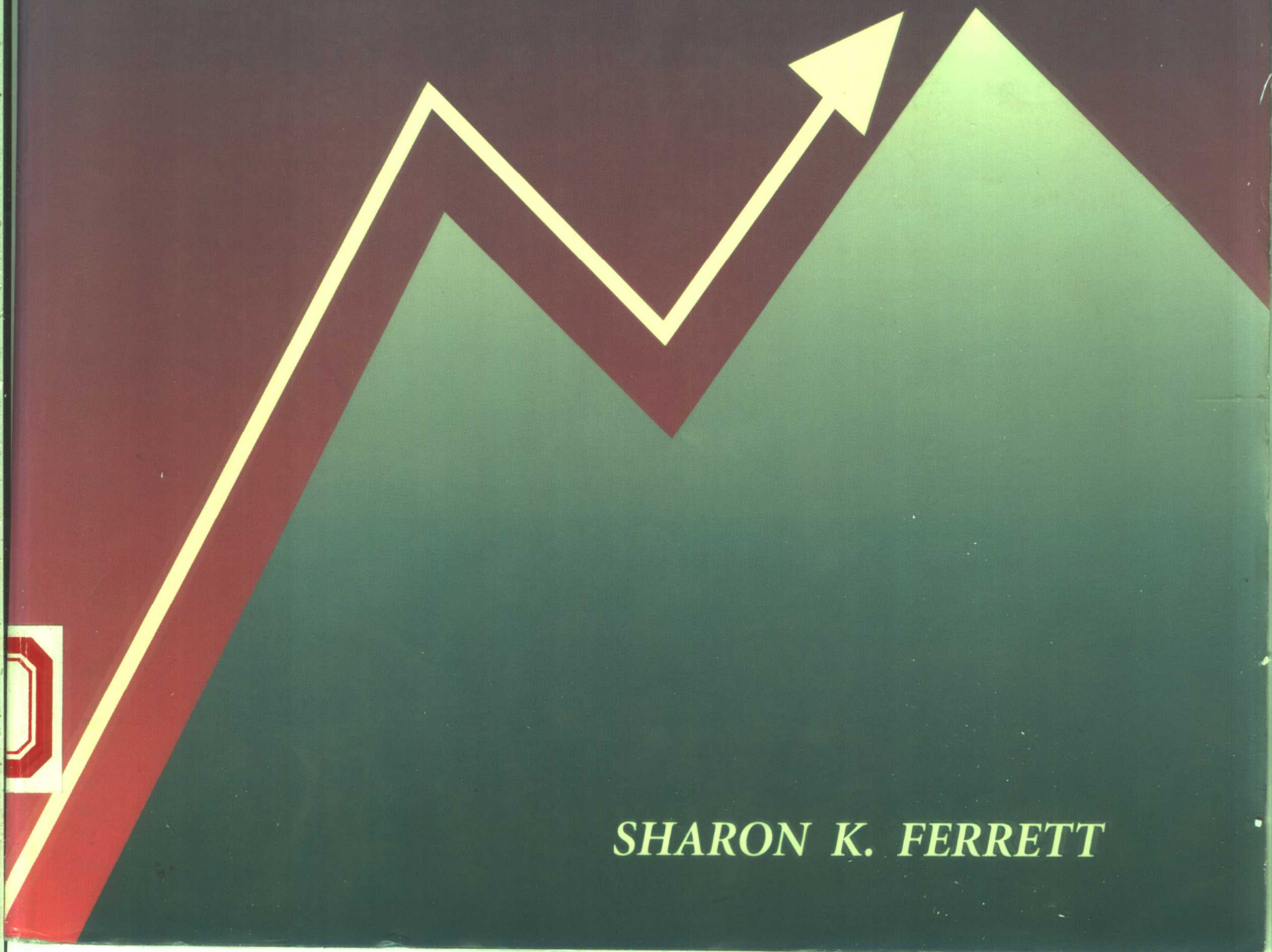


# *PEAK*

## *PERFORMANCE*



*SHARON K. FERRETT*

# *PEAK*

## *PERFORMANCE*

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## PREFACE

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### **Why I Wrote This Book**

I have spent over 25 years working with students and more than 15 years as a management consultant. I began my research into personal productivity early in my teaching career and began compiling data from years of leading classes in organizational behavior and giving hundreds of workshops to managers. I also began teaching classes for students who wanted to learn study skills, explore careers, and understand learning styles, especially their own. It soon became apparent that there are many correlations between the world of school and the world of work. This was an exciting discovery. Many of the exercises and journal writing assignments in this book are just as effective with students as with participants in my management seminars. I reviewed dozens of books on study skills and motivation, but *Peak Performance* is the only text I am aware of that directly connects the world of school with the world of work. My commitment is to teach lifelong skills that are retained and refined as students move between school and career.

