



SHINE

Using Brain Science to Get the Best from Your People

EDWARD M. HALLOWELL, MD

Bestselling author of Driven to Distraction

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW PRESS



Using Brain Science to Get the Best from Your People

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Praise for *Shine*

“If you take Hallowell’s extraordinary knowledge and wisdom and combine them with the latest in brain science, you get this unique, fascinating, and highly useful book!”

—Carol Dweck, author,
Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

“This is an inspiring book that every manager should read. Hallowell has made clear just how important connection is to long-term success and laid out a powerful playbook for how to get the best out of people—and yourself.”

—Jim Robinson, General Partner, RRE Ventures, and former
Chairman and CEO, American Express; and
Linda Robinson, Partner and Chairman,
Robinson, Lerer and Montgomery

“Hallowell has a great gift as a doctor, as a scholar, and as a consultant to business. His gift is that he teaches us all how to play. It is that same gift that makes *Shine* such a valuable and enjoyable book.”

—George E. Vaillant, MD, professor of psychiatry;
author, *Spiritual Evolution*

*To Dr. Shine,
who shines shoes and souls
at Boston's Logan Airport*

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Many people helped me in the writing of this book. I interviewed scores of leaders in business small and large, medicine, entertainment, sports, religion, academia, and other diverse organizations, all united by their expertise in bringing out the best in people. I quote some of these leaders in this book, so their names will appear. To them and to those whom space would not allow me to quote, let me say once again, thank you.

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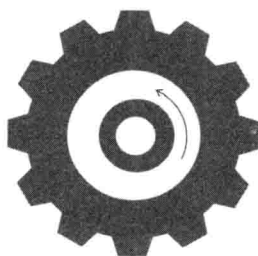
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INTRODUCTION

Brain Science, Peak Performance, and Finding the Shine

WHAT MAKES A PERSON SHINE? What separates people who feel fulfilled from those who suffer with regret? Here's a hint: it isn't money in the bank, fame, trophies, or rank, as much as those may matter. Many people don't finish first but nonetheless achieve greatness and long will be remembered, while many who do finish first will never be called great and will soon tumble into oblivion.

It doesn't much matter what you've got in your personal asset bank. Smart is overrated. Talent is overrated. Breeding, Ivy League education, sophistication, wit, eloquence, and good looks—they matter, but they're all overrated. What really matters is what you *do*

with what you've got. If you hold nothing back, if you take chances and give your all, if you serve the world well, then you will exult in what you've done and you will shine—in the eyes of the world, in the eyes of those who matter to you, and in your own eyes as well.

The more a manager can help the people who work for him or her to *shine*, the greater that manager will be, and the greater the organization as a whole. Put simply, the best managers bring out the best from their people. This is true of football coaches, orchestra conductors, big-company executives, and small-business owners. They are like alchemists who turn lead into gold. Put more accurately, they find and mine the gold that resides within everyone.

Managing in a way that brings out people's best is a critical task, perhaps second in importance only to parenting in shaping the future of our world. More than any other quality, it takes heart to be such a manager. Rather than define heart, let me tell you about a man who has it.

When I was traveling to interview people as part of my research for this book, I got to Boston's Logan Airport early one day and decided to use the extra time to get my shoes shined. As I walked up to the stand, I noticed an old man seated next to it, a walker by his side. He was sitting with his head in his arms, which he had peacefully folded over the bars of the walker. Assuming he was just an elderly passenger taking a rest before his plane took off, I asked him if he knew where the shoe-shine guy might have gone.

"*I'm* the shoe-shine guy!" he proclaimed, straightening up immediately and showing the kind of smile that draws an instant smile out of you, too. "Set your bags next to my walker here and step on up into my *office*." Propelled by this elderly gentleman's sudden burst of energy, I hustled up onto the stand and settled into an old chair. Its sagging seat of cracked black leather had seen

better days, but its proprietor was still going strong. As I put my feet onto the smooth brass footplates, I had no idea how extraordinary he was or how much he was about to influence me and this book.

He slid his chair over and announced in a slight southern accent, “Good mornin’, sir, I’m Dr. Shine.” He proceeded to inspect my shoes with the careful eye of a physician sizing up a new patient. He then began to spray water on my loafers, taking care not to wet my socks or trousers. “You in the corporate world?” he asked.

“No,” I said, “but I work with a lot of people who are. I’m a psychiatrist and a writer. My specialty is helping people get the most out of their abilities.”

