Chapter 1

INCREASE YOUR SPAN POWER™

AND ESCAPE YOUR PIGEONHOLE

"He who reigns within himself and rules passions, desires,
and fears is more than a king." - John Milton

Be Sharp, Stay Sharp, and Give Yourself the Edge

High Performance Thinking' Span Power™ (HPT) offers valuable insight of who you are, how to

change, and what you can become. By applying its lessons, you will improve your memory, thinking, and

problem-solving abilities that are so crucial for surviving and succeeding in today's competitive,

uncertain world.   New, creative learning memory and thinking strategies will help you to gain personal

insight and control your learning and working environment.

Everyone processes information differently through a myriad of input channels. Now you can

identify your own memory processing levels and improve your ability to handle complex information.

You may have wondered how to be mentally sharper, but didn't know how to go about it.

It will give you the information and encouragement necessary, showing you how to absorb,

understand, and apply complex information that you thought was beyond your reach. This book tells

you how you can optimize your mental capacity. By understanding the benefits of HPT, you will have

the determination to use this new important insight to move forward.

Being "average" is no longer good enough. Society has become too complex. We realize that

we must process information faster and more accurately. If not, it becomes information overload, with little relief in sight to meet the technological demands of the 21st century. I will tell you about an important missing link, efficient information processing, which is needed for your personal identity, self-confidence, and the way you manage information.

You will find how first impressions are often lasting, and how to avoid being pigeonholed as a certain type of person at school or work. How sharp we appear, how fast we learn new things, our coping skills, and our behavioral traits generate from our brain. Although they hinge together, our ability to learn and adapt quickly is key to our success in school and the workplace.

A dominant piece to our sense of well-being is the ability to learn easily and apply technological information. Few of us realize we can learn to process more efficiently, and many of us suffer from self-deception, thinking we are more capable than we really are.

We must interface with the technological age, but few of us can meet its demands. Changing skill requirements in the workplace force us to take notice, as they connect to individual opportunity and productivity. To compete in the job marketplace, we will find it necessary to update our training and credentials rapidly. Adding to this challenge are poor career and college course selections made either by chance or a lack of choice, with job ceilings in those particular fields.

To learn quickly, we can develop an eye and an ear for detail, and then transfer newly learned skills into practical applications at work. Performance improvement, in the High Performance environment should be a workplace industry standard. On-the-job processes, which produce accomplishments, are valued by both the employee and the organization. This performance standard hinges on our personal performance and productivity skills. According to the U.S. Dept. of Labor's article on *Skills and Opportunity*, individuals with limited qualifications do not have much to bargain with and they are condemned to low earnings with few choices. As a Human Resources employer, you find yourself frustrated when trying to find well-qualified, highly committed employees.

Articles lament that workers lacked the communication skills needed for the workplace. Unfortunately, the communication skills minimally taught in school through basic reading, writing, and language arts, are not of the same level as those required on the job.

There is a "black hole gap" between work proficiency and productivity. Think tanks work to identify why performance skills are often low, affecting work productivity.

In business, workplace literacy includes the ability to use computer files, business documents, and safety manuals. In industry, we may have to not only operate machines, but read manuals, blueprints, patient charts, street maps, also trouble-shoot, and work effectively with coworkers and customers. Employers are desperately seeking answers. Fitting into the High Performance Workplace is crucial.

The new *High Performance Workplace* challenges affect each one of us personally not only in our work, but also in our daily lives. Faulty thinking creates problems for everyone. With the lack of pattern finding and sequencing ability, confusion, errors, and poor judgment result. Many of us read superficially, fail to see the big picture, focus on irrelevant details, and therefore jump to incorrect conclusions. Workers need definitive written and spoken communication skills and computer literacy. Although we try to cope, we remain surrounded by inaccuracies. We ask: "Why are there so many detail errors made in the workplace?"

The following scenarios will make it clear that disorganization, mismanagement, and a lack of efficiency are all wasting our time. There must be change.

