



# Driving High Performance in 2026

## Why People and Human Skills Are the Competitive Advantage

As organizations close the books on 2025, one truth is clear: performance is no longer driven by tools alone. While technology, AI, and systems continue to evolve at speed, the organizations that consistently outperform are those that invest just as intentionally in their people.

The insights from 2025 point to a powerful conclusion heading into 2026: **high performance is a human strategy**. Leadership quality, emotional intelligence, and psychological safety are no longer “soft skills.” They are core business capabilities.

## The 2025 Reality Check

The pace of change over the past five years has reshaped how people work, lead, and collaborate. Yet despite rapid digital transformation, research confirms that the fundamentals of high performance remain deeply human.

Data from [Wiley Workplace Intelligence](#) reveals:

- Employees who feel psychologically safe are **31% more likely** to be high performers
- **90%** of high-performing teams cite effective leadership as their top differentiator
- **83%** identify emotional intelligence as essential to sustained success

These insights mirror what leaders saw across 2025: burnout rose where trust was low, engagement dropped where communication broke down, and retention suffered where people felt unheard. The organizations that thrived were those that prioritized connection, clarity, and capability development.

## Psychological Safety: The Performance Multiplier

Psychological safety emerged in 2025 as one of the strongest predictors of team success. When people feel safe to speak up, challenge ideas, and contribute fully, performance accelerates.

### Teams with strong psychological safety:

- Share ideas more freely
- Solve problems faster
- Adapt better under pressure
- Deliver stronger collective results

In contrast, even highly skilled teams underperform when fear, silence, or disengagement take hold. As organizations look to 2026, psychological safety is no longer optional; it is a competitive necessity.

## Leadership and Emotional Intelligence: Skills That Scale

High performance starts with leadership, but not the command-and-control leadership of the past. The leaders driving results in 2026 are those who lead with empathy, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence.

### Emotionally intelligent leaders:

- Build trust quickly
- Navigate conflict productively
- Inspire resilience during change
- Create environments where people can do their best work

These are not innate traits reserved for a few. They are **trainable, measurable skills** that organizations can develop at scale. In 2025, companies that invested in leadership development saw stronger engagement, better retention, and more consistent performance across teams.

## Rethinking Where and How Work Gets Done

Another key insight from 2025 is the growing gap between perception and reality around remote and hybrid work. While some leaders still question its effectiveness, data shows that remote employees are **more likely to report being part of high-performing teams** than their office-based peers.

The takeaway for 2026 is not about location. It's about **how people are led, supported, and connected**, regardless of where they work. Clarity, trust, and intentional communication matter far more than proximity.

## **The Skills People Need to Thrive in 2026**

As organizations plan for the year ahead, the most critical investments will be in human capability.

### **The skills that will define high performance include:**

- Emotional intelligence and self-awareness
- Inclusive, trust-based leadership
- Clear communication and collaboration
- Adaptability in the face of change
- Confidence to speak up and contribute

Organizations that embed these skills into their culture, leadership models, and talent strategies will be better positioned to navigate uncertainty and outperform their peers.

## **High Performance Is Built, Not Bought**

The strongest lesson from 2025 is that high-performing teams don't happen by accident. They are intentionally cultivated through leadership development, shared language, and a commitment to people.

As we move into 2026, the question is no longer whether organizations can afford to invest in human skills, but whether they can afford not to. Because in a world where technology is available to everyone, **people are the true differentiator**.

Our suite of professional solutions provides a structure and common language to help empower entire organizations with the skills needed to get to improve performance. From building better teams to creating engaged, collaborative, and adaptive cultures with [Everything DiSC](#), to helping you make confident hiring decisions with [PXT Select](#). Find out more about how these innovative solutions that help make your workplace a better place.

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