“Interesting. Would you believe it, that’s *my* specialty, too! I get up every morning, and I look forward to helping people get into the right frame of mind so they can shine, no matter where they go or what they do. When I do that, I’m happy.”

“You sound like the better managers I consult with in business,” I said.

“Do I?” he replied, then added with a chuckle, “Well, I’m sure I don’t make their kind of money. But I do love what I do. For me, it’s all about the shine I put on the person. You see, *I reach out*. Too many people don’t reach out any more. They hold back. They’re too worried ’bout something bad might happen, or they’re in too much of a hurry. Or they think they have too many answers already and they’re not curious anymore, so they miss *their big chance*. Every time you’re with a person, you’ve got a big chance. I say, *don’t miss it*. Don’t worry about putting out the fire before you strike the match. *I always* strike the match. I want to find that spark in a person, you get what I mean?”

“I sure do. But how do you do it?” I asked, knowing that this was the crux of my book. Maybe Dr. Shine could sum it up for me. And he did.

“Just keep fishin’. I only get a few minutes, you know, so I gotta get right to it. Everybody’s got that spark in them, somewhere.”

Dr. Shine, you are so right, I said to myself. *Everybody’s got it in them somewhere. But far from everybody finds their spark and makes the most of what they’ve got.* How come? That’s what this book is about: helping managers help people find their spark and make the most out of what they’ve got.

“What about the grumpy people you meet?” I asked. “What about the people who don’t even see you as a person? Working here, you must get a lot of those.”

“Oh, sure, but I understand them. You gotta remember, *everybody* has their bad days. I never know what somebody who sits up there is up against, what problems they got, what’s working on them. So I treat them good, no matter how they treat me. If you don’t like people, you better not be shining shoes. I have multiple sclerosis, and my doctor says I better get ready to slow down, but I tell him my work is my best therapy. I love what I do, and my customers need me.”

“You have MS? How do you keep doing this?” I asked.

“I talk to you!” Dr. Shine replied. “When someone is sitting up in that chair, all I think about is what *he* needs and that gives me my energy. If I can’t forget about me and think about you, then I have no business shining shoes.”

“You’re pretty amazing. Where does your drive come from?” I asked.

“From people. I love to find that spark. That’s it.” A little time passed in silence while I watched Dr. Shine tend to my shoes with the sort of devotion you always see in people who care about what they do. “And you know what? People want what I do. They come

from different terminals all over this place just to get a shine from me! I'm known all over Logan Airport."

"Do you work for yourself?" I asked.

"I work for *you*!" he immediately replied.

Like Dr. Shine, great managers serve others; they develop the shine in their people. I marveled at Dr. Shine. Here was a man with MS, working at Logan Airport, who embodied what I've discovered are the most critical elements that lead to achievement at the highest levels, no matter what the endeavor. In fact, without knowing it, Dr. Shine implemented a five-step process for managing high performance that I have come to call the Cycle of Excellence. It is a process managers everywhere can use.

Finding the Shine: Five Steps to Igniting Peak Performance

Life has changed radically from a generation ago. A manager's job is getting harder and harder to do. Some experts even say that managers are becoming obsolete, while others say managers are more important than ever.¹ Whatever the truth may be, the fact remains that managers work hard in pressure-packed, confusing, unsettled times.

The central question for all managers is how to draw the most from their talent. What do you do when your most talented people fall short of their full potential, or worse, fall off their game altogether? How do you find the spark that Dr. Shine always looked for?

Finding the shine in someone, helping all your people perform at their highest levels, isn't rocket science. It's actually more complex,

mysterious, and important than rocket science. It's *brain science*, but it has yet to be codified into a simple and reliable process that all managers can use. In this book, I formulate such a code, the Cycle of Excellence. It is a process that I have created and honed over the past twenty-five years as a doctor, practicing psychiatrist, author, consultant, and instructor at the Harvard Medical School. Much as Daniel Goleman used brain science over a decade ago to shed light on emotional intelligence and show the business world how critical that is to success, I similarly draw upon brain science to explain peak performance and provide managers with a practical plan to bring the best from the people who work for them.

