



Executive Book Summaries[®]

Superperformance

8 Strategies to Reach Full Potential for Yourself, Your Team, and Your Organization

by **George Pesansky**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

Many business leaders and organizations struggle to unlock their true potential. They may achieve brief flashes of high performance, but without a system to sustain success, those moments fade into inconsistency, burnout, and missed opportunities.

George Pesansky's book *Superperformance: 8 Strategies to Reach Full Potential for Yourself, Your Team, and Your Organization* offers a roadmap out of this cycle. Pesansky argues that "superperformance" is not luck but a skill that can be cultivated. Drawing on more than three decades of leadership and coaching experience, he introduces practical strategies designed to eliminate ambiguity, extend moments of peak performance, and create long-term clarity and momentum.

Through real-world examples, Pesansky illustrates how leaders can move beyond rigid expectations, build stronger collaboration, recognize and remove friction, and shift from problem-solving to replicating success. His approach emphasizes utility, the ability to get things done, as the core of creating value and achieving superperformance. By integrating vision, strategy, and action, readers can transform isolated high-performance moments into a repeatable, sustainable system for themselves, their teams, and their organizations.

IN THIS EXECUTIVE BOOK SUMMARY:

- Identify and eliminate bottlenecks, waste, and friction that stall progress.
- Harness the collective strength of teams through true collaboration.
- Shift from solving problems to replicating the root causes of success.
- Turn performance into a sustainable system by practicing improvement like a skill.

INTRODUCTION: On the Path to Enlightenment

I train people to solve problems, to learn, and to grow so that they can offer increasing value to their organization. I focus on techniques and habits that lead to actual skill improvements, so that any performer good at their job can become a *superperformer*, a stellar example for their peers and leaders and a source of knowledge for their team.

Being a superperformer—and finding or creating other superperformers to support you and your team—is crucial for career success, no matter what position you're in.

Creating value is about the utility you can provide or influence. Utility is simply the ability to do things that need to be done, and it's through utility that you create value. Superperformance—your ability to provide the greatest utility—happens at the intersection of vision, strategy, and action.

PART 1: VISION

CHAPTER 1: The Golden Hour

Many people think that there's no way they can ever work at 100 percent effectiveness (often called *zero loss*). They think this state of perfection is either impossible to achieve, unsustainable, or both.

The thing is, all of us have experienced perfection in our lives—the golden hour—when we're in a flow state and performing at our peak. And while that flow state may only last for an hour, a day, or a week, it is possible—each and every one of us has the ability to experience it. It's not a question of if; it's a question of *when* and for *how long*.

Your Outline for Action

Here are some things to keep in mind as you look to find your golden hour:

- A common obstacle to achieving the golden hour is negativity bias, the tendency of our brains to give greater weight to negative events in our life—and dwell on them longer—than positive events.
- The golden hour is all about focusing on expanding our strengths.
- The potential for perfection exists in every organization, but the question is who believes in it.
- Real leaders inspire their teams to hit their full potential, to show them what they're capable of; good leaders give them the opportunity to get to that outcome, unlocking what's possible and what they can do to achieve that greatness.

CHAPTER 2: Unlocking Potential

Superperformance is more about a way of approaching everything that you do. Most of it is about how you define your problem. Defining a problem—and then solving it—makes these people, these superperformers, differentiators.

Superperformers are potential force multipliers. They don't just go out and do projects; they recognize that the way improvements get done is by creating clarity and focus, by giving them a picture of exactly what it is we are trying to accomplish and then being able to connect the dots on how and why we're doing that.

Your Outline for Action

Unlocking potential is the heart of superperformance. Here are some things to keep in mind as you work to unlock your own potential or that of your team:

- No matter where, when, or who is involved, if you can create clarity, you can make decisions and take action. When you eliminate ambiguity, you erase doubt. When the direction becomes obvious, you act instinctually. You have utility.
- Remember the words of Charles Kettering: "A problem well defined is a problem half solved."
- How smart somebody is doesn't necessarily correlate with how much success they're going to have. I have found there is a correlation between success and how open-minded someone is; their willingness to listen, learn, and understand enhances their utility and enables them to reach their full potential.
- Author Stephen Covey developed a framework where knowledge (what to do), skill (how to do it), and desire (why you want to do it) intersect to form habits that lead to action and results. Everything we would like to get done, everything we want to communicate, can be viewed through this simple lens of *what*, *how*, and *why*.
- Use the magic wand question: "If I gave you a magic wand, what would you change?" Then ask follow-up

When you're working with people, success isn't just being right. It's about how much acceptance you can create. You've got to build agreement and support and alignment with the direction you propose to go.

questions about how they think they would have to go about doing it and why they picked out that specific thing to change.

