

Excavating the Paths of Meaning, Renewal, and Empowerment

A Typology of Managerial High-Performance Myths

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Although myths have been comprehensively examined at a cultural or macro level in organizational studies, they have received little attention at an individual level of analysis. This article uses Campbell's "hero's journey" as an analogy for understanding managerial performance myths. The article begins with a review of the literature on individual myths and the hero's journey and then turns to an empirical exploration of managerial high-performance myths. A typology of managerial high-performance myths is derived from data on high-performance experiences. Each of the four myths assumes a different meaning structure. The findings suggest a model for the construction of individual meaning systems in organizations. They also provide important insights on empowerment, leadership, and high performance.

Mythologies are in fact the public dreams that move and shape societies; and conversely, one's own dreams are the little myths of the private gods, anti-gods, and guardian powers that are moving and shaping oneself: revelations of the actual fears, desires, aims, and values by which one's life is subliminally ordered. (Campbell, 1981, p. 128)

Stories are an important form of human expression (Boje, 1991). Since the beginning of time, in every known culture, stories have brought meaning and order to human experience (Campbell, 1968). The most basic human stories are myths (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976). In academic usage, the myth is a narrative ex-

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planation, a meaning system, or a worldview. It conveys values central to the individual or collectivity and communicates conventional wisdom about preferred practices and techniques (Rappaport, 1993). The myth represents "the core process of the organism or the organization, a process through which the organism maintains its identity and continually recreates itself" (McWhinney & Batista, 1988, p. 47).

In his seminal work on myth, Campbell (1968) described two distinct myth perspectives: a cultural and a psychological. In organizational studies, the importance of myth from a cultural perspective has been recognized (Bowles, 1989; Frost, Moore, Louis, Lundberg, & Martin, 1985; Martin, Feldman, Hatch, & Sitkin, 1983; Mitroff & Kilmann, 1976; Jelinek, Smircich, & Hirsch, 1983; Pondy, 1983). In contrast, the notion of myth at the individual or psychological level has not been considered comprehensively in organizational studies (see Mitroff, 1983, for an exception). Understanding individual myths is particularly critical today because cultural myths tend to lose their potency in times of organizational and societal turbulence. In times of uncertainty, individual myths are believed to surrogate cultural myths in creating meaning and guiding behavior. In more stable times, "all meaning was in the group while today all meaning is in the individual" (Campbell, 1968, p. 388). Clearly, a greater understanding of individual myths, particularly as they relate to organizational behavior, is warranted.

Responding to Mitroff's (1983) call for archetypal analysis in organizational behavior research, *the basic objective of this study is to identify a typology of managerial performance myths*. Performance myths are chosen because of the centrality of performance to the human psyche (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Maccoby, 1976). The article begins with a review of the relevant literature on individual myth and meaning making. Because we employ a rather unconventional data set to enable us to tap into managerial performance myths, we then turn to an in-depth description of individual high-performance patterns. In short, high-performance patterns represent the self-described sequence of actions that an individual follows to achieve episodes of personal high performance. They are unusual in that they look *within* the individual to identify episodes of high performance rather than *across* individuals. Because these high-performance patterns are *personal manifestations* of the self at its very best, they capture the essence of an individual myth. We then turn to a description of three studies that use samples of high-

performance patterns to generate a typology of managerial performance myths. From there, we return to Campbell's (1968) model of the hero's journey, originally described in the literature review, to help make sense of the myth typology. Finally, we suggest some provocative implications for theory and practice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Meaning of Myths

Mythology is the study of the search for human meaning. The process of myth making is known as the hero's journey. In his classic volume on myth, Campbell (1968) notes the universal presence and structure of the hero's journey (i.e., separation, initiation, and return). The hero's journey is the experience of separating oneself from the increasingly dull and disempowering status quo, initiating the engagement of uncertainty, constructing a new and more efficacious meaning-making system, and then returning self-empowered and empowering to others. In this way, the hero's journey involves confrontations with "fabulous forces," with "personal despair," and with "the dark walls of living death" (Campbell, 1968). These statements suggest that the hero's journey is primarily a social construction, a social product created and molded over time by the people of a culture. The hero's journey evolves over years to reflect the shared values and beliefs of a culture.

Individual Approaches to Myth

In this article, Campbell's culturally defined hero's journey is used as an analogy for making sense of individual myths. Our focus is on individual myths as they relate to performance because of the centrality of performance to the human psyche (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Maccoby, 1976). Individual myths by their very definition connote concerns of performance: quest and trial, struggle for survival, and ultimate victory (Bowles, 1989). In fact, Feinstein, Krippner, and Granger (1988) suggest that high-performance experiences are the essence of the individual myth. We draw on Campbell's (1968) hero's journey to emphasize that the individual myths we study are *not* the scripts of trivial, day-to-day life experiences. Instead, the individual-level myths are heroic because they represent the self at its best, during peak performance

(Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Such individual myths are integral to the *self-concept*, *individual identity*, and personalized *scripts and schemas* (Howard, 1991).

Similar to the hero's journey, Markus and Nurius (1986) argued that the myth of the best "possible self" is important in the development of the self-concept. The possible self is constructed creatively and selectively from an individual's past experiences. It organizes interpretations of experience, providing a framework for making sense of past behavior and providing the means-ends patterns for new behavior.

McAdams (1985) described the importance of myth in individual identity formulation and development:

[The] central proposition is that identity is a life story which individuals begin constructing, consciously or unconsciously, in late adolescence. The life story model of identity suggests how the personologist, or anyone else seeking to understand the whole person, may apprehend identity in narrative terms. Furthermore, the model suggests hypotheses about identity which can be tested in research, and less rigorously, in personal experience. (pp. 57-58)

Polkinghorne (1988) suggested that individuals "make [their] existence whole by understanding it as an expression of a single and developing story" (p. 150). Likewise, Cohler (1982) referred to individual myths as "the most internally consistent interpretation of presently understood past, experienced present and anticipated future" (p. 207). In each case, the individual's life story or myth is integral to personal identity because it makes sense of significant life experience, rather than more trivial day-to-day events.

Furthermore, individual myths provide cognitive maps or *scripts* for future action (MacIntyre, 1981). They enable individuals to commit themselves through cognitive and affective processes, to a particular pattern of activities (Bowles, 1989). In sum, as Feinstein et al. (1988) described:

Individual myths are inner models that interpret the past, explain the present, and provide guidance for the future in a manner parallel to the way cultural myths orient entire societies. [They] address the broad concerns of identity (Who am I?), direction (Where am I going?), and purpose (Why am I going there?). Typically, they operate outside our awareness, yet they have a powerful effect on our feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. They are influenced by our predispositions, our ongoing experiences, the models and messages provided by our culture, and the images that arise from our unconscious mind. (p. 29)

In sum, our focus is on one process of meaning making, the individual myth of the high-performing

self. This myth is of significance because it reflects the self at its best, is deeply ingrained in individual identity, and acts as a script for guiding future action. In spite of the prominence of myths and the hero's journey in the human experience, there is a dearth of theory and research on individual myths in the organizational studies literature. Responding to this void in the literature, this study seeks to develop a typology or set of archetypes of managerial myths that may serve as a framework for understanding and organizing individual myths in organizational contexts.

Before turning to the basic research question at hand, the next section explores the rather unconventional data and process used to tap into the essence of individual myths for the studies described later in the Methodology section of the article.

SETTING AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Perhaps the primary reason why little systematic research has been conducted on individual myths is the challenge of collecting and analyzing appropriate data on individual myths. As described above, the myth is a script of the self at its best as composed from stories of significant life experiences. Consequently, to study individual myths, it is necessary to draw on stories of meaningful life experiences and then create scripts of the processes that guide these experiences. To tap the essence of individual myths, a rather unconventional data set is employed for this research; we use individual high-performance patterns.

The Construction of a High-Performance Pattern

We used a methodology to help individuals create scripts of their journey to personal high performance to generate the data set (Fletcher, 1993). In an intensive 2-day workshop, individuals create their own personalized high-performance pattern. Actual examples of high-performance patterns are provided in Table 1. A typical high-performance pattern is a set of action statements in chronological order that reflects the individual's heroic journey to high performance. The patterns are systematic abstractions or scripts containing the essence but not the details of the original stories of personal episodes of high performance. In this way, the high-performance pattern manifests the

Table 1
Four Examples of High-Performance Patterns

<p>Pattern A: Cluster 1</p> <p>Stage 1: Context</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I get intrigued by a situation that will allow me to establish personal satisfaction and where I can help the company. <p>Stage 2: Initiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. I "apprentice" myself to the best people I can find and learn anything I need to know. 3. I establish personal-satisfaction goals, as opposed to having imposed goals, which allow me to satisfy myself. 4. I avoid establishing interim time and performance benchmarks to view the big picture. <p>Stage 3: Progression</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. I trust in, and allow, my instincts to guide and govern my activities. 6. I listen to the needs and concerns of my clients so they understand what I am doing for them and feel I am on their side. 7. I do not have formal plans or set routines of ways to perform but let instinctual satisfaction prevail. <p>Stage 4: Conclusion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. I judge my involvement to be over when I can personally answer, Will the world be better for it? 9. Many, as opposed to few, benefit from the project. 	<p>Pattern C: Cluster 3</p> <p>Stage 1: Context</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I take on a new project which is important, has high visibility, and requires a high level of energy. <p>Stage 2: Initiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. I plunge right into the project, taking control and responsibility, and developing a vision. 3. I form a team of experts to begin brainstorming on how to implement my plan. 4. I decide whose buy-in I need, present the problem and proposed solution to them, and receive their buy-in through persuasion. <p>Stage 3: Progression</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. I identify and eliminate barriers by attacking them head-on. 6. I direct and orchestrate my team to achieve each goal. 7. I organize feedback sessions to help individuals achieve their goals. <p>Stage 4: Conclusion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. I turn over an activity to others as soon as it is working, documented, and running smoothly.
<p>Pattern B: Cluster 2</p> <p>Stage 1: Context</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I take on a responsibility with a significant obligation to achieve an important result for a higher authority. <p>Stage 2: Initiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. I define the problem by breaking it down into components and then evaluate ways of achieving each. 3. I establish a plan by myself to accomplish desired goals. 4. I establish personal objectives that will achieve the desired plan through my value system. <p>Stage 3: Progression</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. I begin a careful implementation of my plan by testing each piece. 6. I assess whether I am on track through careful evaluation and consultation with others. 7. I involve high levels in the organization to apprise them of progress and obtain their help in removing obstacles. 8. I evaluate the results of my work and, if necessary, clarify them and redirect my efforts. <p>Stage 4: Conclusion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. I receive commendations for my work. 	<p>Pattern D: Cluster 4</p> <p>Stage 1: Context</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I see an opportunity to do something that fits my value system and will help others. <p>Stage 2: Initiation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. I put together a high risk, "one-of-a-kind" approach and then develop an overarching vision for the project. 3. I attract a diverse group of the most highly competent people there are and get them turned on to helping me. 4. I don't become overly wedded to my vision, staying open to alternatives. <p>Stage 3: Progression</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. I commit myself totally so there is no way out but through; I make sure I can't go back. 6. I organize everything within tight time lines to come together with precise timing. 7. I work directly with my people, turning them on to their own possibilities for doing the work. 8. I treat unexpected obstacles as a game, finding fun strategies to overcome each one and not becoming "grim." <p>Stage 4: Conclusion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. I listen carefully to make sure I have provided my clients with something they see as a real value.

