



Time Management and Productivity Expert Laura Stack Discusses How to Identify the High Performer from the Average Worker



DENVER, Colorado, October 16, 2012 – Bringing a new hire into any workplace is a gamble. There is no way of knowing whether a person will deliver a top-notch performance that makes everyone look good, or if the newbie will just be that colleague who shows up, does an average job, and fades into the woodwork. In her newest blog titled [“High Performer or Average Worker? How Can You Quickly Tell?”](#) Stack reminds readers that while “average” doesn’t mean bad, a leader’s goal is to build a team around high performers. The quantum leapers, Stack says, achieve up to 10 times greater impact and results than the average worker. They’re the stars with whom ambitious coworkers want to align themselves in order to make real progress.

But how does one recognize star quality in a new staff member? In her blog, Stack explains that it’s not an exact science, but there are some telltale signs to look for in a potential office superstar.

First and foremost, they look good on paper. In fact, a candidate’s “paper trail” may offer some important clues about their performance ability. A summa cum laude college graduate with a double major is probably an over-achiever. If they rose quickly through the ranks at previous jobs and have stellar performance records, it’s a good sign that there’s a winner on board. Still, nothing is carved in stone, Stack says.

“You can’t always rule out a personality or attitude change since that last glowing performance review.”

Second, look for what Stack calls “the Yoda attitude,” after the little green Jedi master who once told Luke Skywalker: “Do or do not. There is no try.” Stack says to look for this attitude in a new hire during face-time interviews with the candidate. The Yoda attitude is true of high performers who confront workplace challenges head-on and apply their experience and creativity to craft tailored solutions that get the job done.

“Ask your candidate what they would do in certain hypothetical situations, noting how well and how quickly they can construct a reasonable solution,” Stack says. “You may have a Jedi master before you.” Look for sharp, well-defined goals, a sure sign of a high performer. According to Stack, a high performer has no problem citing his or her goals, both short- and long-term. They can present those goals neatly and quickly, with a solid understanding of the steps required to get there. They understand how to translate goals into action.

Look for ambition. High performers push themselves to get ahead. They are self-starters who radiate confidence and energy and need no one else to motivate them. The ambitious candidate maintains a clear sense of direction.

“They ‘keep on keeping on’ until they get what they want and hit the targets,” Stack says.

Excellent time management skills are also a benchmark of high performers, although it’s a slippery slope since high-performance burnout can be a problem. Ambition, solid goals, and a can-do attitude matter very little if a worker can’t manage time.

High performers understand the basics of time management well enough to create a work/life balance that maximizes their personal productivity—and they don’t become exhausted in the process.

“Working long hours and working productively are not the same things,” Stack says. “You’ll have to dig deeper to see if the person possesses a solid time management skill set.”

Stack also discusses a fairly common occurrence in which the manager and team members, who had written off a new hire as an average performer, are pleasantly surprised to discover she’s a top performer. Unfortunately, the same can happen when new hires seem like a “sure thing” in the high performance department, who only turn out to be a disappointment.

According to Stack, it’s performance that matters. There are plenty of “masters of disguise” who depend on their winning personalities to hide their weaknesses just long enough to get hired. True high performers exhibit a fearless, ambitious, and results-oriented approach that no one can easily fake.

“Take care not to mistake style for substance,” Stack says. “Don’t base hiring decisions on appearance, since they can be misleading.”

For more information on identifying high performers, visit [TheProductivityPro.com website](http://TheProductivityPro.com), Email Laura@TheProductivityPro.com, or call 303-471-7401.

About Laura Stack:

[Laura Stack](#) is a time management and productivity expert who has been speaking and writing about human potential and peak performance since 1992. She has implemented employee productivity improvement programs at Wal-Mart, Cisco Systems, UBS, Aramark, and Bank of America. Stack presents keynotes and seminars internationally for leaders, entrepreneurs, salespeople, and professional services firms on improving output, lowering stress, and saving time in the workplace.

The president of [The Productivity Pro®, Inc.](#), a time management firm specializing in high-stress environments, Stack is the bestselling author of five books: [“What to do When There’s Too Much to do” \(2012\)](#); “SuperCompetent” (2010); “The Exhaustion Cure” (2008); “Find More Time” (2006); “Leave the Office Earlier” (2004). The 2011-2012 President of the National Speakers Association and recipient of the Certified Speaking Professional (CSP) designation, Stack has served as a spokesperson for Microsoft, 3M, Xerox, and Office Depot and is the creator of The Productivity Pro® planner by Day-Timer. Widely regarded as one of the leading experts in the field of employee productivity and workplace issues, Stack has been featured nationally on the CBS Early Show and CNN, and in USA Today and the New York Times.