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# True Performance Realization's DEMAC Approach: An Overview

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**Abstract**

True Performance Realization's (TPR's) Ninth Core Belief is that it is necessary for an entity to define, emphasize, measure, acknowledge, and correct (DEMAC) everything that it values. The DEMAC Approach is a framework for how to measure the traits that an organization values. More specifically, the DEMAC Approach is a process for measuring perceived intangible traits, as the intangibles are what truly govern an organization. The purpose of this article is to succinctly describe TPR's DEMAC Approach, and how one can use the process to change an organization's culture and overall performance.

## Introduction

True Performance Realization (TPR) has Ten Core Beliefs to enable higher, integrated, true human performance for a greater purpose. TPR's Ninth Core Belief is that "we must define, emphasize, measure, acknowledge, and correct (DEMAC) everything that we value in our preparation."[1] As emphasized in previous work by the author, "If you are not measuring a variable, then it must not be important."[2]

Numerous essential aspects for an organization's success are traditionally believed to be intangible, such as culture. Furthermore, several factors needed for organizational success are traditionally not defined, poorly emphasized, and not measured, such as will. When we believe or classify critical influences as *intangible* or *non-measurable*, we will limit our entity's growth and performance.

Douglas Hubbard believes that "anything can be measured. If something can be observed in any way at all, it lends itself to some type of measurement method. No matter how 'fuzzy' the measurement is, it's still a measurement if it tells you more than you knew before."[3] Hubbard proclaims that measuring the intangible aspects of an organization are critically important and that measuring the intangibles "could even be the single most important determinant of success or failure."[4]

With the correct framework, one can measure the often-perceived intangibles or misclassified traits. Within the TPR system, the DEMAC Approach is used. The purpose of this article is to succinctly describe the DEMAC Approach and how it can be used to measure the misclassified intangibles of performance (e.g., performance itself, culture, will). The reader should note that future articles in the *True Performance Realization Applied Journal* (*TPRAJ*) will provide greater detail on how to execute the DEMAC Approach in applicable situations, but a brief example can be found in the article "The Humble Athlete: Why They Are Needed and How to Create Them."[5]

## Define

Many organizations use the right buzzwords and catchphrases. If you were to walk into any professional athletic organization, spread across the walls will be similar terminology, despite their win-loss records. Of considerable note, most institutions, athletic teams, or

businesses will talk about *culture*, *performance*, and *will*. However, when asked to define these same buzzwords or catchphrases and explain what they mean to a particular organization, it is common to receive silence, incoherent responses, or diverging answers from those within the organizations. There is a problem when an organization cannot provide a cohesive, unifying, and meaningful definition to key words such as *culture*, *performance*, and *will*, especially if an entity claims to be a high-performance organization.

Using Figure 1 as a guide, the author challenges the reader to reflect on the organization that they are in right now and to define what *performance* is for their organization (Step 1). Was their answer immediate, definite, and clear (Step 2)? If their answer was immediate, definite, and clear, would others in their organization agree fully with their definition (Step 3)? If there is no clear definition of what *performance* means, then we will have unnecessary variance and diverging efforts in our preparation. After all, "We cannot intentionally, reliably, or measurably elicit performance when we do not know what performance means to our organization."[6]

What is true of the concept of performance is true with other critical factors such as culture and will. Therefore, the first step in the DEMAC Approach is to clearly, concisely, and articulately define the traits that we pursue. As stated regarding culture, "without a clear definition, there can be no communal effort in achieving the desired culture."[7] Great organizations focus on two central themes. First, what they will invest in and what they will be great at, and second, what they will not,[8] as time is a precious asset and we cannot be great at everything. Hence, when defining a trait, one should focus on what the definition will encompass as well as what the definition will intentionally not encompass.

It should be noted that when crafting the definitions of the values to be measured, one should not create definitions in isolation, but rather create a "culture council."[9] A culture council is composed of those within the organization whom "have the respect, influence, and demonstrate the qualities needed for the optimal culture."[10] Including others for organizational change is decisive. This idea is supported by the work of John Kotter, who does not believe that meaningful, sustainable, and rapid change can occur without a guiding coalition.[11]

When using the culture council, the highest-ranking leader (e.g., head coach, unit commander, owner) should not talk *at* those within their organization. Rather, the leader should talk *with* their subordinates and, ideally, ask open-ended questions.[12] This effort must be genuine for the culture council to develop true buy-in for the organization's efforts.