hero's journey and serves as a useful data source for exploring individual myths.

In the creation of the high-performance pattern, a number of assumptions are conveyed to the workshop participants by the workshop facilitator: (a) Every competent person experiences episodes of outstanding performance; (b) each person has a unique way of achieving outstanding performance; and (c) although

few people are aware of their unique high-performance pattern, the pattern can be moved from the implicit to the explicit realm and thus becomes a tool for further increasing the frequency of high-performance episodes (Fletcher, 1993).

The process of generating a high-performance pattern involves a number of steps (Fletcher, 1993). First, using a process similar to "critical incidence recall,"

participants are asked to recall three personal stories that describe significant experiences of high performance (where high performance is personally defined). The stories are usually distributed across work, family, hobbies, volunteer activities, and so forth and reflect episodes of intense personal challenge where the individual worked to overcome significant obstacles, crisis, and failure. Typically, the stories describe times of deep personal courage, change, and growth, rather than mundane everyday occurrences. The following story is representative of the stories told:

I was 29. I had only recently come to work for an electronics company. One of my first big responsibilities was designing and running a management training program in Europe. I badly wanted to do a good job, as it was my first chance to show what I could do, although it seemed way beyond my experience. I identified the topics to be covered and developed, I made sure each piece of the program was good, I put all the pieces together, and I pilot tested the whole program twice in the United States. From that, I gained some confidence that it was a good program.

But I was still terrified. They were flying me to Belgium, flying in managers from all over the continent. I had not spent enough time in Europe to understand how management worked there. I was intrigued by how European management worked, but I wasn't at all certain that ideas that worked in the United States would be effective overseas.

I remember spending the day before the training asking questions of everyone, hoping to get a handle on the nature of management in Europe and how it differed from ours in the United States. I fell asleep playing the seminar over and over in my mind, and I got up during the night to check and recheck everything in the training room. They next day the seminar went beautifully. It was like a dance for 3 days. I was able to accomplish much more than I ever thought. The managers responded well, I was asked to come back, and afterwards I was on an incredible high. In the years since, I have taken every chance to talk to people from the seminar just to see whether the concepts were really helpful. At one point I almost went to Europe to work for 6 months, so I could understand how business there works.

As shown in the above story, the individual describes his or her stories, with as much detail as possible, including such issues as how the person got involved, how the person related to others, what outside pressures were present, how the person prepared, how opposition was experienced, what rewards were involved, and how the episode ended.

Second, the participant analyzes across his or her stories for common elements. These may include en-

vironmental conditions, actions, internal feelings, and relationships. Through this process, much of the drama is abstracted out of the original stories, leaving a more general skeleton. The individual then begins to write a high-performance pattern that encompasses the common elements derived above. Individuals are encouraged to (a) use simple descriptions, (b) use the first person, (c) describe action steps, (d) use positive terms, and (e) provide a level of detail that describes what is unique to the individual. Because all stories are temporally ordered, with a beginning, middle, and end (Labov, 1972, p. 362), the individual is also instructed to write the pattern in chronological form. To keep the process manageable, the pattern is structured into four distinct, sequential stages:

1. What gets you interested in the particular activity in the first place? (i.e., *context*)
2. What do you do to get the activity initiated? (i.e., *initiation*)
3. What do you do to keep the activity progressing forward? (i.e., *progression*)
4. How does the activity come to an end? (i.e., *conclusion*)

High-Performance Patterns as Myth Data

On one hand, high-performance patterns are an interesting data source because they produce rich, qualitative statements that are grounded in individual experience. Mitroff and Kilmann (1976) found similar qualitative statements to be an excellent source for uncovering the implicit action theories of managers. The high-performance pattern provides the closest approximation we can find to data on individual myths and the hero's journey.

On the other hand, some questions can be raised about the patterns as a source of data for systematic research. For example, what about the problem of self-definition? There is a lack of objectivity in the definition of high-performance episodes. What is "high performance"? A very ordinary performer may describe episodes believed to have reflected high performance, yet an objective observer would consider that same performance quite ordinary or even less than ordinary. What about content? The high-performance patterns are a mix of behaviors, cognitions, feelings, constraints, and outcomes. Finally, what about the problem of retrospective rationalization? It can be argued that the individuals are simply surfacing their implicit theories. Because one believed a particular event was successful, the person may have been in-

clined to believe that certain feelings and actions must therefore have been involved.

Ordinarily, these problems would suggest that these patterns are not the “stuff” of science. We suggest, however, that this conclusion may be premature. The high-performance patterns may indeed be retrospective reconstructions but may encompass the process of self-archeology, a term coined by King (1990). King uses myth to aid people in discovering “for themselves something of who they are, what matters to them, and what it means to them to be a human being” (p. 69). She believes that each individual has a personal framework of reality and that only the psyche knows the story of that reality. The challenge is to help people gain access to their stories.

In a similar sense, high-performance patterns may help individuals to “remythologize” (McWhinney & Batista, 1988). Remythologizing is the process of recapturing prior sources of energy by bringing to the conscious original ideals and tales of events that help to establish identity. Interpreting the original ideals and myths in terms of the present reconnects people with past energy and gives a new strategic orientation. Remythologizing allows old behaviors to be discarded while adopting new strategies that still draw on the original worldview. Identification with a living myth helps an individual or group to know what is “natural to itself and what is foreign.”

Notions of remythologizing are also consistent with Weick’s (1990) work on renewal and Bartunek’s (1988) work on reframing. Weick describes the process of renewal as one of becoming reunited or reconnected with past energy and truth through the reviewing of past history in light of the present context. In this way, Weick sees renewal as a dialectic that acts simultaneously on past and present to create the future (Weick, 1990). Bartunek (1988) suggested similar outcomes associated with reframing.

The process of creating an individual high-performance pattern implicitly captures notions such as the archeology of the self, remythologizing, and the hero’s journey. The generation of high-performance patterns provides individuals an opportunity to describe themselves in their most idealized, heroic state. According to Pearson (1989), providing people the opportunity to tell such stories helps them to uncover their personal myth and the related skills they are trying to master. Although these data may not be the ordinary “stuff” of science, they may be quite ideal for the purposes of this study. Because we focus on myth, the accuracy of the high-performance pattern is not as

important as the belief it represents. Because they are retrospective rationalizations, we expect the high-performance patterns to reflect and surface deeply held implicit theories or meaning systems of individuals, their beliefs about the nature of the world, and how they relate to it. As with all stories and myths, the patterns contain the rich mix of elements that reflect human meaning and allow the reader to understand and relate to the story as a complete narrative. Moreover, because the patterns describe times of deep personal courage, change, and growth and tend to reflect episodes of intense personal challenge where the individual worked to overcome significant obstacles, crisis, and failure, they capture the essence of the hero’s journey. Thus we suggest that high-performance patterns provide a useful data set for studying myths and the hero’s journey at an individual level of analysis.

METHODOLOGY

As mentioned in the introduction, the objective of this article is to develop a typology of individual performance myths. The analyses to achieve these ends are divided into three discrete studies. The three studies, each exploratory in nature, are outlined in Table 2. The basic logic across the studies is to develop quantitative measures from the qualitative data to empirically create a typology of individual high-performance myths. More specifically, the purpose of the first two studies is to develop parsimonious and valid quantitative measures of basic themes of performance myths from the qualitative data. These quantitative measures can then be used in the development and validation of the typology in the final study. The first study seeks to identify content categories within the high-performance patterns through content analysis. The second study seeks to construct valid and reliable scales from the content categories, generated in Study 1, into reliable scales. Using the scales developed in Study 2, the third study employs cluster analysis to identify and develop a typology of performance myths. Each of the studies is described below.

Study 1: Identification of High-Performance Content Categories

Purpose. The high-performance patterns lend themselves to both qualitative and quantitative analysis because they are written in script form (Abelson,

Table 2
 Outline of the Three Studies

Study 1

Purpose: To identify content categories across the high-performance patterns

Sample: 110 randomly selected high-performance patterns

Analysis: Q-sort by two independent raters to identify content categories

Outcome: 62 content categories across the four stages

Study 2

Purpose: To increase parsimony and obtain reliable and parsimonious measures for Study 3

Sample: 87 high-performance patterns from public utility managers

Analysis: Two steps: (a) Using an 5-point Likert-type scale, five coders evaluated the 87 patterns on the content categories generated in Study 1 and (b) exploratory factor analyses conducted for each of the four stages to help reduce the categories into reliable scales

Outcome: Eight factors with adequate reliability and validity

Study 3

Purpose: To identify types of managerial performance myths

Sample: Same as Study 2

Analysis: Two steps: (a) conduct cluster analysis of the 87 cases on the eight factors identified in Study 2 and (b) conduct one-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) and mean difference tests for each of the eight factors across the four myth types for descriptive purposes

Outcome: Four managerial performance myths

1976). In this study, a Q-sort is used to content analyze a set of 110 high-performance patterns and to identify basic content categories or themes (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1984) of high performance. The categories are then used in the quantitative analyses in the subsequent studies in this article.

