that confidence can be built through action.



By Sonia Hillary

Consultant, Solution Innovation & Excellence, Human Dynamic Group

TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

The Meetings We Don't Need



You can spend an entire day moving from one meeting to another, yet still have nothing done. Then, you work overtime to finish what could not be completed during the day. This is not uncommon for many teams, and over time, it can lead to tiredness, burnout, and a lack of motivation.

A meeting should help the team make progress, not create more work. The goal is not to have more meetings, but to make better decisions, clarify actions, and reduce unnecessary discussions.

The 4P Meeting Framework

1. PURPOSE

Why are we meeting? Before scheduling a meeting, clearly define its purpose. Is it a brainstorming session to generate ideas, an information-sharing meeting to align with the team, or a decision-making meeting to reach an outcome? Being clear about the purpose helps the team prepare properly and ensures everyone comes to the meeting with the right mindset and expectations.

- ▶ **Brainstorm:** Generate ideas and explore possibilities.
- ▶ **Information:** Share or align key information.
- ▶ **Decision:** Discuss key points and finalize decisions.

2. PREPARE

Come ready, not empty-handed. The host should share the agenda, objective, required materials, and expected outcome in advance. Participants should review the information and prepare their input before entering the meeting.

3. PRIORITIZE

Stay on the agenda. Focus the discussion on what needs to be solved or decided. Avoid turning the meeting into a progress-reporting session or discussing unrelated issues. If a topic is not relevant to the objective, park it for later.

4. PROGRESS

Leave with a result. Every meeting should end with:

- ▶ What was decided? _____
- ▶ What needs to be done? _____
- ▶ Who owns it? _____
- ▶ By when? _____

A Practical Meeting Checklist



By Anh Nguyen

Business Consultant,
Human Dynamic Vietnam

BEFORE

Make the meeting worth attending

- ☐ Set the purpose: What must this meeting achieve?
- ☐ Define the outcome: Are we here to create, align, or decide?
- ☐ Set the agenda: What 2–3 topics must we discuss? How much time does each need?
- ☐ Invite only the right people: Who needs to contribute or make the decision?
- ☐ Send pre-work: What information must participants read or prepare before the meeting?
- ☐ Set expectations: What do you need each participant to bring to the table?

DURING

Focus on solving, not just discussing

- ☐ Start with the outcome: Remind everyone what needs to be achieved.
- ☐ Stay on topic: Does this discussion directly support the meeting objective?
- ☐ Stop unnecessary updates: Can this update be shared by email or chat instead?
- ☐ Park distractions: Is this important but unrelated? Capture it and move on.
- ☐ Push toward a decision: What are the options? Which one are we choosing?

AFTER

Turn discussion into action

- ☐ Confirm the decision: What exactly did we agree?
- ☐ Assign the action: What needs to happen next?
- ☐ Name the owner: Who is accountable for getting it done?
- ☐ Set the deadline: By when?
- ☐ Close the loop: When and how will we follow up?



The 3 Questions Every Meeting Must Answer:



What did we decide?



What happens next?



Who owns it?



A productive meeting is not the one that lasts the longest – **it is the one that moves the team forward.**

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

The Decisions Behind High Performance

In today's fast-moving business environment, our eyes feast on eccentric and sophisticated buildings year after year. Attention often gravitates toward the speed of execution and efficiency of processes, oftentimes at the expense of efficacy. Most people would likely arrive at the same conclusion: those with weak foundation cannot withstand the test of time – for how quickly they are built cannot always compensate for what is lacking at their core. Conversely, one with a solid underpinning must have been born of sound decisions made throughout the building process. With each layer purposeful and each element aligned with the whole, its strength becomes an inevitable truth. Organizations are no different; behind every great business outcome is a series of quality decisions engineered to create momentum, and, eventually, bring sustainable success.

A high-caliber decision-making process isn't a series of ad hoc choices, nor can it rest solely on the shoulders of lone leaders. It reflects a discipline embodied by the organization to deliver consistent results. While execution remains important, a robust decision architecture is an often-unseen foundation beneath a culture of accountability, efficiency, and superior performance. Agility, in this sense, is not simply about how quickly an action is taken; it is about arriving at sounder judgments with greater speed.



As organizational scale and complexity increase so too does decision friction. These less visible barriers delay action, dilute accountability, and create unintended consequences that undermine long-term objectives, and organizational effectiveness. Common hidden barriers to an effective decision-making process are as follows:



- ▶ **Unclear Decision Rights** – when ownership and authority are not clearly defined, decisions can become unnecessarily prolonged.
- ▶ **Excessive Layers of Approval** – multiple review and approval points create bottlenecks.
- ▶ **Competing Priorities** – fragmented decision-making results from teams being expected to respond to too many competing demands simultaneously.

