

*This is part 4 in a series of articles on the harvest and reuse of expert knowledge. Part 1 of the series focused on the harvesting process itself. Parts 2 and 3 focused on using expert knowledge to create an immediate performance improvement and then sustaining that improvement. This article focuses on improving performance in large, geographically dispersed organizations.*

## Performance Improvement in the Far-flung Enterprise

**William Seidman, Ph.D.**  
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### Executive Summary

Grow revenues! Grow profits! Execute better! Is there anything more important for most organizations?

This article presents a unique approach to improving performance in far-flung enterprises – i.e., geographically dispersed chain and chain-like organizations. This approach has already produced spectacular gains in both sales and profits.

### Main Topics

- In large chains some local units consistently and systematically outperform others. The poor performers can have a tremendous negative effect on the organization. Improving their performance can have a tremendous positive effect.
- Personal coaching by top performers has been shown to be the most effective way to improve performance, far better than metrics systems, training, process binders or similar alternatives. However, there is no way to have the top performers personally coach each local unit.
- District managers (DMs), or their equivalent, provide most of the coaching in a far-flung organization, connecting the strategic focus of corporate management with the intense operational focus of local management. Even though most DMs want to be great coaches, they usually don't know what to coach or how to coach.
- Digital Coach Technology (DCT) uses the expert's "secret sauce" and on-screen prompts to make all DMs great coaches. It guides the interaction between the DM and the local manager into a positive, structured planning and management process that they enjoy and that leads to a significant performance improvement, raising sales and profits.

\* Copies of all the articles in this series may be obtained from the Cerebyte web site at [www.cerebyte.com](http://www.cerebyte.com).

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## Introduction

Grow revenues! Grow profits! Execute better! Is there anything more important for most organizations?

However, growing revenues and profits can be a significant challenge if your organization consists of:

- 3600 pharmacies,
- 4400 quick service restaurants,
- 1800 grocery stores,
- 2400 apparel stores,
- 200 bank branches, or
- 60 “identical” manufacturing facilities around the world.

How can you consistently grow sales and profits when the numbers and geographical dispersion of “local” operating units are so staggeringly big and complex?

This article presents a unique approach to improving performance in far-flung enterprises, which are geographically dispersed chain and chain-like organizations. More specifically, it examines the importance of coaching for this type of organization, particularly the critical role of district and area management in coaching local performance, and how “digital coach technology” (DCT) can enable personal expert coaching of hundreds or thousands of local managers simultaneously.

Typically, DCT-enabled coaching has produced spectacular gains. Recent examples include:

- A quick service food chain generates an additional \$2000 per week per restaurant
- A manufacturing company generates a benefit of \$2M per week per manufacturing facility by reducing machine downtime while improving product quality

The impact of coaching on sales and profitability is significant!

## The Challenge

Growing both revenues and profits in geographically dispersed chain or chain-like organizations can be challenging. Typically, there are just two growth alternatives for these types of organizations:

- Efficiently add local operating units either by opening new ones or acquiring existing ones
- Grow year-to-year same unit productivity, sales, and profits

During good economic conditions, chains tend to emphasize adding or acquiring new units as the best way to boost revenues. During weaker times, they tend to emphasize the importance of improving same store performance. Overall, to achieve sustained success, chains require superior execution of both strategies.

Not surprisingly, there are many barriers to achieving the performance required for sustained success. These barriers include:

- Every store (or equivalent such as outlet, restaurant, facility) *represents* the entire company to the customers. One poor experience in any location sours the customer on the entire chain.
- Contact between headquarters leadership and the field tends to be infrequent, limited in scope and strained. Consequently, communication of the goals, objectives, operating procedures and best practices has only limited effectiveness.
- Each locale believes it is completely unique, encouraging local management to diverge, often inappropriately, from accepted and expected norms and standards.
- In many cases, such as when individual state laws differ, specific regional norms differ, or strong local competitors exist, the local environment actually is unique, requiring extensive adaptation of the organizations' marketing, processes, products and services to be successful.
- Computer network connectivity can differ significantly, with many local operating units unable to efficiently and reliably connect to corporate networks.
- Senior managers are bombarded by so many problems and issues that they are forced into a reactive role, with little time for proactive, positive development of the overall system.