- The effort you expend is almost always associated with whichever metric is the reddest.
- Instead of defaulting to “Let’s figure out a problem and then correct it,” look at the successes in your organization and figure out how to do more of that.

PART 2: STRATEGY

CHAPTER 3: Escape from the Prison of Expectations

The *prison of expectations* exists almost any time in an organization when you have three elements at play: the metric is highly visible, the expectations are high, and the consequences for not meeting the goal are also high. Many employees—leaders and frontline workers alike—are trapped in a *prison of expectations*. They (falsely) believe they can't achieve zero loss, so they're happy doing something less than zero loss, often *far* less. They may be meeting their numbers, but the potential is there to do so much more.

Your Outline for Action

The prison of expectations is when we end up in the Goldilocks zone where we don't work too hard, and we don't work too little. We go along to get along, and we miss out on turning golden hours into golden shifts. Here are some things to keep in mind as you try to escape the prison of expectations—or help others escape from it:

- Leaders sometimes think their people are sandbagging or that they're calling it in or not really applying themselves—even not very good employees at all. Experience shows that the way we're being measured forces us into this prison of expectations.
- Most of us are happy to exist in a small zone where we might move up or down 5 percent—no big moves, no big splashes, no big failures.

- Start off with the attitude that employees want to be successful, they want to have pride, they want to get respect.
- Instead of pointing out who is doing poorly, what are the things that you can emulate? Where are the places you're succeeding?

CHAPTER 4: Learn the Potential of We versus Me

While individuals often don't matter as much as they think they do, what really *does* matter is the team you work with. Together, that group has the ability to make really good things happen in any organization. When you start to think that your value to the organization is not *me* but *we*, then you are on the right track.

Your Outline for Action

Too many leaders firmly plant themselves in their offices, losing touch with the people in their organizations who get the work done. These leaders seem to believe that the world revolves around them and that they are more important than anyone else. And of course, that's just wrong. Here are some ways leaders can focus on their teams:

- Regularly put yourself in the shoes of the people doing the work.
- Be a servant leader, prioritizing the needs of others (your people, your customers, your vendors, your community, and so on) over your own.
- When you put the emphasis on *me*, you are naturally limited in what you can do. But when you put the emphasis on *we*, then there really are no limits. You can create your own dream team.
- Engaging in after-action reviews helps employees learn from both their mistakes and achievements.
- A true leader communicates the *what* and the *why*, and then listens and learns *how* to enable their team to achieve an outcome.
- Maximizing your potential is directly proportional to

activating the overall potential of your team. Every interaction you have has the potential to activate collaboration.

- $S = Q \times A$. Success is equal to the quality of the solution times the level of acceptance. The quality of your solution and its level of acceptance is dependent on the team's ability to achieve high levels of assertiveness and cooperativeness, leading to true collaboration.
- Be a Sherpa, that person who has the activation energy to get the best out of everybody.

able to see things for the value they create— can help you do this.

CHAPTER 5: Find the Friction and Lower the Temperature

When you're working with people, success isn't just being right. It's about how much acceptance you can create. You've got to build agreement and support and alignment with the direction you propose to go. Otherwise, you'll never get there. You can't do it alone.

Your Outline for Action

You always need to be self-aware, and you've got to be able to read the room—to feel the temperature. What can you do to find the friction and lower the temperature?

- An experienced Sherpa reads the expedition's potential and pushes the group to their limit but not beyond it. Pushing beyond the limit means you have goals the team can't realistically achieve, and the expedition will likely fail.
- Everything in life is a distribution, and on average, not everything is average. Some of your people are going to perform a little bit better, and some are going to perform a little bit worse.
- To lower the temperature, you've got to find the actual source of the friction, that piece of sand in the gears that is the problem, versus taking a general perspective that the engine is overheating and you've got to fix it somehow.
- The 80/20 rule—the Pareto principle—is always a good place to start. For example, it's likely that 20 percent of the people you're looking for in the marketplace are generating 80 percent of the issues you're having of being shorthanded.
- Start at the end of the process and work your way back to the beginning. The Kano model—being

CHAPTER 6: Make Focus Your Friend

Whether it's in a factory setting or even in the work that you do, there's always a strong allure to pick up the easy or obvious thing to do, to take care of the low-hanging fruit. If you have an infinite amount of time and resources, working on the easy things first could be perfectly fine. Eventually, everything will get done. But in a lot of business and professional situations, you absolutely don't have an infinite supply of time or resources. And in many cases, you're just not going to be able to get everything you want to accomplish done.