Sample. To establish an initial set of categories, 110 high-performance patterns, containing well over a thousand statements, were randomly selected from previous participants in high-performance workshops. Review Table 1 for examples of such patterns. To maximize the diversity of categories from the content analysis at this preliminary stage of research, the patterns of all professionals were included. The objective was to err in favor of overinclusion in the first step of category construction, relying on Study 2 to exclude inappropriate categories and those without adequate reliability.

Analysis. A Q-sort (Stephenson, 1953) by two independent coders (two of this article's authors) was used to identify content categories. An unstructured Q-sort was employed for this task; that is, no underlying variables or factors were theoretically specified a priori. In addition, no maximum or minimum number of categories was predetermined. As described earlier, the high-performance patterns are structured chronologically with respect to four stages. Individual action statements in the patterns were divided into each of the four stages and then randomized. Individual ac-

tion statements, classified into each of the four stages, are illustrated in the sample high-performance patterns provided in Table 1. For example, in Pattern A, Stage 1, a single action statement exists: "I get intrigued by a situation that will allow me to establish personal satisfaction and where I can help the company." A separate Q-sort was conducted on all of the individual action statements in each of the four stages (i.e., four separate Q-sorts were performed, one on the individual action statements in each stage of the high-performance patterns).

Each coder grouped the statements in terms of similarity of content. Then, the two coders came together to integrate their groupings. Whenever a majority of items in a group overlapped with the same items in a group generated by the other coder, a category was created. For example, in the first stage, each of the two coders independently created a grouping of similar items related to a personal need for intrinsic satisfaction; thus, a content category "experience intrinsic satisfaction" was created. The intercoder reliability was .72. In the few cases where there was not agreement, the two coders discussed the validity of the category. Unless there was complete agreement on the formation of a category, it was dropped from the analysis.

Results. This process resulted in the creation of 62 content categories across the four stages (see appendix). These content categories are the basic themes of high performance represented in the sample of 110 high-performance patterns. They are the primary be-

haviors, cognitions, feelings, constraints, and outcomes encompassed in people's perceptions of their own high-performance experiences. As seen in the appendix, each content category takes the form of a general concept followed by two illustrative sentences or phrases. For example, in Stage 1 (i.e., context), one category is labeled *experience intrinsic satisfaction*. This general concept is then followed by two illustrative sentences: "The task is something I believe in" and "I do work that really matters to me."

The first stage, "context," contains 14 categories that describe how or why the person became involved in the high-performance episode. The categories in Stage 1 include such things as responding to needs, feeling challenged, and obtaining rewards. The second stage, "initiation," also contains 14 categories that reflect issues of initiation, including initial assessment and analysis, planning steps, self-empowerment, and the involvement of others. The third stage, "progress," contains 18 categories that reflect such issues as organization, authority, leadership, resources, feedback, resistance, change, and maintenance of energy and effort. Finally, the fourth stage, "closure," contains 16 categories reflecting such issues as presentation, implementation, impact, evaluation, rewards, and future plans.

Conclusion. The categories derived from the content analyses reflect the many and varied ways in which individuals initiate, progress, and obtain closure to an activity. The 62 content categories represent the most basic themes of high-performance experiences. They reflect the rich composition of the patterns in terms of behaviors, cognitions, feelings, constraints, and outcomes. The diversity of content categories suggests that high-performance experiences are highly complex and reflect individual differences. The items in the appendix provide a diverse set of measures for analyzing high-performance episodes. Nevertheless, because the categories were generated from a qualitative analysis, we have no evidence of their reliability. Before further quantitative analyses can be conducted, the reliability of the content categories must be assessed. This is the task of Study 2.

Study 2: Scale Construction From the Content Categories

Purpose. In moving toward the creation of a typology of high-performance myths, it is necessary to

identify a parsimonious set of high-performance themes and reliable measures of those themes. The purpose of this study is to construct reliable scales from the content categories generated in Study 1 that can be used in additional quantitative analyses leading to the establishment of a myth typology.

Sample. A new sample of individual high-performance patterns was used in Study 2. These patterns were obtained from 87 participants in a 2-day workshop that was part of a monthlong executive education course at a midwestern university during 1989. The participants were senior managers from a diverse set of organizations and functions within the public utility industry. Sixty-nine percent of the participants were in middle or upper management positions, and 60% had been promoted once or twice over the past 5 years. Over 90% of the participants were male, and 70% were between 30 and 56 years of age. All had completed high school, more than 35% had a bachelor of arts degree, and 25% had a master's degree.

Analyses: Developing quantitative measures. To generate reliable scales for further analysis, quantitative measures of the content categories needed to be developed. Five coders (advanced graduate students) were trained to code the new sample of high-performance patterns with respect to the content categories generated in Study 1. First, the patterns were divided into the four stages for narrative analysis (i.e. context, initiation, progression, conclusion). Then, using a 5-point Likert-type scale, a judgment was made for each content category generated in Study 1, indicating the level of agreement or disagreement that that content category was represented in that specific stage of the examined pattern. For example, in the coding of Pattern A in Table 1, the coder made a judgment (using the 5-point Likert-type scale) regarding the degree to which the first category "Respond to Felt Needs" was evident or not evident in the statements making up Stage 1 of Pattern A. Each coder judged each pattern on the 62 different content categories described in the appendix. The average interrater reliability was acceptable at .73 (Nunnally, 1978). One category with an interrater reliability below .50 was dropped from the analysis. Because interrater reliability across the coders was adequate, the mean score for each category (across the five coders) on each pattern was computed. These mean scores then served as the quantitative

measure of each content category in the analyses described below.

Analyses: Factor analyses. To identify the underlying structure of the content categories, factor analyses were employed. To retain the inherent structure of narrative analysis and to keep the analysis manageable, an exploratory principal factor analysis was conducted for each of the four stages. A varimax rotation was employed, and the eigenvalue criterion was used to determine the appropriate number of factors to retain. The ratios of items to cases for the four factor analyses were adequate at 14:87, 14:87, 18:87, and 15:87, respectively.

Results. Using the eigenvalue criteria, the results of the factor analyses suggested that three factors exist in each of Stages 1, 2, and 3. The Stage 4 factor analysis suggests the existence of two factors. Some content categories were excluded from further analysis if they did not load strongly any of the factors, indicating a lack of relevance in the managerial sample of Study 2. Other content categories were excluded from further analysis if they cross-loaded on more than one factor. The item loadings, eigenvalues, variance explained, and Cronbach's alpha scores for each of the factors retained are displayed in Table 3. Cronbach's alpha scores were calculated for each factor. The third factor in Stages 1 and 3 and the second factor in Stage 4 were excluded from further analysis because of low reliabilities. Thus eight factors across the four stages were retained for further analyses. Scales representing each factor were created by taking the mean of its respective items. Although two of the reliabilities are fairly low, they are clearly within the range specified by Nunnally (1978) for exploratory analyses.

Each of the factors is briefly described below. The first factor in Stage 1 may be defined as a focus on extrinsic rewards, emphasizing obtaining external rather than intrinsic rewards and demonstrating personal competence. The second factor in Stage 1 may be characterized as a service orientation where the dominant values are helping others and establishing meaningful relationships. The first factor in Stage 2 may be defined as establishing interdependence with others, emphasizing a participative climate, teamwork, and openness. The second factor in Stage 2 may be characterized as an intense focus, emphasizing taking responsibility and exercising direction and de-emphasizing reflection and perspective. The third

factor in Stage 2 may be defined as planning and organizing, emphasizing structure, vision development, and analysis. The first factor in Stage 3 may be characterized as trusting others, emphasizing group commitment, cohesive relationships, and feedback. The second factor in Stage 3 may be defined as a structured orientation, emphasizing schedules, short-term outcomes, and direction. Finally, the single factor in Stage 4 may be characterized as task disengagement, emphasizing moving on to a new project.

The correlations among the eight factor scales are shown in Table 4. The correlations were generally quite low, suggesting that unique themes arise at each stage. The one exception is the relationship between Scales 3 (i.e., establish interdependence) and 6 (i.e., trust others); correlation = .69. This high correlation suggests that, if individuals establish interdependence in "initiating" activities, they will be likely to trust others in "progressing" activities of high-performance episodes. A supplementary factor analysis of the items making up Factors 3 and 6 suggests that the factors were indeed distinct from one another (i.e., two factors emerged).

Conclusion. In this study, it has been shown that a parsimonious set of eight scales can be constructed from the content categories generated in Study 1. Given their reliability, these scales can then serve as a diverse set of measures appropriate for further quantitative analysis of the performance myths. The eight factors identified here represent the basic themes through which individuals may find meaning in high-performance experiences. These factors may provide a foundation on which a general set of performance myths might be generated. The factors will be used in the following study to identify and describe a general typology of performance myths.

