



Understanding the Signs & Causes for Performance

The Skill/Will Matrix



*This article is a **15** minute read.*

By the end of this article you will have taken a look at the Skill/Will Matrix. It is a simple, yet insightful tool for considering & mapping the factors that may be influencing an individual's performance level.

Why will it help me?

By taking the time to consider & explore the influencing factors of an individual's performance level we are better equipped to make decisions about the working style to adopt when managing that individual and to develop action plans to maintain, stretch or improve performance.



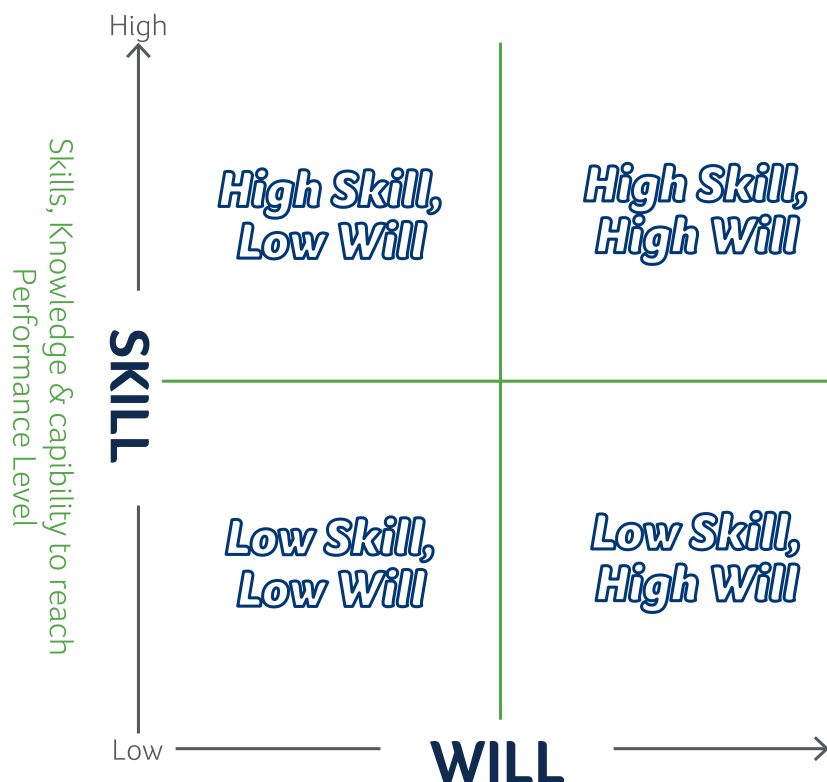
What is it & how do I use it?

The Skill/Will Matrix is a 4 box grid you can use to review performance against an individual's capability to meet the performance expectation and the individual's willingness to meet the performance expectation.

By conducting the exercise it can help you identify ways of managing & interacting with them towards success. IT applies structure to the thought process of exploring the driving forces that may explain the performance levels you are managing.

There are 2 axis on the matrix – the “Skill” and the “Will”, and team members will vary along each scale from low to high. By mapping the individual's across the two scales you will then place them in a quadrant that will illustrate the combination of capability and willingness to be successful.

It looks like this...



An individual's desire to meet Performance Level
based on Attitude, confidence & personal feelings





Here are some key characteristics for each combination's quadrant:

High Skill/High Will

This person is both highly capable and highly motivated to perform the tasks required to perform successfully.

These will often be more experienced team members who remain committed and enthused in their role.

High Skill/Low Will

This individual demonstrates the capability to perform the tasks required to perform successfully but appears to lack the willingness or motivation to do them.

You may find that these are individuals who are experienced and skilled, yet may have begun to feel restless in their role and in need of a new challenge.

This may also be the quadrant where you will find talented individuals who are potentially in the wrong role, or negatively impacted by a change in their responsibilities and, while they are capable, do not want the role & responsibilities.

Finally; this may be where you map a team member who has all the required knowledge & skills to perform successfully, but may lack confidence in their capabilities and have become tentative and demonstrate self-doubt.

Low Skill/Low Will

In this quadrant we see an individual who neither has the required skills to complete the performance tasks, nor the willingness to do it.

In the first instance; this may be a beginner who has simply not developed the necessary skills, nor the confidence in the role as of yet.

However, this may also be the area you map a team member who has become increasingly disengaged and allowed their skills to atrophy.