Arriving home carrying a set of business cards, I was dismayed to discover there were three blatant errors. They were delivered to the store with the text camera ready, accompanied by a computer disc copy. Add the layout, and the job would be complete. Therefore, they should have been relatively easy to produce.

The logo was reversed. Colored lines were missing. The image was not centered on the card.

My name was misspelled. How can so many things go wrong -- so easily, and almost predictably? Was it carelessness? Does this reflect a lack of specific work skills? Although it is difficult to decipher the exact cause, the designer attempted to refine the calling cards. In the process, he mangled them. Why must we all deal with so many daily errors?

When we do not attend to details, faulty product outcomes result. It is important to catch errors in the happening, and rapidly correct them. This can be accomplished by learning step-wise procedural skills.

The copy company will reluctantly send them back to the production company. Several people up the chain of command will be reprimanded: the layout person who sent in the order, the technical person at the production company, the company supervisor, and I'll take heat from the copy company for creating extra reprint work for them, and will be described as a overly demanding person. These detail errors prompt a domino effect of trouble caused by inaccuracy and with careless attention towards details.

Then, I had to stop by the bank to put my hard drive back-up take in my lock box. The man who assisted me appeared to be part of management, as I had not seen him before in the bank. Confirming my suspicion, he quickly extended his hand announcing he was the bank president, and eager to help a valued customer.

I casually commented upon the necessity of training for high tech jobs, and few people can qualify. He lamented, "I have to buy new software program upgrades, every two years. This really affects the banking industry. Furthermore, I have to train my employees in these new software applications in one afternoon. It becomes information overload. They cannot assimilate and apply it all. I often wonder why we need to be in this hurry to upgrade, and continuously learn new software. The software companies are the ones who benefit!"

The employees evidently were not effectively learning and applying the newly introduced skills.

This was unfortunate, as upgrades offer additional benefits for work efficiency. But, they do require additional schooling, meaning that the bank loses employee's availability during that time.

The stories related reveal that we live in a disjointed world where we all can run into daily problems like these. Although we try to cope the best we can with poor work performance, unfortunately, errors are often shrugged off, or blamed on misfortune. Many of us simply do not care, and standards cease to exist. Yet, there is a plea for proficiency in the High Performance workplace.

What can we do? Take personal responsibility? Request that our employer give us more skill training? What is the root of the problem? Is it having a poor attitude or inept work management skills? Although these are concerns, there is more to it.

The answer lies within us. We all learn how to process information in a variety of different ways. Unbeknownst to us, we are born with certain mental strengths and weaknesses, even inherited personality traits. The insidious hidden gaps in our memory and thinking processes can be bridged by teachable performance skills.

We are only a fraction of what we can be. Perhaps we have sold ourselves for too low a price in the past. Self-satisfaction, complacency, and false pride are our worst enemies. This survival handbook will help you and your family cut through this disabling maze. With fresh insight, you can leap beyond your present inner world and find that invisible realities exist.

I am about to identify this important missing link between *Short-Term Sequencing Memory Agility* and *High Speed Mental Scanning and Contrapuntal Thinking Agility* needed in managing both simple and complex information and with solving our problems. *We will call short-term sequencing ability, learning step-wise procedures, the basis for academics and technologies*. We will discover how to chunk and code information with automaticity – you will not have to "think through it." It will come automatically.

I will unravel some of these mental proficiency mysteries. You'll find out why you make certain

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types of errors, but even more importantly, you'll recognize the problems of those around you -- your employees, your family, and even your friends.

When you have identified your innate memory levels, you have the opportunity to improve them and place them in perspective. HPT will enable you to identify your weak thinking skill areas, and then proceed to improve them through analytical skills and mental toughness training. Your spoken and written communication skills will improve, as they hinge on memory agility.

