By Roger Kaufman, PhD, CPT

Ever wonder why so many performance improvement efforts that are successful in the workplace never seem to have the impact on the organization that were hoped for? Some products add to the entire value chain, but most are left to dwell in the depths of operation.

The same is likely true for what we do to and for our bodies. Based on wanting to help ourselves, such as losing weight, taking vitamins and supplements, and exercising—based on the newest self-help books, ads, friends, and well-intentioned advice—they often don’t make any difference, sometimes make things worse, and sometimes make us feel better. Sometimes.

Sound familiar? We start from the here-and-now and assume or hope good things will happen.

For health, we are better off getting a full health condition assessment, just like what we get from a comprehensive health evaluation. Based on the vital signs, blood chemistry and other tests, one is better able to select those interventions that will help make us fit, healthy and live longer. We best start from the outside rather than the inside for helping our health.

The same is for worthy performance improvement and performance accomplishment. Start from the outside-in rather than the usual and initially more comfortable (and conventional) inside-out.

Let’s see (Figure 1) using the Organizational Elements Model (Kaufman, 1998, 2000, 2006, 2011) with the three levels of results:

- Mega—Societal contributions
- Macro—Organizational contributions
- Micro—Individual and small group contributions.

If we start from the outside-in, I suggest we will have more sustainable and worthy success:
Conventional approaches in our field start inside at the Micro level, identify gaps in performance, and then design, develop, and implement ways and means to close those gaps. We collect data and validate our success. But, how often do we check to see if we also added value at the Macro and Mega levels? Sometimes (c.f. Addison & Hague, 2009) but rarely.

Lots of time and money are spent on this, but we often don’t calculate our return on investment (Bernardez, 2018; Kirpartick, 1994; Phillips, 1997) We hope for the best, but don’t often prove it (as does Bernardez, 2018; Bernardez et al., 2012; Kaufman, 2011)

It is better to start outside the organization (asking “if my organization is the solution what’s the problem?”) and roll down to identify gaps in performance (needs) that should be closed to add value at all levels of a planning hierarchy (Kaufman, 2018).…Mega, Macro, and Micro and the processes and resources that will deliver worthy results.

Doing so will be unorthodox and unconventional. It will also cost less and be more successful.

References


ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Roger Kaufman, PhD, CPT is professor emeritus, Florida State University, Senior Fellow at Florida TaxWatch, and has served as Distinguished Research Professor at the Sonora Institute of Technology (Mexico). He received ATD’s Distinguished Contribution to Workplace Learning and Performance award. Also, he is a past president, honorary member for life and Thomas Gilbert Award winner, all with ISPI, Kaufman has published 41 books and 315 articles on strategic planning, performance improvement, quality management and continual improvement, needs assessment, management, and evaluation. He consults world-wide with public, private and NGO organizations, the most recent of which include the President and Minister of Tourism of Panama, the University of Puerto Rico, the Civil Service Commissions of Taiwan, and the Tze-Chain Foundation of Science and Technology, as well as the Department of Labor, Korean Government. At Florida State, he created the Center for Needs Assessment and Planning that did applied research and development. The literature often sites him as “the father of needs assessment.” The International Society for Performance Improvement (ISPI) has created the Roger Kaufman Award for Societal Impact. This award recognizes the continuous achievement of measurable positive societal impact by an individual or organization. He is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association as well as of the American Educational Research Association. He can be reached roger@megaplanning.com or rkaufman@nettally.com or at (850)386-6621. Visit www.Megaplanning.com.