Study 3: Identification of Archetypes of Individual Performance Myths

Purpose. The first two studies serve as the background necessary for achieving the primary goal of this article—that is, the creation of a myth typology. Although the patterns themselves are assumed to reflect the unique, deeply held, implicit theories of individuals, we believe a typology of performance myths can be generated from a large number of high-performance patterns. Using the new scales derived from the factor analyses in Study 2, a cluster analysis

Table 3
Factors Remaining in the Analysis

Factor	Eigenvalue	Variance Explained	Alpha Score
Stage 1: Context			
A. Extrinsic rewards	2.19	.31	.70
1. Obtain external rewards (.83) ^a			
2. Demonstrate competence (.82)			
3. Experience intrinsic satisfaction (-.66)			
B. High-service orientation	1.17	.24	.67
1. Establish meaningful relationships (.77)			
2. Help others (.78)			
3. Be invited in, valued (.80)			
Stage 2: Initiation			
A. Establish interdependence	2.93	.24	.84
1. Establish a participative climate (.93)			
2. Assemble a workgroup or team (.85)			
3. Remain open to alternatives (.59)			
4. Establish individual autonomy (-.86)			
B. Intense focus	2.76	.23	.78
1. Become intensely focused (.81)			
2. Take responsibility (.81)			
3. Exercise direction (.66)			
4. Become reflective, get perspective (-.83)			
C. Planning and organizing	1.99	.17	.60
1. Plan, organize, and structure things (.78)			
2. Develop a vision (.57)			
3. Analyze existing systems (.42)			
4. Learn by doing (-.79)			
Stage 3: Progression			
A. Trust others	3.79	.38	.87
1. Elicit participation-group commitment (.87)			
2. Nurture cohesive relationships (.81)			
3. Trust others to perform (.78)			
4. Remain open to feedback (.62)			
5. Work independently (-.88)			
B. Structured orientation	2.59	.26	.77
1. Stick to set schedules (.88)			
2. Maintain intense effort (.60)			
3. Focus on short-term outcomes (.63)			
4. Provide clear direction (.56)			
5. Allow for flexibility (-.86)			
Stage 4: Conclusion			
A. Disengagement	3.06	.44	.88
1. Turn project over to others (.93)			
2. Exit with an organization in place (.92)			
3. Move on to a new challenge (.59)			
4. Continue commitment to activity (-.94)			

a. Item loadings on each factor.

is employed to generate a set of general performance myths. Then, a separate one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is conducted for each of the eight factors across the archetypes generated in the cluster analysis. This analysis is employed to aid in the description of the clusters. A similar set of analyses were employed by Miller and Friesen (1980), who developed a typology

of organizational transitions, and by Kipnis and Schmidt (1988), who developed a typology of upward influence styles. The same sample used in Study 2 is used in this study.

Analyses. Cluster analysis and one-way ANOVAs make up the analyses in Study 3.

Table 4
Pearson Correlations Among the Eight Factors

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Extrinsic rewards	—	-.14	-.02	.10	.16	.09	-.02	.07
2. High-service orientation		—	.27**	-.10	-.22*	.29**	-.06	.24*
3. Establish interdependence			—	.04	-.10	.69***	.01	.19*
4. Intense focus				—	.19*	.11	.36***	-.04
5. Planning and organizing					—	-.08	.16	-.13
6. Trust others						—	-.10	.31**
7. Structured orientation							—	-.15
8. Disengagement								—

*p = .05; **p = .01; ***p = .001.

Cluster analysis. Using the eight scales in Table 3, the 87 high-performance patterns were cluster analyzed. Cluster analysis is a technique for grouping cases in terms of common content. Unfortunately, there is no objective method for determining the optimal number of clusters for any data set (Hambrick, 1984). Optimally, a cluster solution should provide highly distinct, meaningful clusters that have a moderate percentage of total cases in each cluster. Initial clusters were classified according to Ward's method of cluster analysis (Ward, 1963) in the SPSSX CLUSTER procedure. Ward's procedure provides an index of the "cost" of further reducing the number of clusters in terms of the increases in the pooled within-group sum of squares. "When further clustering produces a discontinuity in the plot of the sum of squares versus the number of patterns, dissimilar groups are being combined and hierarchical clustering is terminated" (Joyce & Slocum, 1984, p. 728). The data were standardized prior to analysis.

ANOVAs. A series of one-way ANOVAs of the eight factor scales developed in Study 2 across the four clusters of performance myths with mean difference tests was used to determine if differences existed across the myth clusters.

Results and discussion. In the cluster analysis, the "cost" index suggested that the four-cluster solution was optimal. The breakout of the four clusters is diagrammed in Figure 1. The *t* tests indicate which factors were most significantly different in each of the cluster breakouts. The size of the clusters ranged from 40 to 7 cases.

To describe the four clusters of myths, the results of the ANOVAs are examined (see Table 5). Figure 2 provides profiles of the four clusters across the eight

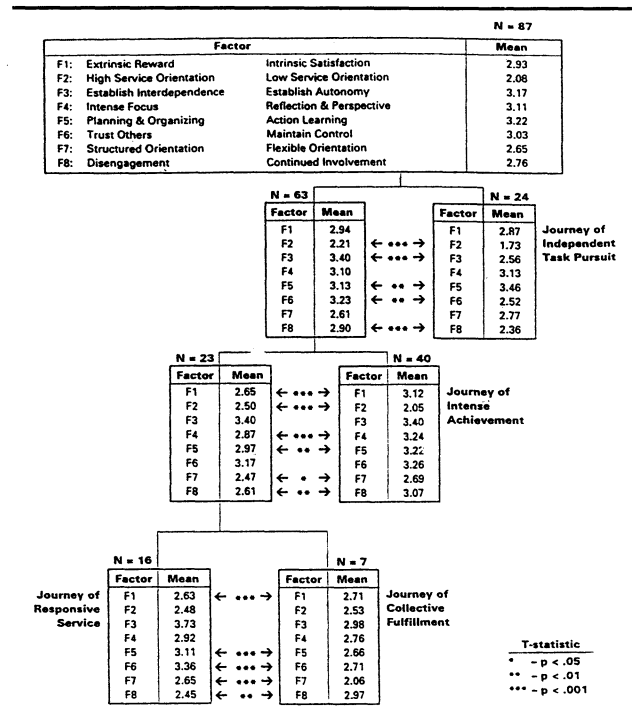


Figure 1: Results of the Cluster Analysis and analyses of variance (ANOVAs).

scales. Standardized scores are used to facilitate interpretation, and Scheffé difference testing is used to ascertain significant differences in cluster means. All *F* statistics were statistically significant at at least the .01 level. These significant differences suggest that the four clusters are indeed distinct from each other. In addition, in a discriminant analysis of the four clusters across the eight factor scales used in the cluster analysis, 93% of the cases were correctly classified (results available from the authors). This discriminant analysis provides additional evidence of the validity of the classification of the cases in the cluster procedure. Using the results of the mean difference tests, each of the myth clusters is described below. Drawing from

Table 5
One-way ANOVA Results of the Eight Factors Across the Four Clusters

Factor	Cluster Means				F
	1	2	3	4	
Stage 1					
A. Extrinsic rewards	-.46	-.11	.40	-.62	5.66*
	1 # 2 3 #				
B. High-service orientation	.95	-.74	-.06	.86	15.97**
	1 # # 2 # # 3 #				
Stage 2					
A. Establish interdependence	-.78	-.93	.35	.86	27.07**
	1 # # 2 # # 3				
B. Intense focus	-1.04	.04	.38	-.57	7.72***
	1 # 2 3 #				
C. Planning and organizing	-1.47	.62	.00	-.30	11.91**
	1 # # # 2 # # 3				
Stage 3					
A. Trust others	-.58	-.93	.42	.60	20.07**
	1 # # 2 # # 3				
B. Structured orientation	-1.43	.27	.09	-.01	6.47**
	1 # # # 2 3				
Stage 4					
A. Disengagement	.38	-.66	.55	-.56	13.80**
	1 # 2 # 3 #				
Cases per cluster	7	24	40	16	
Label	Service	Task Pursuit	Achievement	Fulfillment	

Note: # indicates Scheffé difference test significant at at least the .05 level.
* $p = .01$; ** $p = .001$.

the descriptions of the clusters, a label is also provided for each cluster. The most central case from each cluster is also provided in Table 1.

Cluster 1. Individuals in Cluster 1 score significantly high on a single factor, the High Service Orientation factor ($M = .95$). This high score suggests that these

individuals tend to be drawn to situations where they can help others, build meaningful relationships, and be valued. These individuals score significantly low on three factors—Intense Focus ($M = -1.04$), Planning and Organizing ($M = -1.47$), and Structured Orientation ($M = -1.43$). These low scores suggest that these

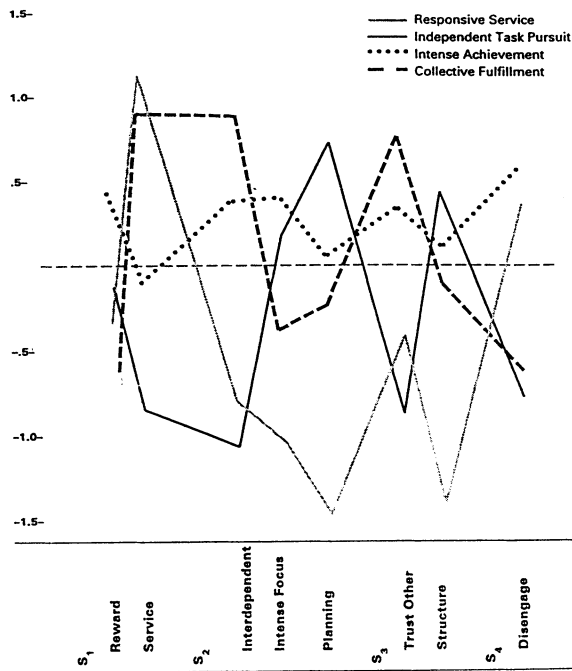


Figure 2: Profiles of the four clusters.

individuals tend to be more reflective than focused, tend to learn by doing rather than by analyzing, and tend to be more flexible than structured. In addition, individuals in Cluster 1 have the second lowest scores (after individuals in Cluster 2) on the factor Establish Interdependence ($M = -.78$). This low score suggests that these individuals, although they tend to have a general interest in helping others, prefer to be relatively autonomous in actual activity. In fact, individuals in this cluster tend to be relatively disengaged from activity in general; they score below the overall sample mean on six of the eight factors (exceptions are a Service Orientation and Disengagement). Individuals in Cluster 1 represent 8% of the sample.