The HPT system reworks traditional link and association methods through improving your encoding-decoding skill. Most mind-related self-improvement books dwell on listening with improved interest and concentration, reading and language tips, visualization and association, speed-reading, or memory peg tricks. You must have strong visualization and listening for these systems to work. If you have underlying visual or listening memory processing weaknesses, these other options will not be enough for you.

HPT training goes deeper and beyond other programs by offering "Span Power." It shows you how to process information and communicate effectively, how to understand complex information quickly with automaticity, and why you experience information overload with a weak Short-Term Memory. You will discover you can exercise to improve your Short-Term Memory and mental strength dramatically. You will learn how to develop the new concept of Contrapuntal Scanning, Parallel-Thinking, or thinking in layers, several thoughts at a time.

This distinctive method is appealing. Acting, comedy, imaginative play, and rhythm create complete sensory integration for learning excitement and a intriguing emotional, even addictive, experience. The arts and science theme feature celebrity identification as an enjoyable way to expand your Short-Term Memory.

The outcome is you are sharper, more dynamic, with better communication and analytical skills. Mastering HPT training will help you learn new procedures quickly, solve problems more effectively, and

be more adept at handling multi-tasks. By having a significant edge over your competition, you will gain

personal status, and stand out in the fast-paced workplace.

High Performance Thinking Releases Your Mind Spring:

o   Understand why you aren't working up to optimum level and how to improve

        work performance through *High Performance Thinking Span Power* training. Learn

        to process new information more accurately. Accomplish more in less time.

o   Expand your Short-Term Memory and conquer information overload through learning

        how to detect patterns and transfer them into workable systems. An agile mind

        experiences Contrapuntal, Parallel-Thinking – or mental scanning, or rapid, coordinated

        thoughts**.** This is a required mental skill necessary for learning technical skills for more

        satisfying jobs and career advancement.

o   Improve your listening and visual accuracy. Accurately interpret what you see and hear

        for higher work productivity and improved personal relationships.

o   Discover mental toughness strategies, and how to think through interruptions.

        Learn to scan, code, and organize information quickly.

o   Understand others' work and life styles to improve interpersonal communication.

o   Impress others with a quick mind in meetings, sales calls, and interviews.

o   Recognize and avoid other peoples' mistakes before they entrap you, and become your

        problems.

o   Find a career best suited to your mental abilities. Avoid the frustration of entering the

        wrong occupation.

o   Recognize aesthetic patterns to increase your appreciation of home decoration, art,

music, literature, poetry, and the theatre.

The Highways To Our Minds

Understanding complex and rapid-fire information input requires exceptional memory pathways which become entries to our intellect. Recent research indicates that there are hundreds of ways facts, feelings, and hunches reach your intuitive mind. However, your primary ones are the five senses: visual, listening, tactile, taste, and smell. We will concentrate on the first three, because they are the most important in work and instructional settings. We will leave taste and smell memories to the gourmet cooks.

Typically, we favor one or two memory pathways, and subconsciously compensate for our weaker ones. For us to understand difficult material, our visual and listening memories must work in consort, blending information like ingredients in a cake. If this does not occur, serious problems result. The first step is to develop a good Short-Term Memory.

A Quick Memory Opens The Door To High Performance Thinking

What is Short-Term Memory (STM), and why expand it? First, let's review a quick explanation of the three stages of memory and how they progress from Immediate Recall (IR), filters to Short-Term Memory (STM), and finally stored in Long-Term Memory (LTM).

Long-Term Memory is like food stored in a freezer for a long time. If you have learned something well, you can freshly recall it from storage. When information is deeply learned, it becomes an ingrained part of us that we don't forget. For example, a recent study shows Alzheimer patients can recall old, familiar songs like "Happy Birthday"[9] and "Jingle Bells" and could hum, sing, or tap their foot to them. However, they could not learn new songs and words that is dependent upon strong Immediate Recall and Short Term Memory. Most of us think if we can easily remember the past or well-learned information, we do not need a Short-Term memory tune-up to learn the new efficiently.