The list could go on and on!

In short, even though the enterprise needs superior, uniform performance from every local operating unit, each local operating unit is usually only “loosely-

coupled” to the organization, functioning at least partially as an independent entity. Naturally, in these circumstances, some units consistently and systematically outperform others, and the poorer performers are a significant problem.

Not only does poor performance in one unit effect the customer’s impression of the entire chain, poor financial performance creates a significant burden on the chain at large, draining energy, attention and, most importantly, cash. In extreme cases, such as was recently announced by several large quick service, pharmacy and apparel companies, chains have had to close poor performing local units. Poor performance in general, and having to close units in particular, has a significant negative impact for chains. The results of poor performance include:

- Loss of the entire investment in the unit, which is often in the hundreds of thousands of dollars
- Decrease in customer confidence that the chain is well-run and will be viable in the future, further lowering sales and profits
- Serious decline in the image of the company, particularly if it is publicly traded, effecting both investor and potential franchisee willingness to invest
- Huge write-downs for closing costs, undermining immediate profitability

Some chains have even been dragged into bankruptcy by the problems of the poor performers. Poor performance by local operating units can have a severe negative impact on chains that cannot be ignored.

## Conventional Wisdoms

Under-performance of individual units in chain environments has *not* been ignored! Management has already been actively working to improve the performance of the less effective units. Many organizations have spent significant time and money searching for a solution to this pervasive problem.

Conventional wisdom says that performance improvement initiatives are built on one or more of the following four primary approaches:

- Implementation of metrics systems in which intensive monitoring of key metrics is expected to drive focus and performance improvement
- Development of process binders which are expected to guide behaviors with written guidelines of standard operating procedures
- Conducting training of various sorts (instructor-led, e-learning and learning management systems) which is meant to teach people the standard operating procedures and/or certify that the training has been completed

- Installation of knowledge management systems (e.g. document management, personnel profilers and communities of practice) which are expected to provide less effective personnel with access to best practices and/or the experts themselves

Most chains have already tried some or all of these approaches, yet most still have significant performance gaps. Why haven't they worked?

Approach	Fundamental Flaws
Metrics Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easily become excessive, mis-focused and/or detached from actual performance improvement</li> <li>- Time consuming to both collect and interpret data; can become overwhelming</li> </ul>
Process Binders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on the “official story”</li> <li>- Provide a static “snapshot” of the real situation and generally lag behind actual working environment</li> <li>- Relatively “dry” or boring format</li> </ul>
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Focus on the “official story”</li> <li>- Difficult to maintain consistency over time; different facilitators tend to emphasize different content</li> </ul>
Knowledge Management Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experts consistently resist contributing documents and time</li> <li>- Inexperienced users have extreme difficulties interpreting and applying the content</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Fundamental Flaws in Conventional Approaches

Each of these “conventional” approaches provides some value, but each has fundamental flaws that severely limit its impact (Figure 1). For example, metrics can easily become excessive, mis-focused or detached from performance improvement. In one retail chain, the district managers described their primary job as “staying off the (metrics) lists ” since the lists were used to “punish” them. Similarly, process binders and training suffer from an emphasis on the “official story,” little differentiation of the importance of content, distance from real situations and boring formats and content. Knowledge management systems generally fail because experts consistently resist contributing documents and time to any system and inexperienced users have extreme difficulties interpreting and applying the content, which is typically provided without context.

Overall, the biggest problem with all these approaches is that local managers must interpret and discover how to apply the content by themselves. For instance,

we observed an area manager of a quick service food chain demand that one of his restaurant managers “fix the food cost problem” that was visible in the metrics. Unfortunately, the area manager did not provide any guidance on how to solve the problem and the restaurant manager did not know how to solve it either. Consequently, the restaurant manager began a series of efforts that ultimately made the problem worse. The incomplete content and inadequate guidance of these approaches actually caused a dysfunctional result, costing time and money.

Few of these conventional wisdoms have produced meaningful improvement. As the president of a large chain put it upon discovery of the continuing gap (addressing her senior staff), “Do you mean to tell me we have been working on best practices for the last two years and nothing has improved?” The answer from the staff was a timid “yes.”