Your Outline for Action

You have to focus on the things that provide the most value for your customers. Here are some ways to do that:

- Work breakdown structures are a great way to take large tasks and activities and distill them down to manageable bodies of work.
- Use SIPOC—suppliers, inputs, process, outputs, and customers—to focus on the things that deliver the highest return and the greatest value.
- Use a PICK chart (possible, implement, challenge, and kill) to help you prioritize projects based on how difficult they are and the value they deliver.
- When you think about what you have to overcome and what you have to achieve, your first task is to try to meet this target condition. A target condition is your state after breaching the barrier between you and the things you need to do; it's an intermediate state of success.
- If you know exactly where you're going, and if you're always clear about the target condition you're moving to, then you have a really clear purpose and you're well on the way to superperformance.
- Use PDCA—Plan, Do, Check, and Adjust—and Toyota's A3 strategy to gain clarity on what you are doing, how you are doing it, and why it matters.

CHAPTER 7: Build an Improvement Factory

Superperformance is facilitating a team to their full potential and understanding the bottlenecks and waste in our improvement factory. It's achieving our full throughput

If you look closely at any successful entrepreneur or business, chances are that their success came about because they doubled down on what was working, what customers valued.

potential. To succeed, you've got to be really focused on your constraints and on the high-value, low-effort things you can do to overcome those constraints. You've also got to be willing to bypass activities that might get you all tied up in knots.

Your Outline for Action

You are an improvement factory manager. Just like a real factory, your goal is throughput—to make the products and services you deliver as fast as you can at the highest level of quality, to weave straw into gold. As you build your improvement factory, be sure to ask these questions:

- What outcomes do we desire?
 - » The golden lens: What does the customer want?
 - » What is preventing these outcomes?
 - » What is enabling these outcomes?
- What resources—people, material, machines, or technology—do we depend on?
- What stages or phases do we work through, and what does the work in progress look like?
- What does the success rate look like—overall and by phase or stage?
- What percentage of our improvements survive a year? Three years?
- What are our bottlenecks to speed or effort?
- What is the quality of results, and does it need to be reworked?
- What are the delays? (This is lost time.)
- What are our strengths to build on?
 - » What could we do more of?
 - » What could we share or replicate?

CHAPTER 8: Find the Root Cause of Success

You are likely sitting on a goldmine, and the ironic thing is you might not realize it. As humans, we tend to focus on our problems; it's no accident that root cause failure

analysis is so deeply embedded in manufacturing and other industries. But if you look closely at any successful entrepreneur or business, chances are that their success came about because they doubled down on what was working, what customers valued.

Instead of the root causes of failure, let's emphasize the root causes of success.

Your Outline for Action

As humans, it's natural for us to focus on our failures. We need to change that focus from failures to successes. Knowing your best demonstrated practice—what works, what you do well, and why—is the most overlooked opportunity in business. Here are some things to consider as you shift your focus to finding your best demonstrated practice and root cause of success:

- Teach the elephant to dance by turning your lumbering organization into one that is nimble and responsive.
- When you find a best demonstrated practice, and a specific group or individual producing this result, you have captured the what. Next, find the how—how they execute and produce this result—which will enable you to learn why they represent the best demonstrated practice and get you to the root cause of their success.
- Use 5W&1H (what, who, where, when, why, and how), the 5 whys, and fishbone diagrams (also known as Ishikawa diagrams) to ask the right questions and read the collaboration vibe in your organization.

CHAPTER 9: Learn a Trade and Deliberately Improve

I suggest that you avoid getting hung up on the labels and, instead, think of the practical application of continuous improvement tools and the ability to drive change as a vocation. The vocation of applying many of the tools and methods described in this book to drive change for the better is something I call *deliberate improvement*.