The most central case in this cluster can be seen by returning to Table 1, Pattern A. Notice that this person seeks a situation that will allow the person "to help the company." The person becomes an "apprentice," maintains internally driven goals, avoids external time structures, relies on instincts, listens carefully so as to best serve the client, avoids plans and routines, and ends knowing that "the world is a better place," and the "many as opposed to the few benefit."

From the statistical analysis and a reading of the patterns that fall into this cluster, the myth begins to crystallize. The journey begins with the idealistic search for service to others. If a high-performance

experience is to unfold, the individual must have opportunities to engage in reflective, action learning. A situation must be created where planning, structure, and intensity can be minimized. The individual must be able to maintain flexibility and openness so the voice of intuition can be heard and followed. The journey is fulfilled when the task is successfully completed and the world has been made better. In the end, it is the idealistic outcomes that are valued, not the relationships or products that have been generated. The traveler then moves on to other opportunities for service. Because of the emphasis on responsiveness and service, this myth is labeled the *Journey of Responsive Service*.

Cluster 2. Individuals in Cluster 2 score significantly high on two factors—Planning and Organizing ($M = .62$) and a Structured Orientation ($M = .27$). These high scores suggest that these individuals tend to be highly analytical with a strong focus on planning and scheduling. They tend to prefer to be clearly directed and maintain intense effort. Individuals in Cluster 2 score significantly low on four factors—Service Orientation ($M = -.74$), Interdependence ($M = -.93$), Trust Others ($M = -.93$), and Disengagement ($M = -.66$). These four low scores suggest that these individuals have a strong tendency not to be relationship oriented, preferring to work independently rather than in a team. Moreover, these individuals tend to be relatively closed to feedback. In addition, these individuals tend to continue their commitment to a given activity rather than moving on to new projects and activities. Individuals in Cluster 2 represent almost 28% of the sample.

The most central case in this cluster can be seen by returning to Table 1, Pattern B. Notice that in this case the journey begins within a hierarchical context as the person seeks a "result for a higher authority." The problem is then generated, not by a group but by the individual. The objectives and values are also highly individualized. Progress is characterized by careful implementation and testing of each piece of the plan. Assessment continues through careful evaluation and consultation. Attention is also paid to authority relations, and evaluation and clarification continues.

From the statistical analysis and a reading of the patterns that fall into this cluster, the myth begins to crystallize. This journey begins with the definition or assignment of a specific task rather than idealistic service to others. If a high-performance experience is to unfold, the individual must be able to organize in a careful, analytic way. Objectives must be clarified;

plans and schedules must be set. Furthermore, the individual must be able to work alone. Isolation frees the individual from the complexities of interdependence and allows for intense individual effort that is free from external feedback. The journey is fulfilled when the task is successfully completed. The individual tends to continue to identify with the overall type of individual activity and tends not to separate from the activity. Because of the strong emphasis on independence, analysis, and structure, this myth is labeled the *Journey of Independent Task Pursuit*.

Cluster 3. Individuals in Cluster 3 score significantly high on three factors: Extrinsic Rewards ($M = .40$), Intense Focus ($M = .38$), and Disengagement ($M = .55$). These findings suggest that these individuals are oriented toward proving their worth to obtain extrinsic rewards. Rather than being reflective, they tend to take responsibility for, and exercise direction over, a given activity. Moreover, these findings suggest that these individuals tend to be relatively transient, moving on to new activities as they are needed. Unlike the other clusters, these individuals do not score significantly low on any of the factors. In fact, they score above the overall sample mean on every factor with the exception of the Service Orientation factor, which is just below the mean ($M = -.06$). Individuals in Cluster 3 represent almost 46% of the sample.

The most central case in this cluster can be seen by returning to Table 1, Pattern C. Notice that in this specific case, the person takes on a project "which is important, has high visibility, and requires a high level of energy." The person then indicates, "I plunge right in, taking control and responsibility and developing a vision." The concern for implementation follows immediately. "Buy-in" is then obtained through persuasion. Barriers are eliminated by "attacking them head-on." The team is "directed" to "achieve each goal." Individuals are helped to achieve their goals. The activity is turned over to another, "as soon as it is working, documented, and running smoothly."

From the statistical analysis and a reading of the patterns that fall into this cluster, the myth begins to crystallize. This journey begins with a challenge to demonstrate personal worth and to obtain external rewards and recognition. As the high-performance experience, this individual takes charge of a group or organization, providing vision and direction. There is constant emphasis on the achievement of goals, and little time is devoted to reflection. Instead, an action orientation is adopted, and an intense focus is maintained as barriers are overcome. The journey is fulfilled

when the outcome is achieved and recognition is given. The high scores on extrinsic rewards, intense focus, and disengagement suggest a high-achievement orientation. Hence it is titled the *Journey of Intense Achievement*.

Cluster 4. Individuals in Cluster 4 score significantly high on three factors: Service Orientation ($M = .86$), Establish Interdependence ($M = .86$), and Trust Others ($M = .60$). These high scores suggest that these individuals tend to be very relationship oriented. They tend to work in groups or teams rather than alone, nurturing cohesion, eliciting participation, and trusting others to perform. In addition, these individuals tend to be open to alternatives and feedback. Individuals in Cluster 4 score significantly low on two factors: Extrinsic Rewards ($M = -.62$) and Disengagement ($M = -.56$). These low scores suggest that these individuals tend to be more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated, and they tend to stay committed to a given project for the long term. Individuals in Cluster 4 represent 18% of the sample.

The most central case in this cluster can be seen by returning to Table 2, Pattern D. Notice that in this case, the person sees an opportunity that fits "my internal value system and will help others." A unique vision is developed. A group is attracted and "turned on" to the project. New alternatives are acceptable. Deep commitment is followed by organizing processes. However, intimacy with the people is maintained as this person works to turn "them on to their own possibilities for doing the work." Emerging obstacles are met with a positive attitude. Client satisfaction and "real value" are important as the experience concludes.

From the statistical analysis and a reading of the patterns that fall into this cluster, the myth begins to crystallize. This journey begins with idealistic opportunity to serve others and is driven by internal satisfaction rather than the achievement of external rewards. If a high-performance experience is to unfold, the individual must have the opportunity to bring together a group or community and help them to develop or embrace some unique vision. Individual commitment and cohesive relations within the team are continually nurtured through participation and trust-building activities. The individual maintains an openness to feedback and to new alternatives. The journey becomes fulfilled as the community successfully matures. The individual values the relationships and products of the community and tends to remain part of it. Given these characteristics, this myth is labeled the *Journey of Collective Fulfillment*.

Table 6
A Summary of the Four Journeys

Distinguishing Factor	Responsive Service	Independent Task Pursuit	Intense Achievement	Collective Fulfillment
Source of empowerment	Service to others	Task completion	Achievement recognition	Service to others
Relationship orientation	Dependent	Independent	Directs, leads, or inspires others	Interdependent
Processes engaged	Personal action learning	Personal planning and organizing	Leadership of others	Participative decision making
Structure	Avoids	Generates for self	Generates for others	Develops with others
Intensity	Low	High	High	Low
Flexibility	High	Low	Low	High
Goal	Individual task completion	Individual task completion	Personal accomplishment	Collective accomplishment
Denouncement	Move on	Continue the activity	Move on	Continue the relationships

Differences between the myths. As described above, the mean difference tests do suggest that the myth archetypes differ significantly from one another. These ANOVA descriptions help to accentuate the fundamental differences across the clusters. A summary of the distinctions among the myths is provided in Table 6. For example, where the Journey of Responsive Service avoids structure, the other three journeys generate structure—for themselves, for others, and with others, respectively. Where the Journeys of Responsive Service and Collective Fulfillment have mild intensity and high flexibility, the Journeys of Task Pursuit and Intense Achievement have strong intensity and low flexibility. The journeys suggest different sources of personal empowerment: service to others, task completion, and achievement. Moreover, where the Journeys of Responsive Service and Intense Achievement require closure, the Journeys of Task Pursuit and Collective Fulfillment tend to be ongoing.

Perhaps the most encompassing difference between the myths is with regard to the relationship between the individual and significant others. In the Journey of Responsive Service, the individual tends to be fairly *dependent* on others as a result of his or her service orientation; the individual has an apprentice orientation with the goal of personal learning. In contrast, in the Journey of Independent Task Pursuit, the individual is *independent* of others, preferring autonomy to community; personal engagement comes through structure and analysis rather than interaction with others. Further, in the Journey of Intense Achievement, individuals tend to *dominate* others by taking responsibility and exercising direction; personal engagement comes through leadership and vision. Finally, in the Journey of Collective Fulfillment,

individuals are *interdependent* with others through acts of participation, trust, and cohesion; personal engagement comes through unity with others.

The differences in levels of dependence between the four myths are particularly interesting in light of emerging trends in the area of constructive theory. Kegan (1994), for example, provides a discussion of contrasting perspectives regarding the notion of independence made by two constructive theories, relational and subject-object (p. 227). In relational theory, one may be connected or separate in voice or style (i.e., I decide by myself). In subject-object theory, one may be embedded in the psychological surround, or one may be highly self-authorizing (i.e., I decide for myself). The two perspectives on dependence-independence are not the same. When the differentiations are put into a two-by-two table, for example, four types of employees emerge. A comparison of Kegan's four types with the four myths are informative.

1. Dependent level-connected style

Takes on the employer's expectations, goals, and strategies as a means to creating, maintaining, experiencing, and exercising strong, harmonious connections; susceptible to having the quality or values of one's work ultimately determined by employer. (Kegan, 1994, p. 225)

This person is dependent on the psychological surround for meaning and is seeking to create a harmonious world in terms of relationships. In the Journey of Responsive Service, the individual is dependent and focused on serving others. The person seeks low structure, low intensity, and high flexibility. As illus-

trated by the first pattern example in Table 1, the person is clearly embedded or directed by the "needs of the company." Most of the entries that follow reflect an idealistic pursuit of free-flowing processes and a world of harmonious relationships.