Lastly, the culture council should not rush the establishment of a trait's definition. If the group defines the trait poorly, inadequately, or

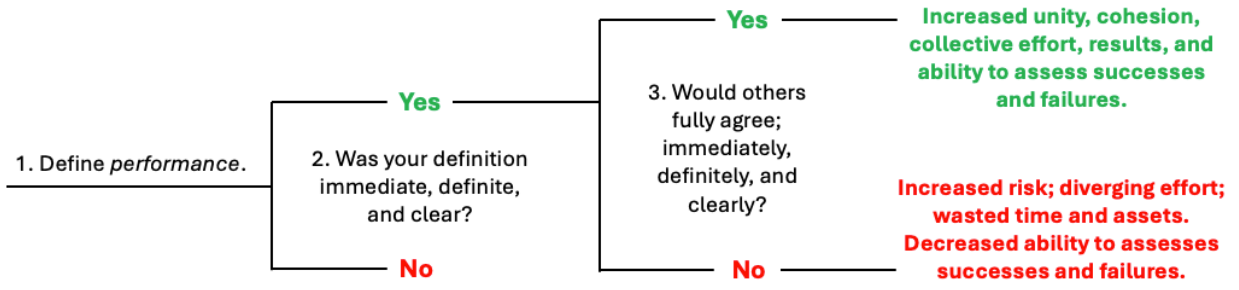



Figure 1: Thought Exercise—Define Performance.

in a non-resilient manner, the culture council will have inherently created a limitation within their organization. However, it must be noted that the DEMAC Approach is a process.[13] Meaning it is a living approach that is constantly evaluated and adapted accordingly. Therefore, if the definition of a trait proves suboptimal, it should be updated, disseminated, and reinforced, which is shown in Figure 1 (modified from previous works).[14] The reader should note, as depicted in Figure 2, that the EMAC [Emphasize, Measure, Acknowledge, and Correct] cycle is continuous and simultaneous.

**Emphasize**

Defining the traits that we desire alone will not achieve the ends that we are pursuing.[15] We must emphasize the traits that we desire so that they become a part of our culture—to include our rituals and habits. When we emphasize what we value and what we are pursuing, we should do so genuinely, frequently, and uniquely.

Daniel Coyle states that "leaders are inherently biased to presume that everyone in the group sees things as they do, when in fact they don't. This is why it's necessary to drastically overcommunicate priorities."[16] When we communicate our desired traits, we must overcommunicate, which is "not simply repeating in the same manner, but it is emphasizing through various means the importance"[17] of the trait that we are pursuing. Coyle suggests using catchphrases, as high-performing cultures have their own internal language.[18] When using unique cultural language, a group's internal language cannot contrast with the organization's overall culture, as this would hinder overall unity and collective effort.[19]

Genuine, frequent, and unique emphasis is critical for organizational change, as Kotter does not believe that meaningful change can occur unless those in an organization have a common understanding of where the organization desires to be in the future.[20] Hence, we must emphasize our desired traits, goals, and vision; sincerely, regularly, and in novel ways. We emphasize our desired traits through our actions, words, intent, and plans; however, we must always remember that our actions speak louder than our words, memos, and emails.