- ▶ **Risk Aversion and Fear of Accountability** – reluctance to make timely decisions may be rooted in penalizing mistakes disproportionately.
- ▶ **Information Overload** – difficulty in distinguishing what is relevant from what is merely available does not lead to better decisions.

When you create a clear system for making decisions, your team knows:

Who actually makes the call.



What goals you are trying to reach.



How to balance potential risks against potential rewards.



Ultimately, what you build is a mirror of how well you decide. Superior outcomes are rarely the product of chance or luck; rather, they are as strong as the decisions that shaped them – how they are owned, challenged, collectively understood and collaboratively executed. As a continuous stream of decisions operates in this complex business environment, going fast in the wrong direction just gets you lost sooner. Organizational effectiveness depends on how your team makes decisions, not just how quickly you act. This is what makes decision quality not just an operational capacity, but a competitive advantage... and a superpower.



Reference

Rogers, P., & Blenko, M. (2006). Who has the D? How clear decision roles enhance organizational performance. Harvard Business Review, 84(1), 52–61. <https://hbr.org/2006/01/who-has-the-d-how-clear-decision-roles-enhance-organizational-performance>.



Anita Marian Sedano

Associate Consultant, Human Dynamic Philippines

WELLNESS CORNER

Your Mind Needs Maintenance Too



Leeann Dio

Managing Director,
Human Dynamic
Philippines

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We accept this readily when it comes to our bodies—we schedule check-ups, watch our diet, and squeeze in a workout before anything breaks down. Yet we rarely extend the same courtesy to our minds. We wait until we are overwhelmed, depleted, or on the edge of burnout before we pause to ask how we are really doing.

Mental wellbeing, like physical health, thrives on regular maintenance rather than emergency repair. The signals that something needs attention are often quiet long before they become loud. A slow dip in motivation. A shorter fuse than usual. Finding yourself present in meetings but no longer engaged. These subtle shifts are not weaknesses—they are data. And the sooner we notice them, the more choices we have.

That is why self-reflection deserves a permanent place in your routine. When we protect our time for rest and reflection, we gain clarity on our priorities and values, and that clarity is precisely what helps us reach our goals with less friction and more purpose.

A Quick Self-Assessment

Take a moment to check in honestly. Over the past two weeks:

Mood:

Has my baseline felt heavier, flatter, or more irritable than usual?

Motivation:

Am I still drawn to work and people that once energized me?

Engagement:

Am I genuinely present, or simply going through the motions?

Energy:

Do I recover after rest, or does the tiredness linger?



If you notice a shift in even one of these, treat it as a gentle nudge—not a verdict.



THE PRACTICE

Reflection does not require long, grand blocks of time. You would be surprised how grounded you feel by inserting pockets of just one to two minutes of mindful breathing across your day: before a call, between tasks, after a difficult conversation. Breathe in slowly, exhale longer, and notice what you feel.

Small, consistent check-ins keep your mind resilient. Give your inner world the same care you give your body—not because something is wrong, but so that it stays right.

SPECIAL EDITION – WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

What Healthy Workplaces Have in Common

What does a mentally healthy workplace actually look like?

Think about what happens at work. A manager sends a “quick question” at 11pm; someone checks emails while on leave; everything seems urgent. People are encouraged to speak up, but may hold back after seeing others dismissed or criticised for raising a concern or disagreeing.

These may seem like small things, but when they happen regularly, they affect how people experience work. This is why having an EAP (Employee Assistance Programme), wellbeing talks, flexible work or mental health days, while important, is only part of creating a healthy workplace.



Our Human Dynamic data gives us a closer look at some of the pressures people experience at work. Across more than 8,000 support sessions in nine APAC markets, 56% of job-stress cases involved high work demands, 39% of workplace conflicts involved managers, and 62% of career concerns were related to growth.

So, what can we take from this?

Pay attention to what keeps coming up.

If similar issues keep coming up, step back and look for the pattern. Is the same team struggling with workload? Are priorities constantly changing? Are concerns repeatedly linked to a particular way of working? Repeated issues can be a signal that something in the work environment needs attention.

Make it easier to raise things early.

Notice how we respond when someone says, “I’m struggling”, “I disagree” or “I need help”. Do we listen and ask questions, or immediately explain, defend or dismiss the concerns? How managers respond in these small moments often determines whether people will raise things early the next time.

Look at what is driving the stress.

Resilience and coping skills have their place. But if people are constantly overwhelmed, another wellbeing activity may not address the real issue. Sometimes the answer is clearer priorities, more realistic expectations, better manager support or simply enough time to recover.

Healthy workplaces can still be demanding. What's important is whether the pressure is manageable and people have the support and space to recover.

This World Mental Health Day, perhaps we can ask a slightly different question:



Are we only helping people cope, or are there things about the way we work that could also change?



Because when we make work healthier, we give people a better chance to stay well and perform at their best.



Xin Yuan Low

Director, Solution Innovation & Excellence,
Human Dynamic Group