With an agile Short-Term Memory (STM) you can develop a strong command of the spoken and written word, read faster, absorb facts like a sponge, and handle math and business problems with ease and speed. A long, strong, and resilient memory is necessary to remember any type of data. Without it, you quickly forget the small complex details what you see and hear.

What is Average Short-Term Memory? What is Expected?

Remembering five to seven units, or chunks of information, is average, and represents your *Short-Term Memory Span* (STM).We may have difficulty recalling a series of three or four names of people, places, or things which are below average. The objective of *High Performance Thinking* is to expand your memory span from three, four, or five items up to six, seven, or eight. Then, multiply it times two or three different variables, and you will manage 16-24 bits of information with speed. In Chapter 6, you can check your own visual and listening memory spans.

"Information Overload" occurs when the information is greater than what your memory span can hold. For many of us it is only three to five spans. Think of you mental STM span like a bridge that can hold only so many cars. When the amount of information is greater than your "mental bridge" can assimilate or hold, the overloaded information falls into the river, much as a series of cars and trucks would if the bridge collapsed.

Additionally, under heavy demand and stress, your Short-Term Memory "short-circuits," and does not process facts quickly and accurately. When incoming facts scatter, they end up as disconnected "bits and pieces." Not seen and heard correctly, they are not understood or remembered. A disorganized mind becomes cluttered, confused, and poor reasoning and test taking ability results. You have to work twice as hard and three times as long to retain half as much. Scary? You bet.

When you develop scanning ability, have a flexible, Short-Term Memory, and can handle several thoughts or ideas simultaneously, you will experience something called Parallel or Contrapuntal-

Thinking*.* You'll quickly organize information, remember it, problem-solve, and out-think others when you have to.   Upcoming chapters offer self-empowerment games on how to scan and experience contrapuntal thought.

The HPT and mental toughness workouts will increase your Short-Term Memory Span and improve creative and critical thought processes because you will see all of the patterned pieces. The goal is to quickly absorb and remember what we see and hear to produce new ideas (creative thought), and to analyze issues (critical thought). You will find a "brain power" formula for quickly learning new information and thinking in layers.

You should also understand that within your own mindscape you can think creatively and analytically with equal proficiency is possible. Popular current literature encourages us to settle for our dominant learning style, [11] which in reality, we can have more than just one. Undoubtedly, it is not an "either or situation". Within the myriad of newly created learning styles, we can be both creative and analytical.

Trainers often apply creative techniques using color, rhythm, and music to teach courses such as mathematics. However, missing from this picture is creative pattern finding combined with analytical sequencing. Understanding pattern detection and sequencing management in upcoming chapters will explain how these skills are paramount to your personal performance. The combined ability to analyze and think creatively is necessary for both work and academic achievement.

Although you'll find that this training is remarkably effective, it's not a quick panacea like taking a smart pill. Your effort with *High Performance Thinking* training will give you the mental edge in your career, your home and social life, and removes personal limitations placed by yourself and others.

<u>The Pigeonhole Syndrome: Becoming Mired In The Wrong Place</u>

"*Pigeonholing,"* is condescendingly one-upping another person by placing them into a cultural,

social, or work niche. It often stems from a desire for control or power. This stereotyping relegates one to a derogatory position based on ability, personality, or appearance.

A person's social awareness and educational level is quickly apparent. Our bearing and actions introduce us. We are sized-up during employment interviews, or in business or social interactions. It can happen when we are casually window-shopping, or socially when being introduced at a party, or cheering at a football game.

We become pigeonholed by first and continuing impressions of how we appear, speak, and act. We cement our image. Someone correctly observed, "You have only one chance to make a good first impression."

Unfortunately, mind games can come into play. Rather than getting to know and respect you as a unique individual, it becomes a quick way for exclusion. Unaware of manipulation, we unknowingly become pigeonholed and the victims of those, consciously or subconsciously, seeking a social or business edge.