## Management Coaching Creates Performance Improvement

What then can a chain do to improve the performance of the less effective operating units, and thus the performance of the overall chain? The answer is actually quite simple – manage them better!

Is the answer really so simple? One apparel chain formally tested the importance of better management by transferring top performing managers to “poor” locations. Guess what happened? The outlets immediately improved performance. Morale, guest service, and loss management all improved. Gradually, sales and profits improved as well.

Similarly, several quick service food chains improved performance of lower performing restaurants by having district managers supervise only six restaurants at a time, well below the industry norm of 15-30 restaurants per district. These chains use small changes to real-time metrics to trigger daily interventions by the district managers with the restaurants. The differential in performance is considerably less in these chains (even though they still have some performance gap). Clearly, effective management is the key to sustained performance improvement.

What do these managers do that is missing from the conventional wisdoms? Mainly, they provide personal, one-on-one coaching for the local store managers, performing many of the functions that training, binders and IT systems neglect. Their personal coaching:

- Conveys the coach’s energy and passion about the function to the non-expert, motivating their excitement about and ownership of the process
- Provides the ‘big picture’ view to the non-expert, including critical mental models and organization, enabling them to understand the focus and process of the function
- Adjusts the specific “how to’s” to the real situation of the non-expert, enabling direct application of the coach’s knowledge

- Frequently checks in with the non-expert to track and assess progress, to make further adjustments and provide emotional support

In summary, great coaching provides the emotional, mental and physical guidance and support in real-time, which makes the non-expert feel valued, involved, focused and successful. Sound familiar? Of course, this is the secret sauce as applied and used in the previous articles (Harvesting the Experts’ “Secret Sauce”, 8 Minutes to Performance Improvement, and The Performance Improvement Multiplier). None of the conventional wisdoms can provide anything close to the impact of direct coaching. The results of great coaching are, once again, the development of profound trust and huge gains in productivity, sales and profitability.

## The Critical Role of the District Manager (or equivalent)

But we already know that coaching is critical! The problem is how to do it throughout the geographically dispersed enterprise.

District managers (or equivalents such as area managers, group managers, etc.) are the key! District managers (DMs) provide the most critical performance coaching in a far-flung enterprise. Typically, corporate and regional management focus on strategic issues while local unit and department management focus on day-to-day operations. DMs are close enough to daily operations to understand and coach local management on critical issues, but distant enough to keep perspective and alignment with corporate initiatives. They are the bridge between the more distant, long-term focus of corporate and regional management and the intense, consuming tactical focus of the local operating units (Figure 2). Again and again, chains indicate that it is coaching by the DMs that determine the success of local stores, and ultimately the success of the overall enterprise.



Figure 2: DMs as the Bridge

Most DMs gain their position by excelling as a local manager, earning promotion into the expanded responsibilities of the DM because of their previous success.

However, managing a district is very different from managing a store, presenting the new DM with significant unexpected challenges including:

- In most chains DMs supervise at least 15 local operating units and in some the number is as high as 40, limiting the amount of time that they can spend with any one unit
- The units are usually geographically spread out, further limiting the amount of time available for support
- Local store managers are often recently promoted into the role, having little experience with managing the complete unit, which is very different from being a contributor
- The DMs are constantly on the move, often with poor connectivity and communication with either the corporate or regional offices
- They are typically responsible for the profitability of the district and of each unit within their district, and these numbers are continuously scrutinized by regional and corporate management
- There is little training or support specifically for DMs and they are just expected to know how to do the job because they had been store managers

How is the DM supposed to cope with these radically difficult conditions? They are expected to become more managerial, leading their district by coaching the local managers into independently achieving superior performance.

Unfortunately, most new DMs tend to do what they know, which is manage a local unit. They therefore tend to initially manage districts as a series of isolated units instead of as a multi-unit environment, micro-managing the local unit managers by requiring strict adherence to the processes that made the DM successful at the local level.

