



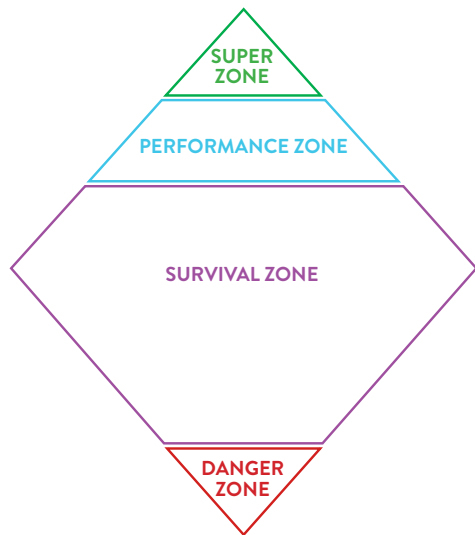
THE PERFORMANCE ZONE

A MAVERICK & COMPANY ARTICLE



MAVERICK & COMPANY

THE PERFORMANCE ZONE



There are thousands and thousands of books and classes on personal performance. It's easy to get lost and spend a lot of time learning a technique or model that may not even work all that well for you. Alternately, we believe in being Scientific About Your Own Success. This is a strategy that basically says that whatever works best for you is the best strategy for YOU. Spend your time working to understand how you work best and then find strategies that align with your habits and patterns for high performance.

The **Four Operating States** and specifically the distinctions of the Performance Zone are a way to think about how you operate. They're also a way to help you identify the activities, habits and strategies that can help you create an environment around you that supports your best performance.

Notes on the **Four Operating States**

At its' heart, this idea of the four Operating States is basically just an organized way to think about your good days and bad days in terms of productivity. Being in a mental state represented by the top two "zones" is more pleasant and more useful than being in a mental state described by the two "zones" on the bottom.

Each "zone" or operating state had its' own unique qualities and characteristics. The triggers that send someone into a more or less productive zone may vary greatly from person to person. Use this tool as a way to frame your thinking about how to influence productivity. The next two pages provide some general things you should know about how the 4 operating states work before you study them individually.

It's a **Continuum of Experience**

Being at the top of the Survival Zone will feel better than being at the bottom. Being at the bottom of the Performance Zone is not as great as being on the border of the Super Zone and so on. You can use your understanding of the operating states to help you know where you are and identify what it would take to move you up the scale toward more positive operating states.

You can't skip from one state to another

If you're at the bottom of Survival, you won't be able to hop to the Super Zone. Likewise, you won't go straight from Performance to Danger. You'll move through the operating states going both up and down the scale. This can happen very quickly, making it seem like a jump. But whether it's a quick ascent or a slow descent, you want to be aware that you're moving through the states. That means you can be aware of where you are and what signs indicate you're moving in a positive direction. You can slow the descent and speed up the ascent. You have some level of control, or at least influence over the emotional state you find yourself in. While you may not be able to snap your fingers and land in the Super Zone, you can definitely take conscious action to move yourself toward a better place.

All of the Operating States are **natural and normal**

Each of these operating states is a natural and normal part of the human experience. Many people get frustrated with themselves for spending time in the Survival Zone, being unfocused or maybe just sad. It's not a bad thing to have periods where you're not highly productive. Sometimes vegging out in front of your television, sleeping, taking a walk where you can daydream IS the most positive thing you can do. Don't be afraid of any of the operating states and don't beat yourself up for experiencing all of them in your professional or personal life.

It's also useful to remember that other people move and drift from one state to another. Your job as a manager, colleague, spouse, or even parent is to support people as they move through the different states. Resenting someone because they're too tired to get excited about the new marketing strategy or forcing a distracted sales person to make calls is often not your best strategy. As you learn about moving yourself from less desirable to more desirable operating states, you'll also be learning how to support the people around you in doing the same. Remember however that all the states are natural and normal, and you can't just snap your fingers and make someone move into a different zone.

It's not about trying to be in the super or even performance zone all the time

It's normal for people, when they first learn about the operating states, to want to figure out a way to spend all their time in the Super Zone or at least in the high end of the Performance Zone. Unfortunately, human beings are not designed this way. Most of us spend most of our time in Survival, sometimes flirting with the Performance Zone. The idea is not to be in Performance all the time. The idea is to learn how to set yourself up so your life is Performance Zone friendly AND to learn how to recognize when you're in Survival and have strategies you can rely on to move you closer to the Performance Zone.

