

What high performance looks like

Every high-performance business has a story to tell about how it's assembled something unique out of components that are common to all businesses. At Accenture, more than two years of rigorous research and many more spent working with clients have convinced us that each of these companies has what we call a distinctive *performance anatomy*, and that we could observe, identify and describe in detail this embodiment of high-performance business.

To do this, a team led by Bob Thomas, director of the Accenture Institute for High Performance Business, and Walt Shill, managing director of our Strategy practice, to date has interviewed more than 70 senior executives at 15 high performers across several industries. They talked about topics ranging from strategy and leadership style to people development, technology enablement, performance measurement and innovation.

The results form the basis of a series of *Outlook* case studies that will explore the particular set of skills that define the performance anatomies of a number of successful companies. The series debuted in our October 2005 issue with a profile of high performer Harrah's Entertainment. This issue features Constellation Energy (page 38).

"Throughout the research," reports Thomas, "we've heard a consistent refrain: Creating a high-performance anatomy is overwhelmingly the responsibility of the top management team. No one else has the perspective, the sense of stewardship and the overarching passion to tackle the task."

That doesn't mean the job is exclusively one for senior executives; the winning mindset that emerges from the performance anatomy must permeate the entire organization. However, Thomas concludes, "top leaders need to clearly, repeatedly

and passionately articulate values that not only distinguish the organization from its competitors but also resonate with the people who make up the company."

With this issue, we introduce a new author of "On the Edge," *Outlook's* technology column: Accenture Chief Technology Officer Don Rippert. A 24-year Accenture veteran, Rippert is responsible for our company's technology vision and strategy; he also oversees Accenture Technology Labs, the company's R&D organization, and Accenture's architecture group. There will be no shortage of topics for his column, notes Rippert: "We are in the midst of a rigorous and ruthlessly fact-based assessment of approximately 30 emerging technologies that are going to impact our clients' businesses during the next five years."

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