For example, a chain of tire stores that is very well known for its service culture promotes people into store and district management because the person was an effective tire changer. Newly promoted DMs were stunned by how irrelevant tire-changing skills were for managing a district with 15 stores. In turn, the tendency to micro-manage, decreases ownership by the local manager and stretches the bandwidth of the DM, quickly frustrating both. In one apparel chain, headquarters staff wondered: “why the DM’s were always complaining about being so busy when there just didn’t seem to be that much to do.” It is because the DMs are actually directly trying to manage each store, instead of building a local management capability.

When asked why they manage this way, DMs invariably respond that they would like to be more managerial, delegating more to the local management by providing great coaching, but that they do not know how to coach or what they should be coaching. In short, many DMs do not have the fundamental knowledge

and skills required to perform their most critical functions, coaching local managers!

## Labor Intensive District Management

So why not follow the example of the chains that have a ratio of one DM for every six restaurants? This form of intense coaching appears to be “working.” Certainly, these chains have a smaller performance gap than others we have encountered.

Unfortunately, there are some profound problems with this approach. The DMs in these chains are, in effect, surrogate local managers, micro-managing the restaurant managers and indirectly managing most daily operations. As you might guess, this is very expensive! District management costs for these chains are approximately 2-3 times as much as for other chains. In addition, by micro-managing, these DMs tend to limit the development of the individual store managers. This added expense and personnel development limitation combine to restrict overall enterprise growth.

In addition, even the more successful chains still report that local managers with “long tenure” (i.e., over 5 years as a manager) are consistently outperforming those with “short tenure” (less than 2 years as a manager). So, it appears that it some other factor is effecting the results.

Why hasn't this approach been more successful? Again, even though the DMs can give substantially more time and attention to the local managers, many DM's don't know what or how to coach. Their coaching is based excessively on either the “official story” or a limited version of personal experience, not the true “secret sauce” that enables top performers to excel. Consequently, it is neither particularly credible nor effective at changing behavior. Also, the DM's time is spread among several local stores, not to mention other administrative duties. This means that often the DM “coach” isn't available when the naïve local manager needs him, resulting in efficient operations until the coach can devote the time required.

Furthermore, there is little reason for the local manager to comprehensively “own” the behavioral change. Because the DMs micro-manage them, they tend to perceive that they're not really responsible for the improvements. So, even though the DMs make a tremendous difference, the successes of these chains appear to be a result of the application of brute force, rather than effective management development. Thus, labor intensive coaching has an impact, but it is expensive and, at best, is only a partial solution to the performance problem.

## Far-Flung Coaching (with DCT)

How then can a chain get great, cost-effective local coaching when there are hundreds of DMs and thousands of outlets, spread around the world? The answer is to:

- Provide all DMs with the support they need to be great coaches!

- Provide some way to leverage the DM's coaching so that it's available at every local store 24 x 7

The temptation, of course, is to rely once again on training or process binders, but these haven't worked because they aren't designed to support coaching. "Digital coach technology (DCT)," on the other hand, is specifically designed to support manager coaching, including coaching of multiple local operating units simultaneously.

DCT is software that emulates the human coaching experience. It uses a highly structured process (see Figure 3) consisting of a specialized interview that causes the expert to tell his story (called the "naïve new person story"), polish that story into a repeatable best practice, and store the best practice in an archive. When an inexperienced person needs to perform the same function, instead of asking the expert to coach them, they recall the best practice from the archive and are "coached" through performing the function as though the human expert was there.

