

## HIGH PRODUCTIVITY AND MENTAL TRAINING

Dr. Michael J. Keyes, M.D., practices psychiatry in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Dr. Keyes is also an accomplished state pistol champion and coach of several national championship teams. Now that's my kind of therapist! He has written extensively on mental training for successful shooting sports competition. Because productivity is strongly linked to styles of competition I see in his work some important ideas that convert into the context of high-productive employees in the workplace.

A high-achiever employee always has the potential for hitting 100% of a production benchmark. That "perfect score" and the employee's achieving it is what matters most in purely quantitative production. Of course perfect score productivity requires solid technique and the right kinds of tools and equipment. Problems that plague others are solved by the high achiever with the versatile use of alternative techniques and tactics. In this manner he or she keeps the stress of production pretty well-managed.

As good as the high-achiever is, there is another level of achievement I refer to as "peak performance". The significant difference is that peak performing individuals concentrate on *perfect performances more than perfect scores*. In an ideal world the perfect performance will always produce the perfect score.

But in reality one can produce a defect-free performance and yet not attain a perfect score. Using target shooting as a visual aid a person can put 10 shots in a defect-free "one ragged hole" group, but if the group is outside the ten-ring the person can't get the 100 possible points. Conversely, one can receive a perfect score (100 out of 100) for a less-than-defect free performance with the 10 shots not in "one hole" but all in the ten-ring nonetheless.

Where this hair-splitting detail takes on great importance is when productivity *and* quality are linked. In manufacturing a high quality product there is a method used that's called "statistical process control (SPC)". In simple terms it means not deviating or varying as little as possible from an ideal or standard. Impossible! There is always a little deviation in the real world; however, the peak performer figures out how to *keep the deviations as close to zero as possible*. The implication for successful workplace achievement is that talented peak performers are *timely, accurate and precise*.

The peak performer lives up to the prediction of a perfect, benchmark score by mastering the challenge not just of getting the score itself but rather of having a perfect, well-timed performance that leads to the perfect score.

When productivity demands both quantity and quality, it takes a well-balanced mix of personality factors and the capacity to mentally handle information quickly and accurately. My list of "personality suspects" would be: (a) the frequent rebalancing of priorities with success in executing productive acts; (b) a habit of using intrapersonal energy in a prudent manner (not too much, not too little); and (c) situational awareness that feeds the asking of strong questions. And of course the focal point for all this energy would be a strong preference for "doing things better than anybody else".