Your Outline for Action

Avoid getting hung up on the labels applied to the tools of continuous improvement; instead, think of the practical application of these tools—and their ability to drive change—as a vocation. Here are some things to keep in mind as you approach this experience like learning a trade:

- Understand that knowledge is necessary, but that knowledge alone is useless without the skill and ability to use it effectively. If you approach driving change and improvement as a trade, you are already positioned for success.
- The vocation of applying many of the tools and methods to drive change for the better is *deliberate improvement*.
- *Troubleshooting* is the practice of checking all the conditions that should be working to try and find anomalies—things that aren’t working or that are out of place—and all improvement should start with troubleshooting.
- Before you look for the root cause, there’s one more very critical question you need to answer: Is this a *waste* problem or a *variation* problem?
- If you use root cause failure analysis (RCFA), pick out a specific instance and establish the chain of events that initiate from some specific cause, causes, or combination of events.
- At its heart, Kaizen (Japanese for “change for the better”) is about empowering the people who do the work to improve their circumstances. It is best when you have direct experience with the problem and the people who will solve the root cause are the ones who experience it.
- DMAIC (define, measure, analyze, improve, control) is a process that focuses a team on a specific problem or opportunity. The team identifies factors that affect the process, gathers evidence, conducts analysis, tests solutions, and produces quantifiable, sustainable improvements that impact the business.

**CHAPTER 10:
Be Able to Clearly Explain WHY
We Will Sustain**

Every business wants improved worker safety and morale. Just because something is difficult to measure doesn’t mean

that you shouldn’t try to do the right thing. The drive toward focusing on a metric, a KPI, or some other measurement of our success costs businesses literally billions of dollars every year. That idea is more than a little counterintuitive—that if you can’t improve what you can’t measure, but then you somehow measure it, it costs you billions of dollars. But it comes down to the problem of *sustainability*.

Your Outline for Action

Companies have entire organizations, training, consultants, teams, money, and time wrapped up in their improvement efforts, and 75 to 95 percent of the outcomes can’t survive the warranty period on the results. That’s unsustainable. Here’s how to avoid being one of those companies that is pouring money down the drain:

- Understand that sustaining results from improvement projects is a must-win battle.
- The water you will carry is not only the size of the bucket, but also how fast the bucket leaks. Choosing the right projects that you execute effectively to produce sustained results is an order of magnitude better than a shotgun blast of projects where only a very small number land.
- You can’t sustain what you can’t explain; you need to know why and how your solution works if you want to sustain the results.

PART 3 ACTION

**CHAPTER 11:
Walk the Talk—A Call to Action**

When we lack clarity on our target condition—what the barrier or issue is we are overcoming to reach our longer-term goals—we are asleep. People who have purpose know exactly what they’re working on and exactly what they’re trying to improve. And if you want to be a superperformer, you absolutely have to move with purpose.

Your Outline for Action

Being deliberate is different from the ongoing slow burn of what’s constantly happening in the background. If you want your improvement efforts to succeed, you have to be deliberate about them. Here are some tips on how to do just that:

- To determine if you’re moving with purpose, take note of this moment that you’re in right now. *What*

are you doing? *Why* are you doing it? Next, imagine this same moment exactly seven days from now, after an entire cycle of the common patterns in your life has passed. In this moment, based on the intention that exists right now in your mind, what will be *different* seven days from now?

- Your ability to provide the greatest utility is what separates you from the rest of the pack. It's what makes you a superperformer.
- It's not enough to walk the walk or talk the talk. You must be able to walk the talk, engaging teams and organizations while having the skills (the vocation) to do what you say you're going to do and deliver results.
- Carefully craft your elevator speech. It will be your go-to method for doing your best to be a superperformer and to walk the talk. Be able to communicate three things in just a few minutes: the what, the how, and the why.

Acknowledgments

No success—no superperformance—is achieved alone. Just as this book emphasizes the power of clarity, utility, and collective success, its creation was made possible through the support, insight, and encouragement of many people who helped shape both the ideas within these pages and the journey that led me here.

To the readers—those who are committed to pushing past limitations, leading with clarity, and sustaining peak performance—may this serve as a guide to unlocking your own golden hours, eliminating ambiguity, and building a future defined by deliberate improvement and lasting success.

Thank you all for being part of this journey. Your contributions are a testament to the very principles in these pages—because real success is never achieved alone.



George Pesansky is a leadership and performance optimization expert with over 30 years of experience in operational excellence, executive coaching, and organizational transformation. Known for his practical, results-driven approach, he has led initiatives across industries to enhance efficiency, foster continuous improvement, and turn high-performance moments into repeatable systems. George has trained and coached more than 10,000 professionals in Six Sigma, Lean, and World Class Manufacturing worldwide, while also authoring influential work on peak performance and best practices. As founder of Capacity2Care, he encourages top performers to contribute their talents to strengthen charitable organizations.

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