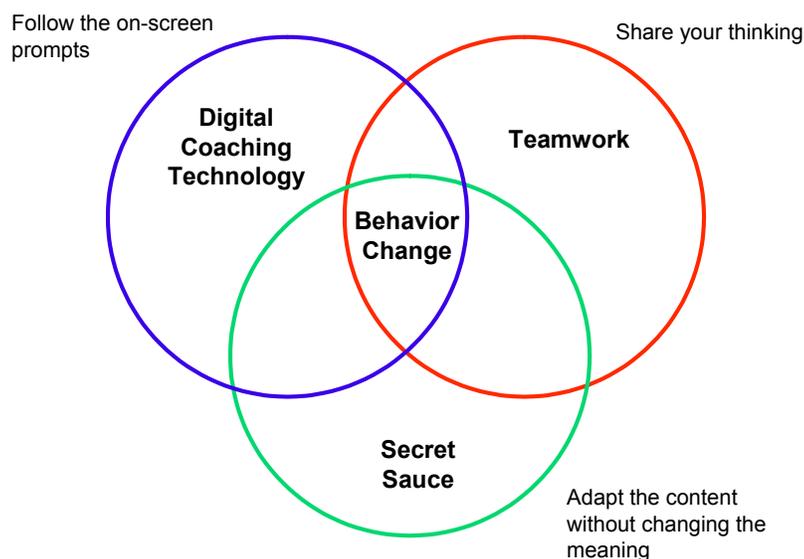


Figure 3: DCT Coaching

As an example of the DCT coaching process, visualize a district manager and a clinic manager from a chain of audiology clinics who need to address an on-going client satisfaction problem at the clinic manager's clinic. They sit in front of the clinic manager's laptop computer, launch the DCT application, select Client Service (CS) from a library of four critical management processes and rename it for the clinic manager's specific clinic, "CS Initiative for Clinic 7206." The DCT application automatically retrieves the secret sauce for CS, processes it for easy absorption and displays a prompt that guides the clinic manager to read, feedback and adapt the goal of CS, which is:

*Improving the client's hearing-related social situation is a core value of the clinic, raising satisfaction and increasing hearing aid sales.*

Guided by DCT, the following dialogue occurs:

Clinic manager: *“This means that our priority is to focus on the real reason the client comes in to have their hearing checked.”*

District manager: *“The CS best practice uses the words ‘core value.’ What do you think is meant by these? Why do you think it uses that term instead of ‘priority’?”*

Clinic manager, after a pause: *“The real reason is always discomfort caused by either a spouse or child complaining about the TV being too loud or some other social situation. This should always be a priority for us. But a core value is more fundamental than just a priority. (Continuing in an excited voice, leaning forward) Making the client feel great about their ability to hear and communicate is the foundation of everything we do.”*

District manager (following the on-screen directions): *“That’s right. Now why don’t you modify the goal using your own words?”*

Clinic manager: *“OK, I want it to read (editing the goal): ‘Making our clients feel great about their ability to hear and respond to others is the foundation of the clinic’s success because it creates a service experience that raises satisfaction and increases sales.’ How is that?”*

District manager: *“That is great!”*

The clinic and district manager repeat this process with:

- Key organizing principles, including specific CS metrics and objectives
- Assignment of individuals to specific roles and responsibilities
- Development of a milestone schedule for improving CS
- Identification of key risks that might undermine the CS initiative

In less than 30 minutes, the district manager/coach and the clinic manager agreed on all of the elements required for mutual success. Guided by DCT and coached by the DM, the clinic manager quickly adopts the expert’s mental model and develops a plan based on the secret sauce. Later, the two spent an additional 90 minutes learning the details of the secret sauce and creating a specific action plan for improving CS for clinic 7206.

The area manager told us: *“It took about 10 minutes for the clinic manager to become engaged, but once she understood the principle of CS as a core value, she really absorbed everything else quickly.”* In just a few hours, the area manager had effectively coached the clinic manager to internalize and apply the secret sauce. Since both the DCT and the modified (and mutually agreed to)

secret sauce reside on the clinic manager's laptop, it's available to her whenever needed, 24 x 7, without requiring the area manager to be there. The area manager's coaching has been effectively leveraged!

If this sounds remarkably similar to the interaction between the manager and the new engineer from the manufacturing company discussed in "8 Minutes to Performance Improvement," it is. DCT engages the passionate commitment, mental models, specific action plans, risk management plans and pointers to supporting resources that are naturally supplied by great coaches, *making any DM a great coach!* As a result, organizations can coach literally thousands of people simultaneously, which enables chains to improve performance for the entire chain at the same time, regardless of the size or geographic dispersion of the individual stores.

## District Managers and Live Action

But great coaches aren't finished with their coaching when the action plan is done. Great coaches continuously monitor the on-going use of the secret sauce, observing the behaviors and actions of local managers and providing continuing guidance and support. This keeps the local manager focused by allowing the DM to provide almost immediate additional coaching.