2. Dependent level-separate style

On behalf of ends or goals derived from the employer directly or indirectly, unilaterally advances, strategizes, argues, competes, negotiates, promotes own position; susceptible to having the quality or value of one's work ultimately determined by employer. (Kegan, 1994, p. 225)

This person is dependent on the psychological surround for meaning but is seeking independence in personal operating style. Comparing this category with the Journey of Independent Task Pursuit provides an insight about the myth. The independence theme is so strong in the second myth that it becomes the central element in the title we give it. Yet a reread of the elements in the myth suggest that the independence is in style, not in terms of level of hierarchy. Note the second example in Table 2. This independence-seeking person begins the journey by taking "responsibility with a significant obligation to achieve an important result for a higher authority" and ends the journey by receiving "commendations for my work." What appears to be a very independent myth in style is actually a very dependent myth in terms of level.

3. Independent-separate style

Exercises personal authority on behalf of advancing or enhancing one's own position, status, advantage, agenda, mission, or profile; relates to others on behalf of furthering unilateral ends rather than deriving ends out of relationship; personally evaluates employer expectations and own performance relative to these kinds of priorities. (Kegan, 1994, p. 225)

This person is self-authorizing in terms of level and task oriented in terms of relationships. In the Journey of Intense Achievement, the individual seeks achievement and recognition, direction of others, provision of leadership, the generation of structure for others, high intensity, low flexibility, and high personal accomplishment. The self-authorization and task orientation can also be seen in reading the third example in Table 1.

4. Independent-connected style

Exercises personal authority on behalf of inclusivity, keeping communication open for maximum participation and input, preserving connections and surfacing threats to colleagues' collaborative capacities; personally evaluates employer expectations and own performance relative to these kinds of priorities. (Kegan, 1994, p. 225)

This person is self-authorizing and oriented to relationships. In the Journey of Collective Fulfillment, the individual seeks to serve others; to form interdependent relationships; to use participative decision making; to develop structures mutually; and seeks low intensity, high flexibility, and collective accomplishment. A reading of the fourth example in Table 1 confirms the fit between the myth and Kegan's category.

Kegan's work is both constructive and developmental. Clearly, the myths are constructive in that they reflect ways of organizing experience and knowing the world. However, it is difficult to know if they are developmental (i.e., evolutionary over time). Because the data are cross-sectional, we can only speculate about the developmental nature of the myths. Nevertheless, we are struck by the congruence between Kegan's scheme and the myths found here. We also note, in congruence with Kegan's developmental sequence, that individuals holding the myth of Responsive Service tend to be younger, whereas those holding the myth of Collective Fulfillment tend to be older.

Conclusion. In this study, four clusters or general archetypes of individual high-performance myths have been identified. These clusters represent the four general orientations to meaning making. As described above, the Journey of Responsive Service suggests an overall service orientation that avoids structure and intensity. The Journey of Independent Task Pursuit tends to be highly analytical and autonomous. The Journey of Intense Achievement tends to be highly intense with an emphasis on obtaining extrinsic rewards. Finally, the Journey of Collective Fulfillment tends to be highly relationship oriented and intrinsically motivated. In this way, the myth archetypes do appear to capture quite distinct symbolic psychological constructions of meaning. Moreover, the congruence between our findings and Kegan suggest that the myths tap into something universal about meaning-making systems.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The purpose of this article was to begin to address the void of research on myths at an individual level of analysis in the organizational studies literature. Using Campbell's culturally formulated hero's journey as an analogy for understanding individual myths, the article develops a set of myth archetypes through the analysis of performance experiences. Four myth archetypes or journeys were identified in the analyses. In considering the implications of the findings, we first review Campbell's model of the hero's journey and consider how the present findings compare and contrast with that framework. The differences lead to some insights about the process of meaning making and about the need to see the notion of the individual journey of meaning making in a broader way than the classical hero's journey. Finally, some implications for theory and practice are considered.

Toward a Model of Enacted Meaning

The hero's journey is a theory about the enactment of meaning that resides in the human consciousness. The hero's journey is explicitly a cultural product. A particular story of a great performance is continually formed by a culture over many years. As it is retold, the story evolves until it takes on increasingly dramatic characteristics that are common across cultures. The communality suggests that the hero's journey reflects some widely shared needs and beliefs in the human psyche.

In contrast, the present analysis focuses on myths at the individual level. These are not myths culturally elaborated over centuries but myths as seen by the original actor and storyteller. We use Campbell's formulation of the hero's journey as an analogy for understanding the individual process of meaning making. We expect some similarities with the cultural version of the hero's journey, yet we also expect some differences that might provide some insight into individual myths of performance.

A comparison of myth at two levels. Campbell's (1968) formulation of the hero's journey is a cultural theory about meaning making. Analyzing heroic stories across numerous cultures, Campbell is able to depict the hero's journey (see Figure 3) describing it in the following way:

The mythological hero, setting forth from his [*sic*] commonday hut or castle, is lured, carried away, or else voluntarily proceeds to the threshold of adventure. There he encounters a shadow presence that guards the passage. The hero may defeat or conciliate this power and go alive into the kingdom of the dark (brother-battle, dragon-battle; offering, charm), or be slain by the opponent and descend in death (dismemberment, crucification). Beyond the threshold, then, the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of the mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero's sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father-creator (father atonement), his own divinization (apotheosis), or again—if the powers have remained unfriendly to him—his theft of the boon he came to gain (bride-theft, fire-theft); intrinsically it is an expansion of consciousness and therewith of being (illumination, transfiguration, freedom). The final work is that of the return. If the powers have blessed the hero, he now sets forth under their protection (emissary); if not, he flees and is pursued (transformation flight, obstacle flight). At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread (return, resurrection). The boon that he brings restores the world (elixir). (pp. 245-246)

Using Campbell's (1968) description as an analogy, from our analyses above, the hero's journey at the individual level of analysis in an organizational context might be depicted as shown in Figure 4 and described as follows:

The individual, setting forth from the commonday routine, is lured, assigned, or voluntarily proceeds, to the threshold of commitment. Here there are misgivings. In order to proceed, the right opportunity structure (intrinsic satisfaction, extrinsic recognition, service to others, task completion) must be perceived. Beyond the threshold of commitment, then, the individual journeys through a world of complex forces, some of which are threatening and some of which facilitate progress. The individual's test is to create a combination of factors that will allow the individual to proceed (autonomy, interdependence, intensity, reflection, planning, action learning, trust, control, openness, closure to the context). If the individual is able to establish the right combination of factors, success follows. The triumph may be represented in a number of different ways (the individual's sense that the world is a better place, in the sense of competent task completion, in the sense of achievement and recognition, or in the establishment of successful community). Given the victory, the individual is now blessed to set forth with an increased sense of meaningfulness.

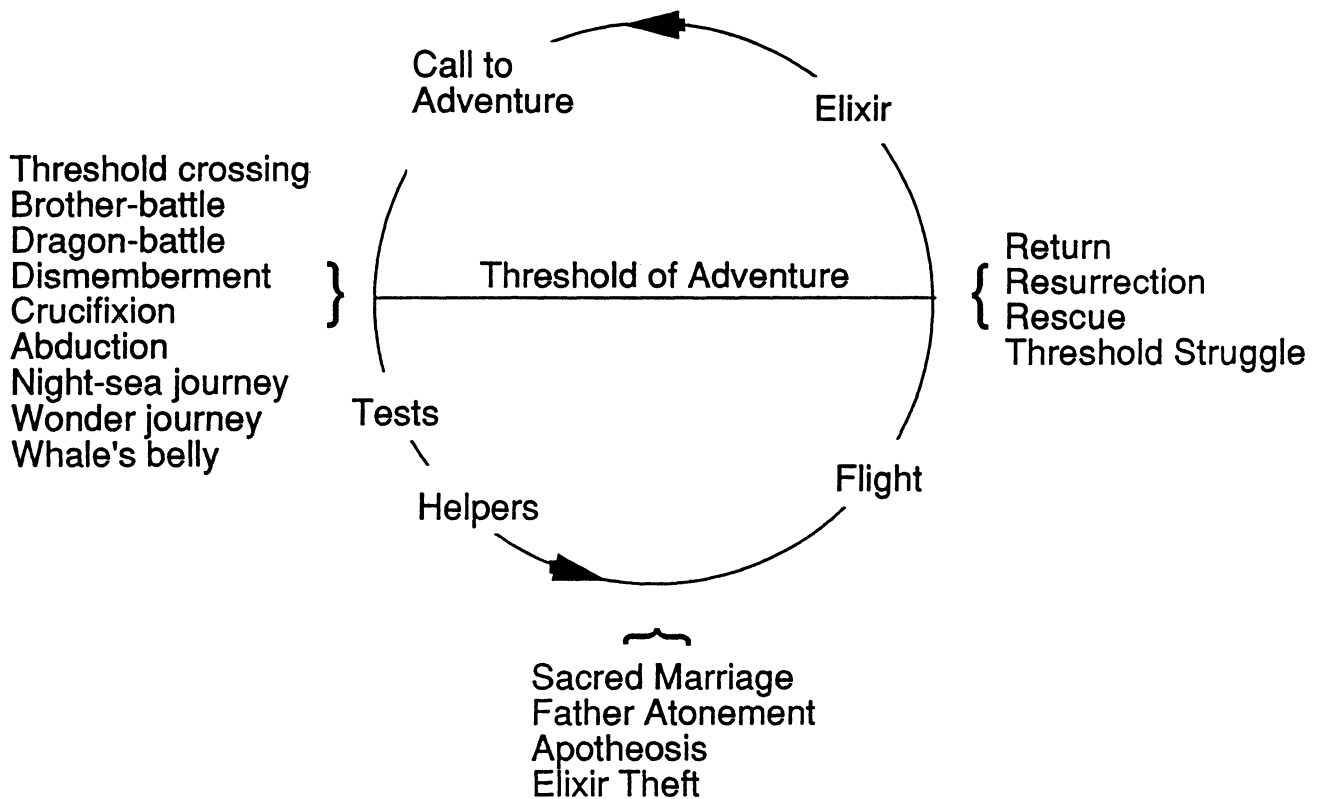


Figure 3: Campbell's depiction of the hero's journey.