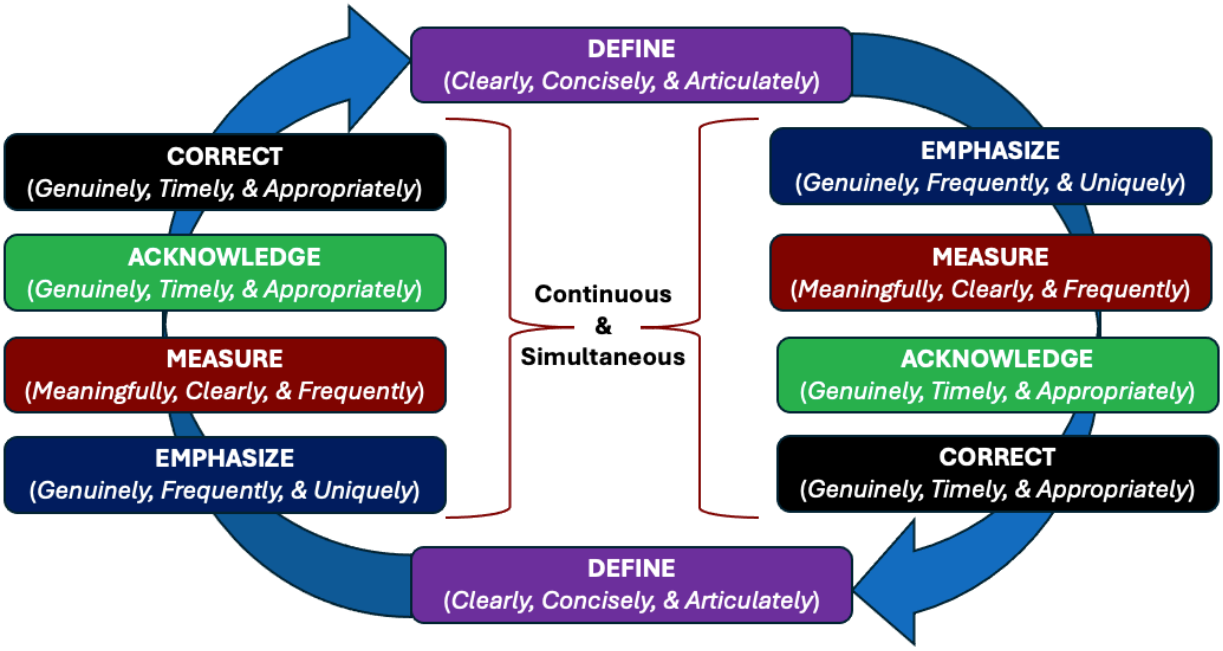



Figure 2: The DEMAC Approach Cycle.

Notably, we can emphasize defined traits in unique ways, such as in strength and conditioning sessions, by emphasizing with each repetition, set, and drill what we are trying to accomplish in the long term.[21]

While optimally defining the desired traits is essential, how well each trait is executed is vastly more important.[22] A great definition with poor execution is ultimately just words. In contrast, a good definition with great execution will lead to meaningful and sustainable change. How well we emphasize our defined traits (genuinely, frequently, and uniquely) is critical to organizational performance.

**Measure**

Measurements are essential for high performance, organizational change, and continued growth. One's measurements should be meaningful, clear, and frequent. Regarding measurements, Hubbard believes that we have more data than we think we possess, we need less data than we think we need, observations are more meaningful than we believe, and whatever we want to measure has been measured before by someone else.[23] John Doerr states that high-performing organizations focus on clearly and equally on what is and what is not important.[24] Knowing what is and what is not important is only possible through reflection, a framework, and a process that utilizes meaningful measurements.

Data should drive decisions, because "without measurements, non-data decisions will inherently have greater uncertainty and risk."[25] It must be mentioned that "while we can measure everything, it does not mean that we should measure everything,"[26] as time and resources are vital minimal assets. We need only to measure the traits that we know will highly impact our organization (i.e., meaningful measurements). Doerr poses that when determining what to measure, we should ask ourselves, "What is most important for the next three (or six, or twelve) months?"[27]

The greater that we define a trait, the greater we can measure that trait.[28] Concurrently, a clearly defined trait needs a clear measurement, as confusing or convoluted data is not useful. As Doerr conveys that "contributors are most engaged when they can actually see how their work contributes to the company's success,"[29] our data should be clear to the contributors of the entire organization. Lastly, measurements must be frequent, as infrequent measurements lead to complacency, stagnation, and atrophy.

**Acknowledge**

As we are trying to create organizational change and as we are trying to achieve our desired traits, we must acknowledge the behaviors that we desire. While acknowledgement may sound simple in theory, we rarely do an adequate job in letting others know when and how they have helped facilitate change, growth, or performance. This tendency to under-acknowledge valuable contributions, attitudes, and behaviors may especially be true in military organizations, which typically focus on crushing undesired behaviors as opposed to recognizing correct deeds.