But how can the DM monitor the progress of up to 40 units at once? This is more than they can effectively visit in a month!

Recall the earlier discussion of Live Action (in "The Performance Improvement Multiplier" article) in which DCT guides the non-expert, in this case the local manager, to quickly provide feedback to the DM. Recall too the automatic alerts DCT generates to warn the DM of various risk conditions. These actually reduce the time required for the DM to monitor each local operating unit to only 90 seconds per week, and it is comprehensive to everything the DM needs to know.

DCT consolidates the status reports for each unit into summary screens that show the DM the status of all of the local units at once. The DM can, as a result, proactively monitor the entire district, whether it is 5 or 40 units, with minimal effort. Similarly, districts can be consolidated for regional, national and even global review, allowing senior managers to see an overview of the entire organization and, if desired, drill down into the specific plans of a particular operating unit. The entire organization can now support the initial coaching experience.

## Resisting the Change

As effective as DCT is, it still is a change, and people resist change. Senior corporate managers typically articulate their resistance as:

- "It would take too long for our DMs to learn the system"
- "Our DMs are not comfortable with computers"

- “Our DMs would never use technology to coach”
- “We don’t want the DMs and local managers off the floor sitting at a computer”

These comments provide a surprising, and somewhat negative, view of the DM. It may be unintentional or even unconscious, but we’ve found that corporate managers typically view DMs as neither particularly competent nor motivated: unwilling or unable to quickly adopt new methods. This is definitely *not* consistent with our experience. Do you know of any DMs who wake up and think to themselves: “Today I want to be a mediocre manager?” We don’t. Quite the contrary, every DM we have met is incredibly dedicated to the success of the organization and completely willing to adopt anything, including new technology, that will make them more successful. Therefore, one must conclude that all of these are simply “smoke screen objections” (i.e., objections that hide the real concern). What is the real concern underlying corporate managers’ resistance? By probing deeper, we’ve found that it is simply the normal human resistance to change itself.

In contrast to the objections, the facts of DCT are persuasive. DCT does not encounter any of the barriers typically found with other technologies. It does not suffer from the fatal flaws of the conventional approaches. For example, guess how much training it took for the district manager and clinic manager in the example above to learn to use DCT to coach? Thirty minutes for the DM and none for the clinic manager! All the DM and clinic manager really needed to do was read the on-screen prompts, follow the directions, and click the “next” button. Effective DCT smashes the training objection!

Similarly, a self-described “computer-phobic,” rolling out DCT to a quick service restaurant chain, stated that DCT was “so easy to learn and use that even he could teach it to technology resistant franchise owner/operators.” Everyone who has used DCT finds it exceptionally easy to use, and most people say it is fun as well. Technology fears are not a barrier to DCT success.

Also, DMs are already coaching, but often feel inadequate about their abilities and want to coach better. A few simple questions highlight the DM perspective:

- Do you, the DM, spend time coaching your local operating managers? (Of course, that is their main job!)
- What is the minimum time acceptable for this coaching, particularly when the local manager is new or consistently ineffective? (Typically, several days per month)
- Would you be interested in an approach that allows you to more effectively coach your local managers, in less time and with less travel? (You bet!)

DMs are already spending significant time coaching, they all want to coach well and we already know that coaching is critical to sustained revenue and profit

growth. So, why not use DCT to ensure that all of the DMs are great coaches!

But coaching is not, to many people, sitting at a computer and talking, even for an amount of time that is less than currently allocated for coaching. Instead, coaching is being on the floor, pointing out conditions that need correction, and, presumably, providing instruction on how to correct those conditions.

Have you ever tried coaching someone this way or been coached this way? It is bits and pieces of information, often without any overarching context. This type of information is difficult to organize and assimilate, and often leads to misinterpretations of both the importance of the content and the meaning of the content itself.

For example, in one discount apparel chain, the DMs had made a concerted effort to coach store managers and staff on the presentation of the clothes bins by walking to the bins and refolding the clothes. However, the training just never seemed to “take.” Customers would finish with clothes and toss them in a bin and the clothes would stay that way for a long time, primarily because staff was doing other work.