Rather than touting a single key idea for peak performance, the process I describe here incorporates many ideas while drawing upon the latest research from diverse disciplines. The five steps in the Cycle of Excellence, and what they will teach you, are as follows:

1. **Select:** How to put people into the right jobs so that their brains light up
2. **Connect:** How to overcome the potent forces that disconnect people in the workplace both from each other and from the mission of the organization, and how to restore the force of positive connection which is the most powerful fuel for peak performance
3. **Play:** Why play—imaginative engagement—catalyzes advanced work, and how managers can help people tap into this phenomenally productive yet undervalued activity of the mind
4. **Grapple and grow:** How managers can create conditions where people *want* to work hard, and why making

progress at a task that is challenging and important turns ordinary performers into superstars

5. **Shine:** Why doing well—shining—feels so good, why giving recognition and noticing when a person shines is so critical, and why a culture that helps people shine inevitably becomes a culture of self-perpetuating excellence

Each step is critical in its own right and translates into actions a manager or worker can *do and do now*. Each step builds upon the other. *The most common mistake managers make is to jump in at step 4 and ask people to work harder, without first having created the conditions that will lead workers to want to work harder.* There is no point in challenging employees to exceed their personal best if they haven't first been placed in the right job, found a safe and connected atmosphere within which to work, and been given a chance to imaginatively engage and contribute to the design of the task. But if you follow the steps you can create the conditions that will lead to hard work and peak performance.

This plan works because it brings together the empirical evidence on peak performance into one integrated series of steps—that create the ideal conditions, the perfect tension in the violin string, for managers to propel their people to excellence.

The Evolution of This Plan

While the Cycle of Excellence is based on the latest neuroscience, it has deep roots. It has evolved in my mind over 30 years during my practice as a psychiatrist. I developed the bare bones of the plan when I was a resident in training three decades ago to help my

patients who were underachieving. I knew these individuals were talented, but they were unable to work at their full potentials. Some had the trait we now call attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), while others struggled for different reasons. But they all shared the problem of not making the most of their talents.

Their managers assumed that they simply were not trying hard enough. But I could see sometimes they simply were in the wrong job. That's when I began to understand the practical importance of *selection* in achieving peak performance. In other cases, I could see they were shutting down because of a toxic culture in the workplace. That's when I grasped the importance of positive *connection* as a key to peak performance. In still other cases, my patients' talents were being wasted because managers were not challenging them or asking them to use their creative talents. Time after time, I saw that what *appeared* to be a failure to work hard enough actually grew from a frustrated desire *to* work hard. That's when I concluded that almost everyone wants to work hard, if they see they can succeed and grow.

I learned that all people want to work hard and will work hard, given the right job and the right conditions, because it feels supremely good to excel. Deep within all of us beats a primal desire to contribute something of value to this world and to stand out as a positive person in the eyes of others. Great managers make this happen.

But how? That's the riddle I have worked on over several decades. In this book I share the answers, represented by the Cycle of Excellence. Its roots go back to ideas that I offered first in my books about ADHD, *Driven to Distraction* and *Delivered from Distraction* (books that have sold well over a million copies), and later in a book for parents called *The Childhood Roots of Adult Happiness*.² But I knew that the method could help organizations

as well, especially given how dramatically business conditions have changed in recent years. In 1999 I wrote an article for *Harvard Business Review* (HBR) called “The Human Moment at Work.”³ By the human moment, I mean face-to-face, in-person communication, as opposed to the electronic moment—communication via e-mail, cell phone, smartphone, Facebook, Twitter, text messaging, and instant messaging. From a biological standpoint, people deprived of the human moment in their day-to-day business dealings are losing brain cells—literally—while those who cultivate the human moment are growing them. Simply put, connecting genuinely with other people makes you smarter, healthier, and more productive.⁴ Being alone for extended periods reduces your mental acuity.⁵ Those are medical facts, but facts many managers don’t appreciate or use.

The human moment is the chief supplier of what I call “the other vitamin C,” vitamin Connect. Just as you will get sick and die if you are deprived of the original vitamin C, ascorbic acid, so can you get sick and in fact die if you are deprived of face-to-face, human connections (more on the research that proved this later). This led me to identify what I called the *first modern paradox*: *while we have grown electronically superconnected, we have simultaneously grown emotionally disconnected from each other*. Books like Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* and Thomas Friedman’s *The World Is Flat* describe and document our new world and some of the obstacles it poses, not the least of which is loneliness.⁶ But it is a new kind of loneliness. Modern loneliness is an extraverted loneliness, in which the person is surrounded by many people and partakes of much communication but feels unrecognized and more alone than she’d like to.

In a follow-up HBR article, “Overloaded Circuits: Why Smart People Underperform,” I showed how modern life, due to its speed and a