Ironically, sometimes the best strategy for getting out of the Survival Zone is to just let yourself be in it. When you're fighting with yourself, beating yourself up for being sad, distracted, or lazy, you often dig the trench deeper. Sometimes being lazy for an hour is what it takes to get back to work. In the material that follows you'll have a chance to see what strategies will work best for you. Ultimately, you want to focus not on how to be in the Performance Zone ALL the time, but rather how to increase the amount of time you consistently spend there.

It may be that being in the Survival Zone is actually necessary to getting into the Performance Zone in the same way that sleep is necessary for being awake. Don't fight it. Use your knowledge to shoot for what's possible, NOT what's perfect.

A small % increase of time spent in the Performance Zone can mean huge productivity increases

Because you are SO much more effective when you're in the Performance Zone, any increase in the amount of time you spend there will have a big impact on the results you're able to produce. If approximately 80% of your results come from the small amount of time you spend happy, confident, clear, and focused, imagine what an extra 4 hours a week in this mental state could help you produce.

THE SUPER ZONE

This state is the highest and most fun of the operating states.

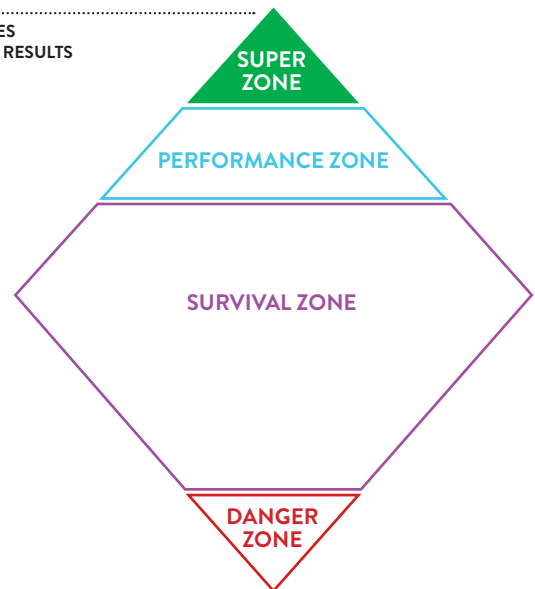
It's sometimes referred to as the "Michael Jordan" Zone because the results you can produce are so extraordinary. You've all experienced this heightened state. It's the zone you're in when the results you're producing are so good it's almost surreal.

Unfortunately, it's tough to duplicate this state of mind and the extraordinary results you can produce here. While it's possible to thoughtfully take actions to get into the Performance Zone and tragically easy to slip into the Survival Zone, getting into the Super Zone is more of an uncontrollable and an unknown. For most people, it seems to happen naturally and almost accidentally when they're already at the top of their Performance Zone and positive momentum carries them into the Super Zone.

Remember, the Super Zone is not an ideal to be realized, but rather one of the 4 operating states you may find yourself in. Don't pressure yourself to be here all the time or bother feeling bad about the time you're not here. The Super one represents a heightened state...not a constant.

The Super Zone represents, typically, about 1-3% of your experience.

- MAGIC & MIRACLES
- EXTRAORDINARY RESULTS



THE PERFORMANCE ZONE

In this state, you're happy, confident, clear, and focused. You're able to respond productively to negative occurrences.