This text also encourages reflection. The focus is not just on academic tools, but on the qualities that distinguish peak performers: integrity, a positive attitude, respect for others, teamwork, courage, curiosity, discipline, self-esteem, self-confidence, and leadership.

When I began my study of individuals who became peak performers, I examined three groups:

1. Successful students who not only earn good grades, but also enjoy a range of school activities.
2. Successful businessmen and businesswomen who are productive achievers.
3. Successful athletes, especially those who learn demanding skills and apply an unusual level of commitment, judgment, and discipline to physical and mental challenges.

Based on my study of these three groups of peak performers, I developed *Peak Performance*. Each chapter has been designed to encourage self-awareness, self-motivation, and self-confidence and thereby promote student success. This book's special features enable students to chart their path to peak performance:



### **Trailmarkers**

These self-assessment exercises call on students to measure their own strengths and weaknesses and develop strategies to build durable study and life skills. Students complete self-assessment scales, practice mind mapping and brainstorming, develop success steps, set goals and create strategies to achieve them, develop self-motivation strategies, and take responsibility for directing their success in school and later on the job. The Trailmarker exercises make the chapter material relevant and personal.



## Log Entries

Write-in log entries give students a chance to express their thoughts and insights on topics discussed in each chapter. Students are encouraged to be expressive and creative in their written reactions to chapter material and to make connections between the chapters' main points and their own lives in and out of school.

## Career Focus Boxes

These boxes give students concrete examples of the relationship between the study and life skills they learn in *Peak Performance* and the skills they'll need for career success. Career Focus boxes describe work situations that directly call on chapter skills. Chapter 3 features time and stress management strategies for busy students; the Career Focus box for that chapter shows time management strategies used by many professionals. Chapter 5 covers active listening for use in lectures and with study teams, instructors, and friends; the Career Focus box shows how active listening strategies work at meetings, during note taking at a conference, and in clarifying job assignments. Each Career Focus box makes these explicit connections between academic and career success.



## Peak Performers' Profiles and Case Studies

Each chapter ends with these two extended features. In the first, a well-known individual is profiled. This person has overcome obstacles and challenges to become successful. Students see that they can become peak performers by planning success strategies and taking charge of their own life.

The Case Studies are hypothetical problems students are asked to solve based on their knowledge of the chapter material. They examine issues in school and in the workplace, stressing that the same strategies that work in the classroom can be retained and adapted to work on the job. For example, the first two case studies in Chapter 2 follow Joel as he encounters motivational problems, first as a new college student and then later as a medical technician. Readers help Joel build motivational strategies that enable him to achieve success in both these situations.

## Peak Performance Strategies

Each chapter offers concrete step-by-step guidance to achieve study and life skills. Every skill, from note taking to time management, to stress reduction and speech making, is organized into easy-to-learn steps. A chapter's most important skills and strategies are summarized in a tear-out *Peak Performance Strategies* list at the end of each chapter.

## Making the Connection

Throughout the book, I've concentrated on two main themes: the connection between school and job success, and the needs and differences of an increasingly varied and diverse student population. Today's students are, I believe, increasingly more aware that what they learn in school needs to pay off in the long term—the time they spend learning skills in class should directly correlate with finding and keeping a job they want. I've addressed this connection throughout *Peak Performance* by stressing the link between academic skills and life skills.

For instance, problem solving skills are just as crucial in school as they are in work. Stress management pays off in better grades *and* in better job performance. There *is* a connection between this course and a rewarding career.

Today's students come from more varied backgrounds than ever before. A significant proportion of students do *not* come from the traditional pool of recent high school graduates. Many students are older, some have jobs, and many have children and other adult responsibilities. I've taken care to develop study and life skills strategies and use examples, exercises, case studies, and assessment exercises that make sense to traditional *and* nontraditional students.

In addition, today's students come from a wide diversity of cultural backgrounds. Throughout this book, in exercises, Trailmarkers, and Log Entries, I address diversity in learning styles, communication styles, and cultural backgrounds. Diversity is addressed as an enriching rather than a threatening difference, and students are encouraged to develop appreciation and sensitivity to cultural differences.

**Let Me Know What You Think.** I am interested in your ideas and suggestions, which will be considered in the next edition of *Peak Performance*. Please write to me and tell me what works and what doesn't work for you.

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## PART ONE



# GETTING STARTED

*“We are not at our best perched at the summit. We are climbers, at our best when the way is steep.”*

*John Gardner*



# Success