Once in control of us, it is hard to maintain a positive identity. Through this false start, you become hindered both socially and at work.   Finding yourself mired in a job with limited growth potential, you feel trapped. Labeled, you stay in a fixed state and the tag sticks like glue.

Pigeonholing can also include a nickname we do not like, but tolerate. Yet, in some locales, as part of the culture, unusual nicknames appear in a positive way. For example, many prominent people in an affluent East Coast location have friendly nicknames: Squeaky, Buzzy, Muffie, Boo, Bunny, Cracker, and Humpy. They enjoy their nicknames and use them professionally, offering a comfortable, sociable identity.

Sadly, thoughtless labeling can evolve into name-calling, or put-downs like "fatso", "snob", or "loser." Being the target of this abuse can be devastating to our psyche. Eventually, if not recognized,

derogatory labels erode our spirit. Subconsciously, we begin to believe what others think of us, becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. We must not allow demeaning labels to rob us of the self-confidence we need to move forward in life.

The sore realization is that pigeonholing occurs at any age -- not only as a youngster in early grade school, but as an adult on the job. Clearly, pigeonholing can occur repeatedly throughout our lives.

Recently, I was reminded that I had been the victim of the pigeonhole syndrome during my college years. I had delivered a public lecture near a university I attended as an undergraduate. A college girlfriend, whom I had not seen in years, approached me. She sarcastically commented, "I don't remember you being this sharp when you were in school."

She was right. I had not been a high performing student in college. I was slow to "pick up" information and retain it. Test taking was difficult for me. Without hesitation, I responded, "Isn't it wonderful that we can move forward and expand ourselves?" Taken back, she wondered, how later in life I was competent, and at-ease in a professional career. There should not be embarrassment in obtaining personal expansion. It is like having been given wings to fly.

It is important to realize that although you suffer from early pigeonholing, even to the extent of bullying, you do not have to remain trapped. Renewal is not an easy task. Few things that are worth having, come easily. Reflect why you are there, and how maximizing yourself helps you escape.

Be on guard, however. Once on your way to self-actualization, your friends can resent your new persona and sense of direction. If envious, they will give you little support and encouragement. They might even question your new mindset, because they lack the initiative and courage to move ahead. It will take your determination to stay on track, because change is difficult, and rejection is even worse.

Reaching Our Potential Through Mental Exercise: We Can All Advance

It is hard to admit our shortcomings and accept the need for change. In the process, we fear

exposure. Although we may recognize having a mental block when we try to understand difficult

material, we suppose that is just the way it happens. We know we can all benefit from memory and

critical thinking training, but must take the first step. What are our weak mental areas? How can we

find out what they are without embarrassment? How can we begin to change for the better?

Understanding Your Mental Capabilities

Obviously, good written and spoken communication skills require a certain level of intelligence.

We are born with our own unique profile of inherited mental capabilities, up to 80%. Improved

communication skill directly affects educational attainment, self-esteem, job success, income level and

social position.   Although we would like to think we can achieve fame and fortune like any celebrity, it's

not likely we will be that lucky.

Unfortunately, we often choose careers not matching our mental capabilities. We select careers

glamorized by the media, and especially those that embrace social status and high pay. Locked in

fantasy, we fail to consider what the job entails, and if we have the talent to be successful. Even if we

are ambitious with a strong work ethic, we need to match our mental talents with job requirements.

For example, those with low visual skills may decide to become hair stylists, architects, or

engineers; all occupations requiring high visual and spatial abilities. A person with poor numerical ability

may aspire to be a Certified Public Accountant, or someone with low listening skill may wind up in Tele-

marketing. Owning your own business might sound good, but you could lack the necessary

management and communication skills. We must make our career choice carefully; consider if it is a

good fit, and how much schooling or training is required to become qualified to enter it.