Source: From *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, by J. Campbell, 1968, New York: World Publishing. Copyright 1968 by Princeton University Press. Reprinted with permission.

The final step of the journey is the process of denouement. The individual either embraces the activity or community, or separates and moves on. As the individual closes the adventure, an increased sense of meaning serves as an elixir to self. It also serves as a lens from which to view and evaluate other opportunities for adventure.

The cultural and individual myth have similar structures: The individual initiates a journey; encounters challenge, paradox, or dilemma; transcends the tensions; comes to a new level of understanding; and then moves on as a more enlightened and empowered person. In both cases the individual has enacted a new or improved "system" of meaning.

There are commonalities between the two models, but there are also some important differences. Perhaps the most important difference has to do with level of risk and drama. In Campbell's cultural model the myth always grows to dramatic proportions. The heroic task is never easy, involving confrontation with "fabulous forces," with "personal despair," and with "the dark walls of our living death." However, because at the individual level we identify four different

myths, some variations at the individual level can readily be seen. In each individual myth, there is some challenge to be met. In the Journey of Independent Task Achievement, it is often some difficult project or unique task. In the Journeys of Intense Achievement and Collective Fulfillment, it is often a major organizational challenge. In the Journey of Responsive Service, however, the high-performance episode might be defined in a much less dramatic way, such as in the establishment of a successful mentoring relationship. Yet, like processes inherent in the other three myths, these processes also result in personal meaning. Individual journeys of meaning making include heroic risk taking but are more comprehensive than Campbell's cultural model of the heroic journey because they include challenges that are less risky and less externally dramatic. In this way, individual journeys of meaning may be arrayed along a continuum, from myths that are clearly heroic in the traditional sense of the word to myths that are less heroic to outside observers but still deeply meaningful to the individual.

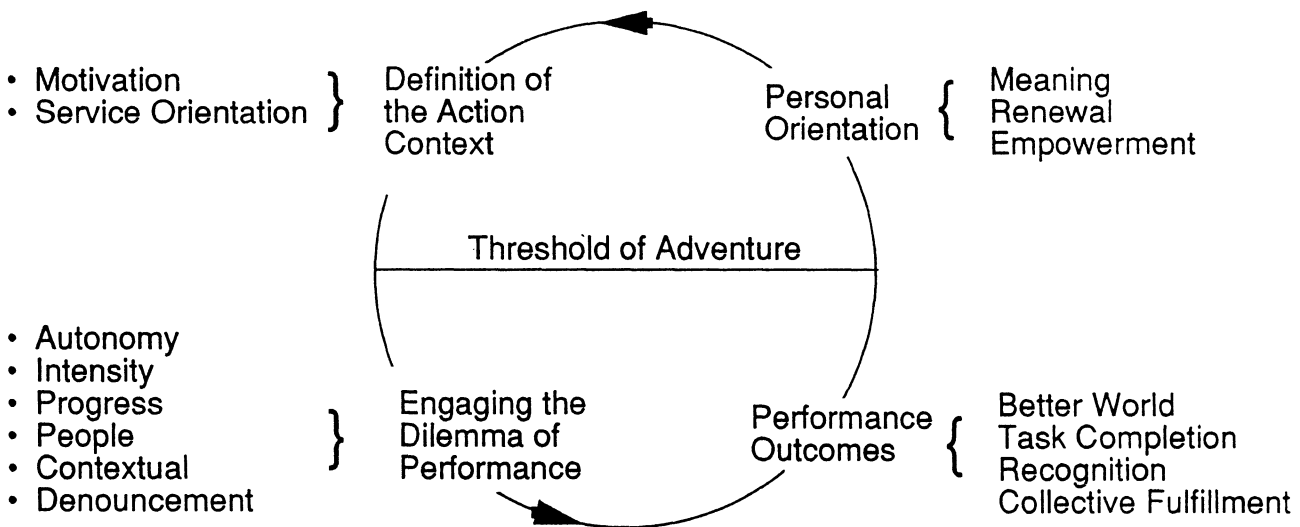


Figure 4: The individual mythic journey of high performance.

The Implications for Management Theory

In considering the implications for management theory we focus particularly on empowerment and leadership. In doing so, it is useful to take both a within-myths perspective and an across-myths perspective. One suggests incremental growth through congruence; the other transformational shifts in levels.

Congruence. This work suggests that people have myths or meaning systems that, if followed, will bring valued outcomes. The basic episodes follow Campbell's general model in that people separate from the status quo engage uncertainty and then return empowered with a renewed meaning system. The specific journeys are quite different within each myth. When people are able to get into their preferred high-performance pattern, they are establishing a state of congruence between their inner and outer worlds. As congruence and success occur, the experience is meaningful or satisfying because it is reconfirming. It is also empowering in that the reconfirmation provides a sense of increased confidence, and a willingness to further engage the world because the individual has a theory of success that is believed to work. Here empowerment is increased confidence and the willingness to further engage the world by again applying the existing myth or meaning system. We might call this first-order empowerment.

Transformation. One can look across, rather than within myths, for another perspective on empower-

ment. Here we return to the discussion of Kegan's (1994) work. The first two myths reflect viewpoints that are embedded in the psychological surround. The latter two reflect viewpoints that are highly self-authorizing. In the self-authorizing myths, the individual has differentiated him- or herself from the psychological surround and is likely to exercise personal authority. One of the two latter myths is more focused on task and the other on relationships, but both are self-authorizing and not dependent on the system to define needs and actions. Here empowerment is not just the confidence to engage the world through one's existing myth. Instead of being driven by values and beliefs embedded in the psychological surround, one has the "psychological authority to reflect upon values and beliefs" (Kegan, 1994, p. 231). One thus has the ability to alter the psychological surround. In the self-authorizing myths, empowerment does not come from achieving congruence between one's inner and outer worlds. Instead, it means being capable of changing the overall system. This kind of empowerment can only come by movement from an embedded myth to a self-authorizing myth. This suggests a transformation that may come not from congruence but from some form of crisis and reinvention. It requires moving from one of the first two myths to one of the latter two myths. We might call this second-order empowerment.

This second definition of empowerment has implications for leadership theory. Some authors have argued that to be called a leader, one must be transformational (Locke, 1991). From this perspective, leaders

who do what is already defined in the psychological surround are not leaders at all. Instead, leaders must have the capacity to envision new direction, otherwise they are simply managers of the status quo.

The present findings suggest that transformational leaders may be on the Journey of Intense Achievement or the Journey of Collective Fulfillment. The distinction between these two self-authorizing myths helps provide greater understanding of potential differences across transformational leaders. Consider, for example, the fact that both Patton and Gandhi were transformational leaders. Whereas Patton was likely on the Journey of Intense Achievement, Gandhi was likely on the Journey of Collective Fulfillment. Although both myths are self-authorizing, the myths lead to very different experiences for the people being influenced by the myth holder. One provides for considerable freedom by encouraging individuals to develop their own personal myth, whereas the other suggests more dominance over those being influenced.

For those seeking to develop empowered, transformational leaders, the implications are somewhat discouraging. For years, managers have been reinforced for behaviors encompassed by one of the first two myths (Drath, 1990). Dependent behavior can be expected in large organizations. The number of people falling within the first two myths in this study supports this observation. People, of course, can be assisted in changing but probably not by many of today's usual methods. Second-order empowerment and leadership are not likely to result from traditional information and skills training efforts. These tend to reinforce people in their current levels (Quinn, Sendelbach, & Spreitzer, 1991). More complex "transformational" modes of education may be required that facilitate new and more complex ways of thinking and lead to the construction of new myths about the desired mode of being and acting (Kegan, 1994, p. 232).

The Implications for High Performance

The myths also suggest some radical implications for understanding high-performance experiences. The literature on high performance takes two forms, one more popular and one more systematic. Most of the popular works on high performance present lists of rules outlining an optimal path for high-performance experiences across individuals (Adams, 1986; Garfield, 1986; Shainberg, 1989). The findings from this study suggest otherwise. Each myth suggests a different

definition of high performance and personal meaning. Findings from the analyses in this article suggest that each myth holder is driven by different needs and searches for meaning through different paths. The more systematic literature on high performance, however, is consistent with the present findings. Csikszentmihalyi (1975), Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1988), and Privette (1983, 1985) each describe the different paths to personal meaning inherent in high-performance experiences.

A second contradiction of these findings with the popular literature on high performance concerns assumptions regarding the distribution of high performance across individuals. In this study we look within the individual for positive deviations in performance, the assumption being that everyone has high-performance experiences at some point in time across life experiences. Given current practice, this is a somewhat unusual assumption. Nearly all performance measurement systems assume that high performance is exhibited by only a few people at the far end of a performance curve. Consequently, reward systems are designed to recognize the efforts of these few. Such systems often generate conflict, are difficult to administer, and tend to deteriorate over time (Beer, 1992). These dysfunctional responses to current reward systems are partially explained by the fact that the large majority of the people in organizations feel ignored or punished because the reality of the organization conflicts with their personal myth performance.

The mythic perspective and the present results raise some interesting questions. What if existing theory assumed that everyone was at times a high performer, that the definition of high performance was not absolute, and that there were alternative paths for obtaining high performance? How would organizational practices shift? What would it mean to design systems that attempted to understand alternative performance myths and assist people in pursuing their personal myth? These assumptions differ so radically from current practice as to seem unthinkable. Such questions, however, may lead to some fruitful insights on the design of administrative practices.

