

## Sustaining Peak Performance



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Have you ever had a day in which everything goes just right? Are those days' just accidents or is there some secret as to why you perform so well on those days? Those were the questions posed by Walter Kowalski, BS, president, BreakThroughs, Inc., in his session entitled, "*Sustaining Peak Performance.*"

According to Kowalski, peak performers share common skills, attitudes, and beliefs. They are committed to their work; they have a love, a passion, for what they are doing. To emphasize this point, Kowalski said to ask yourself the following questions:

- If they didn't pay me, would I still do what I am doing now?
- What do I want to pursue with my time and energy that is worthwhile?
- If I won the lottery tomorrow, what would I do with the rest of my life?
- What do I want written in my obituary?

The answers to these questions will give you insight and information about your career, according to Kowalski. You must be 100% committed in order to be a peak performer.

The second most important characteristic of a peak performer is that of confidence. People are confident in what they do because they expect themselves to succeed, and when they slip, they tell themselves that they will do better next time. Peak performers are willing to take risks, and they are willing to make mistakes, Kowalski said.

The third characteristic of peak performers is that of maintaining control over those things that can be controlled. For example, a person can control the quality of his or her product; the person cannot, however, control the current market conditions for his or her product. You can control your response to change, but you cannot control chance itself, Kowalski said.

The fourth characteristic is dealing with change successfully, according to Kowalski. Peak performers are challenged by change and consider it to be natural and useful, whereas others may be threatened by change and see it as disrupting their comfort and security. Peak performers realize they can either react to change or initiate it; often they choose to initiate it.

Kowalski warned the audience that fear often makes people hold on to a job that they dislike — fear of a lack of security. He said one can overcome exaggerated fear by doing a "*reality check.*" First, you should identify the fear, and then "*you should analyze it to death.*" Kowalski advocated the use of deep-breathing exercises, guided imagery, and mental rehearsal (i.e., creating images in your mind of steps to take to reach your goals). When you are happy with your career paths and develop the characteristics of a peak performer, you will be able to have more of those days in which everything goes just right, according to Kowalski.