In the next chapter, we will read some success stories about actual people from the following

diverse groups. The stories reveal the frustration of having unidentified memory weaknesses, and

highlight the effect that improvement had on interfacing with the High Performance Workplace.

1. **Business and Industry Personnel** includes managers, executives, skilled and unskilled workers, professionals, and all others in the workforce desiring higher work proficiency.

Skilled and unskilled assembly workers need proficiency to compete in domestic and foreign labor markets.

Jeff, story # 1, a machinist in the aluminum industry, at age 38 began college coursework in business, received a promotion, and became a community leader.

2. **High school drop-outs** who want a second chance, and **college students** who want to read and think faster, comprehend better and improve their test taking ability.

Bill, story #2, was on the high school student council, class president, and a popular athlete. Had severe visual memory problems which stood as a barrier to entering his chosen field, physical therapy.

3. **Those reentering the work force, or making a mid-life career change** need to quickly learn new job skills and procedures. Older individuals must compete with adept younger workers, and prove they are equally capable.

Marilyn, story # 3, a 52 year-old woman with scattered work history, wanted to be self-supporting with more than occasional part-time employment.

4. **Homemakers** wanting to keep mentally fit and avoid the depression and let-down of aging. They need higher personal organizational ability for handling personal and social activities. Many women reenter the workforce while raising a family. Not having kept up their work skills, they often cannot find well-paying jobs. Women lead all minority groups in poverty levels.

Beth, a socialite, story #4, had poor visual memory and lacked self-confidence.

5. **Aging or health-impaired people** requiring rehabilitation therapy following strokes and other serious illnesses can benefit from mental exercise retraining.

6. **Immigrants and minorities** must bridge communication barriers so that they can assimilate into the workforce and become self-supporting.

7. **Athletes** eager to improve their spatial ability, timing, and sequencing ability to remember plays and signals when performing with visual and auditory interference.

8. **Actors, artists, musicians and dancers** need fluid, spontaneous thinking. Besides their dominantly creative characteristics, they must develop problem-solving, logic, and reasoning ability.

9. **Children** require excellent memory and critical thinking for math and science achievement. America's need to produce more scientists is an incentive to initiate mental fitness early on.

10.   **Gifted With Hidden Learning disabilities** have high potential for spontaneous and creative problem-solving. They may have underlying memory weaknesses, so their true capability is not recognized, and *future accomplishments diminish.*

11.   **Dyslexics, Attention Deficit Disorders, Learning Disabled, Developmentally Disabled, Behavior Disordered, and those with Speech and Language Disorders.** require remediation programs for inclusion into the regular education initiative (REI). Education Week reported that students left in special education classes had more grade failures, and often lacked basic skills. Furthermore, few obtain meaningful employment after high school. The drop-out rate is a high 52%. [15]

Sally, story #5, a 22 year old young adult with a hearing problem, was incorrectly classified as Developmentally Disabled. She achieved self-efficacy and independence.

Moving Forward: Improving Our Minds

It is easy for us to know what we *want*, but often we do not know what we *need* to achieve our goals. Unfortunately, weak memory and thinking abilities do not hurt like a toothache. They are more subtle. You feel frustrated and overwhelmed, like you're drowning.   With an infected tooth, your reaction is immediate. You rush to the dentist. In contrast, we do not physically *feel* blocked information pathways. We cope the best we can. Our stress and embattled self-confidence slowly wears us down.

Think of your mind like the engine of your car, the many parts interacting efficiently to develop power. If your car runs poorly, a tune-up or a part replacement will restore performance. Look at mental optimization the same way. If an under performing mind is reducing your personal efficiency, you can tune-up its weak areas through *High Performance Thinking.*

It will be fun finding out more about your own capabilities. No more *"whistling in the dark"* because you aren't performing as effectively as you could be. You may sense that you are on the road to High Performance proficiency, but are having trouble finding the direct route, and become lost. I will provide you with a map to find your mental superhighway to self-awareness and achievement. *You are the driver*.