At the same time, however, it may not be enough to consider an individual's high-performance pattern in isolation of the interpersonal or organizational context. Sometimes there may be a mismatch between our individual myth and the demands and expectations of our environment (Kegan, 1994); conflict may be inevitable. For example, an individual on the Journey of Independent Task Pursuit who favors independence

and low flexibility may be a nightmare employee in an organizational context that necessitates interdependence and high flexibility. Given that the strength and duration of high-performance experience likely depends on situational or contextual issues (Kegan, 1994), an interesting direction for future research would be to examine the patterns of individual variables in interaction with situational variables to expand the set of high-performance archetypes.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are a number of limitations inherent to the present study. In an earlier section of the article, much discussion was devoted to the nature of the data. As indicated, the analysis began with secondary, qualitative data. These data were categorized, judged, reduced through factor analyses, and typologized through cluster analyses. Given these many steps and potential sources of error, it is noteworthy that the four myths are congruent with Campbell's (1968) cultural formulation of the hero's journey. The primary exception seems to be that individual myths are not always as heroic externally as are cultural myths. In future research the myths should be validated with respect to organizationally relevant attitudes and behaviors. Naturally, a more diverse sample of managers (e.g., in different industries and with more diverse demographics) would also provide insight into the generalizability of the present effort. Moreover, a sample of nonmanagers may enlarge the typology to include additional myth types such as those identified by Pearson (1989). Nonetheless, in spite of its inherent limitations, the present study provides an important first empirical effort at understanding individual myths and meaning systems.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an important first step in understanding myths and the hero's journey at an individual level of analysis. Although the importance of myth and ideology has been increasingly recognized in the administrative sciences, the focus of that work has been almost exclusively at the organization level of analyses. Using Campbell's cultural formulation of the hero's journey as an analogy, we considered the notion of myth at an individual level. From a series of exploratory analysis, four different journeys or myth

archetypes of individual high performance were identified and probed. From these analyses we were able to develop a preliminary model of the meaning enactment process in individuals—that is, the core process through which an individual maintains identity and continually recreates him- or herself. These individual myths provide important clues for gaining a deeper understanding into the human psyche in organizational settings.

APPENDIX

Underlying Themes of High Performance Across Stages

Stage 1: Context

1. Respond to felt needs: "I sense a real gap or hole in something and volunteer to help." "I see a situation in which I am clearly needed."
2. Be wanted and appreciated: "I am invited in, I do not have to intrude or force." "I am valued and have credibility with the people with whom I'm involved."
3. Accept a challenge: "I take on a problem because it seems impossible to solve." "I am involved in projects requiring risk and challenge in untried processes or ideas."
4. Initiate and control: "I can take charge and make things happen." "I initiate a challenging project."
5. Be creative and envision change: "I take on projects that cry for the design of a fundamentally fresh, elegant system." "I can develop new ideas from loosely defined concepts."
6. Obtain external reward: "I initiate a project with big potential rewards." "I realize that it is in my self-interest to do the project well."
7. Help others: "I get involved because people I care about will lose something unless I help." "I can help others with a problem that is important to them."
8. Experience intrinsic satisfaction: "The task is something that I believe in." "I do work that really matters to me."
9. Establish meaningful relationships: "I am invited to get involved with people I like and respect." "I am asked to do a job for someone I really like and admire."
10. Feel comfortable and confident: "I know I can do it; I feel self-assured." "I know the project can be done."
11. Demonstrate competence: "I see a chance to prove myself." "I can demonstrate my abilities and talents."
12. Establish order and stability: "I take on the task of cleaning up or bringing order to a chaotic, uncertain situation." "The project lacks organization and needs to be developed in detail."
13. Produce and achieve: "I must produce a product in a short time." "I am thrust into a priority situation requiring high energy to reach the goal."
14. Engage conflict and controversy: "I take on activities that require working through controversial concepts." "I am forced to deal with a difficult, emotionally charged situation."

Stage 2: Initiation

15. Take responsibility: "I focus in on the project by making a commitment and taking full responsibility." "Nothing comes before the project, it is my highest responsibility and concern."
16. Establish individual autonomy: "I establish freedom and self-direction so I can use my own judgment and discretion." "I make it understood that I like to work by myself."
17. Plan, organize, and structure things: "I outline the general steps and set deadlines." "I write down requirements, tools, and objectives."
18. Analyze existing systems, constraints, and structures: "I analyze the facts, details, and data to gain a full understanding of what is happening." "I take in large amounts of data, becoming an expert on the task, and I develop a realistic outlook so that there are no mysteries."
19. Become reflective: "I take a playful, relaxed, long-range perspective." "I step back to get away from the intensity and pressure."
20. Develop a vision of what might be: "I work creatively to establish a new model, strategy, or plan in which I can strongly believe." "I develop a new vision which inspires me and allows me to inspire others."
21. Assemble a workgroup or team: "I assemble a group of people who are capable of pulling off my plan, and I solicit their buy-in." "I bring together key people to carry out the plan."
22. Establish a participative climate: "I encourage an open orientation in the group." "I seek the group's active participation in achieving direction and purpose."
23. Elicit help from others: "I consult an expert to help direct me." "I use an outside person to help me make decisions."
24. Become intensely involved: "I feel a heightened urgency to get the task done as I am overwhelmed." "I become intensely focused on the project."
25. Exercise direction and control: "I become very demanding of the people around me." "I am in authority and have control of the project and those involved."
26. Learn by doing: "I learn where we need to go by using a trial and error process." "I discover what needs to be done by trying to do it."
27. Remain open to alternatives: "I leave all options open and place few constraints on myself." "I conduct brainstorming sessions to produce alternative solutions."
28. Show immediate progress: "I make short-term advances and show immediate success." "I try for some small but quick victories."

Stage 3: Progression

29. Stick to set schedules: "I stay within the set time blocks." "I stick to the overall schedule."
30. Focus on short-term outcomes: "I keep a list of short-term goals, methodically completing each part as it progresses." "I set short-term goals and take each stage as it comes."

31. Work independently: "I maintain control over the task methodology throughout, working intensely by myself, with others involved as helpers, if at all." "I work independently with little supervision and little interaction or sharing of information with others."
32. Provide clear direction to others: "I define specific objectives that others will understand." "I develop detailed, step-by-step plans that explain to others what I expect to have accomplished."
33. Obtain approval and support from superiors and peers: "I keep superiors informed and make sure I have their support." "I consult with others asking for approval or advice."
34. Remain open to feedback and criticism: "I obtain periodic feedback from others." "I encourage people to tell me the brutal truth about the project."
35. Allow for flexibility: "I flow with the time schedules rather than become upset about surprises." "I set a realistic schedule that allows for diversions."
36. Respond to opportunities: "I develop new objectives and procedures to take advantage of change." "I stay open to all new opportunities."
37. Develop expectations for high performance among team members: "I keep up steady pressure towards building a tight-knit team where people support each other's 'personal best' work." "We prepare carefully, rehearsing exactly what we want to have happen."
38. Maintain intense effort under stress: "I use the presence of stress or pressure to complete the task on schedule." "I work under stressful and pressured objectives that either I or someone else has established."
39. Monitor, coordinate, and problem solve: "I keep close track of progress and stay available to help solve problems." "I check regularly to see that each detail is right."
40. Participate in personal stress management activities: "I recognize when pressures are too great and protect against burnout by doing self-maintenance and self-renewal activities." "I read self-help books to regain patience, logic, and perspective."
41. Nurture cohesive relationships: "I initiate the resolution of any conflicts which arise." "I use humor to defuse tension and maintain perspectives when the working environment becomes tense."
42. Elicit participation to maintain group commitment: "I get team members to jointly work out key issues." "I operate collegially so everyone stays committed."
43. Trust others to perform: "I delegate responsibility and trust others to do their job in their own way." "I let others handle the details of the plan and have them report back only when problems occur."
44. Stay close to the customer: "All through the project, I constantly clarify what the user really wants." "I keep in touch with what the client is expecting."
45. Sell the project to others: "I constantly promote the advantages of the project." "I develop a positive picture, building enthusiasm about the project."
46. Maintain an extended outlook: "I focus on the long-range outcome." "I redefine goals in order to fit the long-term objectives."

Stage 4: Conclusion

47. Make a final push or extra effort to end with excellence: "I intensify the work to give that final polish that makes it an elegant product or effort." "I raise the level of intensity as we near completion to ensure a smooth but strong finish."
48. Complete a postproject performance assessment: "I analyze the results to see if they match the expectations." "I get clean, objective feedback about the value of my work."
49. Exceed expectations: "I produce a first-class result." "I become a model for others who see what I did as brilliant."
50. Leave a documented record of what was achieved: "I file a thorough record of what was done." "I communicate verbal, written, and graphic documentation to those who will maintain the results."
51. Make a formal presentation of the final project: "I present the completed project with enthusiasm and confidence." "I defend my results before a very difficult audience and carry the day."
52. Receive individual recognition and rewards: "I am rewarded and acknowledged for my efforts." "I receive awed reactions from the assembled parties when I demonstrate what I've done."
53. Feel a sense of personal achievement: "I produce a product of which I can feel proud." "I feel a sense of self-satisfaction for attaining the goal."
54. Have a sense of personal growth and increased self-confidence: "The results become a springboard for the next project." "I can look at what I did and use it to pump myself up for new challenges."
55. Reward and recognize others: "I recognize each team member for his or her contributions." "I recognize the efforts of each individual."
56. Feel satisfied from helping others: "Others have grown or benefited from the project, and I take satisfaction in their satisfaction." "I see the project has helped someone or improved some process or situation."
57. Developing lasting relationships and support: "I become like a member of the family." "There is long-lasting support for me and my organization."
58. Continue my commitment to the activity: "The daily activities are different and challenging, so I keep on." "I stay involved because it's worth it."
59. Exit with an organization in place: "Things are well organized and the staff is competent." "I leave behind a strong program that continues as I move on."
60. Turn the project over to others: "I turn over the operation to competent individuals." "Someone else is ready to carry on the project."
61. Move on to a new challenge or opportunity: "I move on, applying the skills I have learned to future projects." "I begin looking for a new ground floor situation."
62. Experience postproject recovery and personal self-renewal: "I make sure there is some relaxation and recovery time between projects." "I have breathing room between the end of the project and the start of the next."

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