Acknowledgement must be "genuine, timely and appropriate."[30] Genuity is necessary because false acknowledgement, such as insincere praise, once detected by others, leads to resentment, a reduced amount of discretionary effort, and less buy-into the organization. Acknowledgement must be timely; if appropriate effort is not promptly acknowledged, the individual(s) could stop performing the action(s) due to a belief that such effort is not valued. It should be noted that timely acknowledgement could be as simple as letting an individual know the importance of their efforts in a small informal gathering or in a one-on-one conversation.[31]

"Appropriate recognition is two-fold," with those aspects being specific to the person and being correlated to the act.[32] Meaning, a person who values private recognition should be recognized in private and the person who values public

recognition should be recognized in public. Regarding acknowledgement being correlated to the act, neither underinflate the important nor overinflate the unimportant actions within an organization. Lastly, as Kotter expresses that short-term wins can lead to additional wins,[33] we should not overlook the small, appropriate actions of those within the organization.

**Correct**

As "credibility, trust, and influence are hard to gain, but are easy to lose,"[34] we must immediately, genuinely, and in a timely manner make corrections in our organizations.[35] "When we fail to correct the failure to meet the standards, we lose credibility as leaders, which leads to complacency and the lack of buy-in by our subordinates."[36] There are several reasons why we may fail to correct those who are not performing as needed. In the book *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, Patrick Lencioni states that the main dysfunctions of a team are: absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results.[37] Related, Kotter believes that the primary reason for organizations failing to optimally change is because they allow too much complacency to exist within their association.[38]

While it is common for us to not immediately correct improper or suboptimal actions, Coyle believes that when we hold others accountable, we are letting them know that the expectations for them are high, that they are a part of an organization with high standards, and that we believe that they can achieve those standards.[39] One way to view immediate correction is through use of an analogy; specifically, the quality and quantity in wound care.

When caring for a wound, one must immediately and appropriately clean the wound, which is painful. However, if one fails to immediately and appropriately clean a wound, then it will most likely become infected, which naturally leads to greater pain and the potential loss of a limb or a possible loss of life. When we fail to correct those in our organizations who are failing to accomplish the clearly defined standards, expectations, and goals, those behaviors will infect the organization, which will lead to further, potentially uncontrollable infection within the organization, and that scenario will either lead to eventual firings (loss of a limb) or collapse of the organization (loss of life).

Just as acknowledgement should be specific to the person and the act, so should correction. Some individuals simply need to know that their actions were not adequate, while others need consequences to correct their behaviors. Additionally, do not overcorrect a minor infraction with harsh punishment or under correct a major infraction with minimal reprimand. Harsh punishment for a minor infraction can lead to timidity, loss of initiative, and learned hopelessness, while minor reprimand for a major infraction can lead to entitlement, arrogance, and future ill-warranted behaviors. Finally, corrections should be dealt with justice, with no one being above the process or without accountability to the organization.

**Conclusion**

Measuring intangibles is invaluable. Furthermore, great organizations do not train—they prepare, as preparation is fully encompassing to the day, week, month, and year. When we prepare, we should clearly and articulately define what we expect, repeatedly and uniquely emphasize what we desire, consistently measure our actions and inactions, acknowledge our successes, and correct our setbacks, with the DEMAC Approach providing us with a framework for our preparation. Remember, "if you are not measuring a variable, then it must not be important."[40]

**Author Biography**

Jeremy Carter (featured right) is the Founder, Owner, and President of True Performance Realization (TPR), and serves as the Editor-in-Chief for the *TPR Applied Journal*. With over

eighteen years of experience in human performance, Jeremy has earned numerous certifications, including the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA) Strength and Conditioning Specialist with Distinction and the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) Certified Exercise Physiologist. He is a current reviewer for the NSCA's *Strength and Conditioning Journal* (*SCJ*), a founding member and editor for the *Journal of Sport and Human Performance*, and a recipient of the NSCA's *SCJ*'s 2023 Editorial Excellence Award.



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