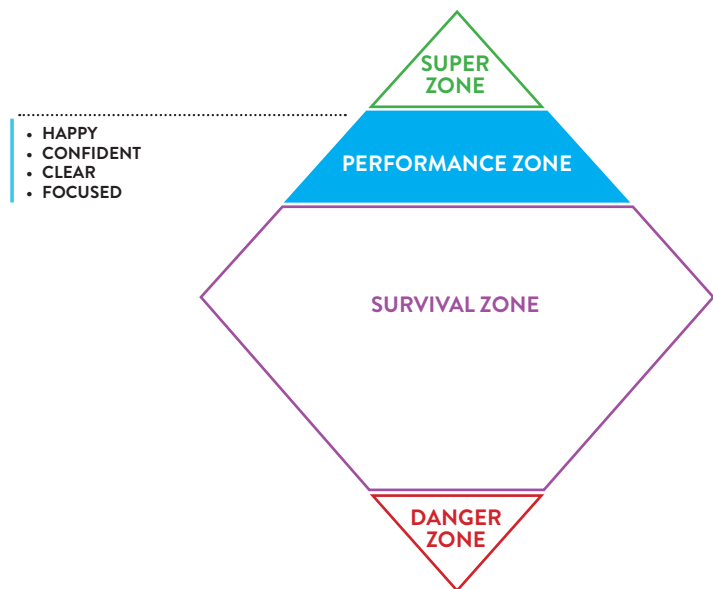
You're proactive and typically moving efficiently from task to task. It feels good and you get a lot done. The work you do is also of a higher quality. You're bringing a larger percentage of your mental abilities to the task at hand AND you're not fighting the emotionally draining thoughts and feelings, which tend to influence you when you're in the Survival Zone.

For example if you're making sales or follow-up calls in the Performance Zone, you're probably doing it happily and quickly. Everyone seems to answer, they call back, and they respond positively. The challenges or problems seem easy for you to deal with. Sometimes the people you're trying to reach even call you. It's easy and fun. You experience MOMENTUM.

Being in the Performance Zone doesn't exempt you from problems. The difference is that in this state you have full emotional reserves to deal with problems. Your perspective is skewed by positive expectations and you're able to response. effectively to challenges. In the Performance Zone little things, seem, well, little. (Contrast this to the Survival Zone where even small things can seem like big problems.)

The positive or negative nature of your circumstances have less to do with how you perform than the mental operating state, the "zone" you're in when you face them. In the Performance Zone YOU are different and the results you're capable of producing are different as well.

If you're like most people, you spend about 15-20% of your time in this operation state. While this mental state represents a minority of experience, it's also where you produce the MAJORITY of results.



THE SURVIVAL ZONE

The Survival Zone is a frustrating place. It's where life tends to suck.

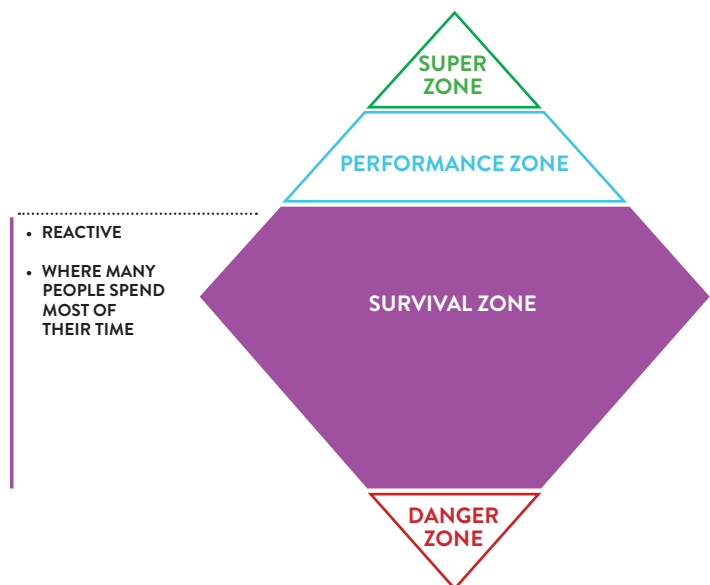
Things are slow. Everything seems to take longer and more effort to accomplish. It can feel like running in quicksand. Even small distractions can throw you completely off track. You have a tendency to overreact. It's hard to maintain perspective. Your emotional, mental, and physical reserves may be low; making it harder to stay focused or deal with challenges.

In the Survival Zone, you're mostly reacting to what happens around you. Sometimes you may be in the Survival Zone, but not necessarily feel upset or sad...you just may not be very clear or focused. Being in love, for example, has a way of being VERY distracting. In the Survival Zone, you're the pinball, being bounced around the machine. You're not driving the bus, the bus is driving you. And, in some cases, you're being run over by the bus.

In the Survival Zone, even small things can seem like BIG problems. The emotional experience adds weight to tasks. The dread and annoyance at the idea of making sales calls makes the task heavier, makes it harder to get started, makes it harder to keep going and harder to finish. The calls are no more difficult than they usually are, but your emotional state actually makes them more difficult. If you're NOT Happy, Confident, and Clear and Focused, odds are, you're in the Survival Zone.