However, once the store manager understood the secret sauce of excellent “merchandising,” she was much more effective at creating a context for maintaining eye appeal and trading off maintenance of the floor against other duties. As a result, not only were the bins better maintained, but also stock was rotated from the backroom to the floor more effectively and shrinkage declined. Without the mental models and organization to enable absorption and maintenance of the behaviors, most on-the-floor coaching has little sustained impact.

Finally, there is the “we are too busy” objection. Too busy doing what? We have heard many answers to this question including:

- Developing a training program
- Rolling out a point of sale system
- Introducing a new product

Are these really more important than directly increasing the sales and revenues of the organization through superior coaching? We doubt it!

Even if they are critical, can they be implemented without excellent DM support? We again doubt it. For example, an insurance company wanted to introduce a new product. They brought 300 people from the field into headquarters, at huge expense, and followed it up with a tour of the field offices by senior management. Everyone was excited. But two weeks later hardly anything had changed. There was little, if any, development of local action plans or systematic follow-up for the introduction. Neither the DMs nor the local managers knew how to actually implement the new product. Consequently, the inertia of “business-as-usual” caused the introduction to stall. In fact, it is virtually

impossible to introduce new training, systems or products *without* effective coaching by the DM. DM coaching is the operational heart and soul of the organization. Nothing is more important to the performance of the organization.

A variation of “we are too busy” is “we have too many initiatives going on in the field.” Ironically, the ability to cope with overload is one of the key attributes of top performers. Their robust mental models and organizational capabilities allow them to efficiently prioritize and manage all of the various pressures. For example, in one full service food chain, top performers systematically categorized a multitude of corporate initiatives into those requiring immediate attention and those that could be deferred. They also established a system for processing the corporate requests without significant work or attention. Their underlying organization creates efficiencies, even in the face of overload.

In contrast, these pressures tend to fragment the less effective performers, further reducing their performance. They try to do everything at the same time and as a single event, without applying any contextual judgments or creating any systems. For instance, the less effective DM’s in one hardware chain responded to frequent requests from corporate by rushing around their districts collecting specific data. They rarely collected multiple pieces of data, developed systems for responding to the on-going requests or integrated the data collection with other activities. Overload produced fragmentation.

This is exactly the circumstance DCT is designed to manage. By guiding less effective performers to improve their personal organization, DCT enables them to better cope with all of the initiatives. DCT implementations, by reproducing the top performers patterns with the less effective managers, actually create relief from overload and pressure, rather than increasing the burden.

Certainly, there are initial concerns before DCT is actually used, but they disappear quickly, the results are persuasive, the barriers minimal and the ROI spectacular.

## Searching for Alternatives

You may again be asking yourself, why can’t I do the same thing with training for the DM and a detailed process binder? You probably already have these in place. Do you still have a performance gap? Remember training and binders provide information, but don’t effectively change behavior. In addition, they are actually more expensive to implement than DCT. Don’t delude yourself into thinking you can get the same result from other approaches.

It took a team of academic, business, and technical experts over 5 years to develop what we today call DCT. It represents a fundamental paradigm shift in performance improvement methods and technology. Unlike most other approaches to performance improvement, and most other technologies, DCT is specifically designed for coaching interactions in non-technology environments.

For example, DCT includes screens that:

- Stimulate non-expert's passionate engagement with the experts' mental models
- Prevent non-experts from going into denial of risk conditions
- Create introspection about the "right" way to perform and "moral" commitment to the performing that way
- Separate personal opinion from best practices
- Prevent non-experts from inadvertently overriding critical elements of the secret sauce

These are just a few of the subtleties designed into DCT that drive performance improvements. Compare this to training classes, e-learning, consultants, knowledge management or any other method, including those you are using now. No other approach can produce even remotely similar results.

## Summary

Let's be clear: Success in geographically dispersed chains or chain-like companies requires constant revenue and profit growth. Each unit of the chain must contribute by continuous, superior execution. DCT enables these enterprises to quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively improve the performance of the less effective local operating units to nearly the same levels as the top performing units. The changes are often visible in just a few weeks and can yield millions of dollars in additional sales and profits for the chain. While you should never be satisfied, using DCT will ensure that you are doing everything possible to optimize its performance.