Low Skill/High Will

This person demonstrates the drive & desire to perform successfully, however does not possess the skills & knowledge to be successful.

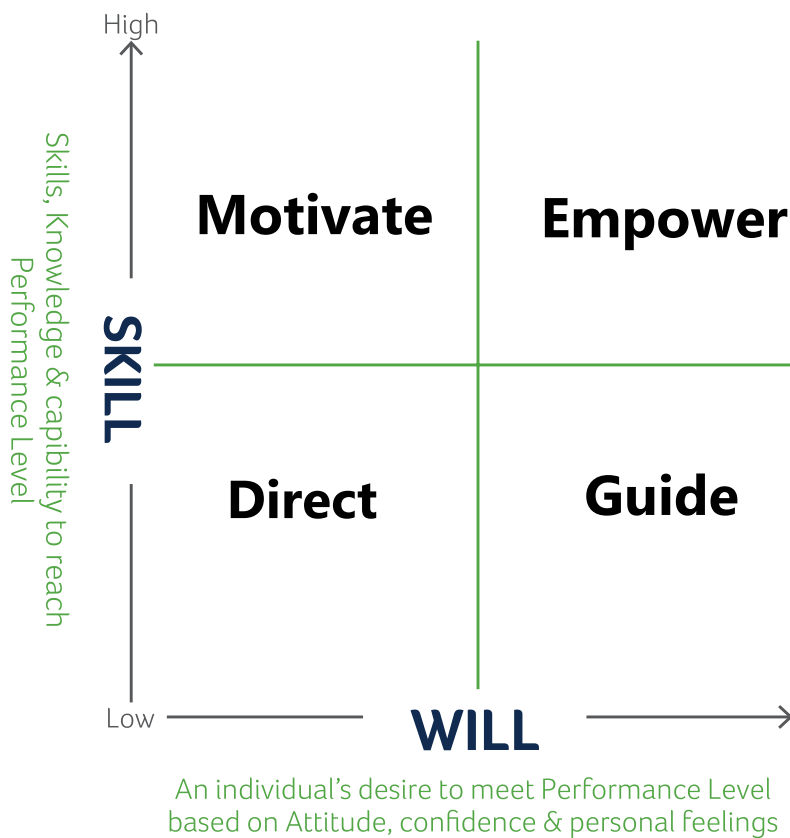
Often this will be the area where you would place a team member who is new to their role, but demonstrating high levels of drive, confidence & motivation to perform successfully.



What next?

The placement in the quadrant may then inform the management approach you may adopt to guide them to success.

In a broad sense: it may look like this:





Here are some hints & tips on how to approach performance management of the individuals in each quadrant...

High Skill/High Will – Empower

Here the aim will be to provide freedom in completing their tasks and to demonstrate trust in them through your management style. You will want to encourage them to take autonomous responsibility for many key elements of their role.

Involve them in decision making and make effort to ask for input and opinions on ways of working and how they may want to approach their performance.

High Skill/Low Will – Motivate

There's a bit of variation in this quadrant, but largely speaking you would adopt similar management styles to influence their performance.

Enter into a discussion with them to explore what may be driving the state of Low Will. Is it boredom, frustration, lack of recognition, self-doubt, or some other reason.

Use this then to further discuss and examine how you might facilitate their motivation levels or improve their confidence levels. Get their input but be sure to strike the right balance between the needs of the organisation and the needs of the individual. Then; make a plan together.

Low Skill/ Low Will – Direct

There is a need here to build both Skill & Will. Your first step is to determine whether you have mapped the individual here because they are simply new to the role or a particular responsibility or whether it is a state of disengagement driving the behaviour.

In either case there will be some direction needed. The best recommendation would always be to build the Will in the individual before building the Skill, so explore the reasons for the low will with their input to build a plan. It will be important in these discussions to re-enforce clear expectations too.

Low Skill/High Will – Guide

With the intrinsic drive in place there is just a need to build the skill, so some guidance is the order of the day.

Take the team member through the process of clearly defining the development needs to build the skill levels to performance standard and provide the necessary training, coaching & development to learn from.

Create a risk free environment to allow practice to take place and be ready to provide feedback and praise as they go along.



Give it a go...



Take a moment to review your team/project group/course group and map them across the Skill/Will Matrix.

What does this reveal about the management approach you should adopt?

