



The Path To Performance – OP’EEP (Part 1)

The workplace is an environment where we spend a great deal of our time—for those who are employed—and so the workplace represents a perfect example of where respect is in play and relevant, and where respect can foster success. In fact I devoted a whole chapter to earning respect in the workplace in my book—*Respect: Gaining It and Sustaining It*—with a view to gaining and sustaining respect from an individual perspective. I presented four steps that can be implemented by anyone, and one of those steps is to become a performance employee.

However, becoming a performance employee is not something that happens overnight—it takes time and commitment. I presented a set of tried-and-proven guidelines in the chapter—Earning Respect at the Workplace—in my book. These guidelines work. I know this because I have practiced them for a long time and I know many people who have also practiced them with success. Performance employees in virtually any employer organization command respect. Such employees can exist at every level of an organization—entry level, staff level, supervisor level, middle management level, senior management level, and director or executive level.

The road to performance in a workplace—and indeed any environment for that matter—goes through four stages. These stages—which differ from the guidelines in my book—are the focus of this edition of *Ektimis* and are: Orientation & Preparation, Establishment, Endurance, and ultimately Performance.

Orientation & Preparation—the first stage—is where you begin your journey in a new environment, or role. During this stage you are primarily getting yourself aligned—oriented—with the various aspects of your new environment or role. You familiarize yourself with people and things unique to the new environment, and you prepare yourself to fit in properly. The primary objective here is to become familiar with “the lay of the land”—so to speak. This familiarization process includes meeting key people; learning existing conditions, policies, procedures, and protocols; etc.

Establishment—the second stage—is where you begin to *establish* yourself—your style, your work ethic, your approach, and so on. This is all done within the context of what you’ve learned from the previous stage—orientation & preparation. This stage is also where you find out if certain aspects of yourself produce synergy—that is win-win—in the workplace. Your value system, which I cover extensively in my book, begins to emerge and become visible to others around you. This stage is a very critical stage on the path to performance.

Four-Stage Path to Performance OP’EEP

I - Orientation & Preparation

II - Establishment

III - Endurance

IV - Performance

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Endurance—the third stage—represents the longest portion of the path to performance. I truly believe that most people spend more time in this stage and never emerge from it. This stage is where you begin to perform your duties and functions while dealing with the numerous challenges—ups and downs—that come with “the job.” I term this stage *Endurance* because it is where you encounter the most obstacles on your path to achieving interim successes. Your skills and expertise are put to the test, and your past experiences are cherished and relied upon as often as possible and as relevant as may be. Your successful emergence from this stage positions you very well for the final stage.

Performance—the fourth and final stage—is where fewer people arrive. In *Respect: Gaining It and Sustaining It* I define a performance employee as not someone who comes in regularly to perform his or her duties fully and in a timely manner, but as someone who excels well above the norm. This is a person who continuously produces results—the results that matter the most. At this stage you have mastered the art of performance and you consistently enjoy what you do—as an effective leader, or manager, or supervisor, or worker. You are valued very highly by everyone around you and by everyone familiar with the results of your effort. This valuation of you enables you to command respect—Earned Respect, one of the three types of respect presented in my book.

The example below illustrates the four-stage path to performance. Most readers will appreciate this specific illustration—I hope.

A young athlete turns from being an amateur to becoming a paid professional with a major team. During his first few days with the new team, he goes through an orientation where he meets his team mates and coaches and learns the team routines—workout and practice schedules, drills, etc. He also learns the rules, policies and procedures of the organization. **(Orientation & Preparation)**

He then settles in and soon establishes his own work style and work ethic—he attends every workout session with his trainer, he arrives first to training camp and to most practice sessions, he excels at most drills and soon becomes an exemplary team member. He engages the veteran members on the team and seeks their council from time to time. He appreciates their advice and their past experiences. **(Establishment)**

Over the next couple of years he begins to receive more play time. Each opportunity he gets to play is filled with challenges—communication issues with his team mate, occasional poor judgment, taunting remarks from opponent teams, and so on; but, he learns from these challenges, overcomes them and begins to produce results for his team. He begins to piece together a system—habits, practices, attitude, discipline, focus, etc.—that seems to work well for him. He systematically fine tunes this system. **(Endurance)**

By the third year he rises to become a star on the team. He becomes a go-to member on critical occasions. He is a permanent starter and is trusted by his team mates when the stakes are high. He is highly valued by the team, the organization, and the fans. **(Performance)**



To successfully navigate these four stages several factors must prevail. Three of these factors are most critical and will be covered in the sequel—part 2—edition of this newsletter. Furthermore, this path to performance is laden with pitfalls and many people are not aware of some of these until very late in their career path—if at all. Two of these pitfalls will also be covered in the follow-up edition.

Cheers and thank you – N. Taiwo