This is the also area where most people spend the MAJORITY of their time, but typically you're not effective or efficient here and you struggle to produce results.

The Survival Zone is where MOST people spend the MAJORITY of their time.



THE DANGER ZONE

The Danger Zone is where you're dealing with the extremes of human emotion.

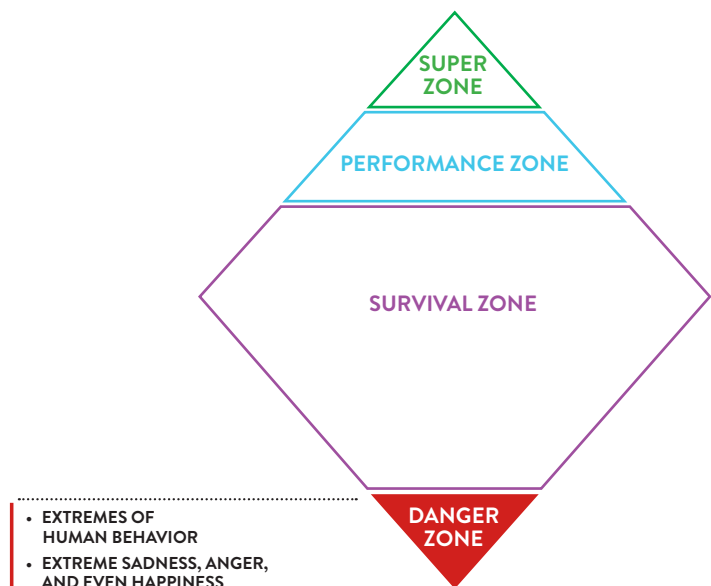
In small doses, any human emotion is natural and normal. We all have moments of frustration, sometimes turning into bursts of extreme anger. The death of a loved one, for example, might cause us to sink far into the Survival Zone and even dip into the Danger Zone at times. Typically our deep sadness will put us at the bottom of the Survival Zone. We're still functioning, just not well.

Most of us will not however get stuck in the Danger Zone. While short stays in the Danger Zone are natural and normal, extended visits probably indicate a well-being problem. If someone is full-on ENRAGED for 15 minutes over being cut-off in traffic, or even manically happy, this is NOT normal.

Most of us rarely encounter people who are deep in the Danger Zone. If you do, remember that this people in the Danger Zone are not operating from a rational perspective. You can't reason with them and often should not try. In extreme cases, it's best to call the authorities.

Again, dropping in and out of the Danger Zone is normal. It's being there for extended periods that is a problem. Most people will only experience brief periods in the Danger Zone and then will move back into the Survival Zone.

The Danger Zone represents a very small portion of your experience, maybe 1- 3%.



The strategies of the Performance Zone are designed to help you find ways to increase your efficiency, effectiveness and your level of enjoyment.

Performance, the way we think about it, is a combination of your EFFICIENCY, EFFECTIVENESS and ENJOYMENT. High performance is about achieving high amounts of all three. One of them is not very useful without the others.

Applying this model is not a complicated task, but can and should be an ongoing one. Until you die, you'll be performing. You'll perform professionally, as a parent, spouse, friend, family member or even driver. And as long as you have a role to play or a job to do, there will always be more things you could do to improve your personal performance. This is both good and bad news. On the good news side, you'll always have more little secrets you can uncover that can make it easier to produce the results you want. On the bad news side, you'll never be done. This can be somewhat overwhelming.

You could drive yourself crazy trying to "fix" everything. Don't. My recommendation is that you not attempt to change everything you could change. Instead, spend some time identifying 3 simple things you could shift now and keep your eyes peeled for others.

We like to train people to think in terms of the TWEAK. A tweak is a small change, a minor adjustment, a little thing that you can do that has the capacity to produce very BIG results. Look for the things in your environment that you can tweak to make yourself more performance zone friendly...in other words, more happy, more confident, more clear and more focused. Resist the urge to look for all the things that you need to fix and spend your time looking for those little things that will produce big results for you.



For more information, speaking and service inquiries, and/or permission to reproduce please contact:

Alecia Huck

alecia@maverickandcompany.com

720-273-3287

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