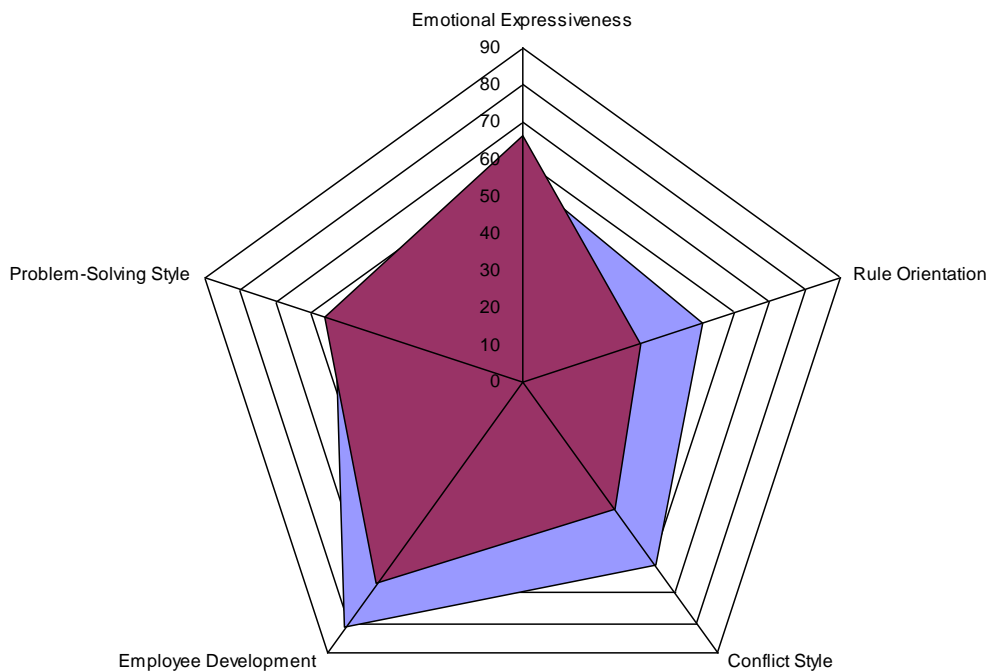


## High Achieving Women and Their “Suite” Spots: How to Choose Between An Entrepreneurial Or Corporate Career



**Summary:** As the number of visibly successful businesswomen expands, it is clear that some high achievers find and follow their path to success as entrepreneurs while others pursue their route to the top via the corporate world. What separates the Es (entrepreneurs) from the Cs (corporate)? Does their drive differ? Would they succeed no matter which track they choose?

Business psychologists Dr. Wendy Alfus-Rothman and Dr. Paul Connolly did an extensive personality and behavioral assessment of 72 high achieving businesswomen to understand what separates them from the general population, and then to further explore what differentiates the corporate achievers from the entrepreneurs. While the women all share many traits with each other (and with high achieving men), there are critical differences between entrepreneurs and corporate careerists.

Applications of this research are broad. Employers can use it in selection and development of high potential women. It is also available for individual women who want to explore their own best-fit choices whether they are in transition along their career path or starting out in their professional roles. The report is based on the Hogan Personality Inventory and Hogan Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory from Hogan Assessment Systems.

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### **Extraordinary Businesswomen:**

*Entrepreneurial or Corporate, they share key differentiating traits but differ in significant – and predictable – behaviors.*

As the number of visibly successful businesswomen expands, it is clear that some of these high achievers find and follow their path to success as entrepreneurs while others pursue their route to the top via the corporate world. What separates the Es (entrepreneurs) from the Cs (corporate)? Does their drive differ? Would they succeed no matter which track they choose?

As participants in the field of executive assessment and coaching, we had tested and delivered feedback to hundreds of women and men. “I wanted to be able to tell my female clients whether they were better suited to the corporate or entrepreneurial track,” says Alfus-Rothman, “especially in a market where many women are leaving the corporate world and considering starting their own businesses”. During her career as president of [Wenroth Consulting](#), she was unable to find relevant research. “The only published data looked at the differences between men and women,” she says. “Not the differences within the group of women themselves.”

Access to this high-powered population was part of the research obstacle. Having grown a prior business to over \$100mil, Rothman herself was part of that fairly exclusive club and she was therefore able to reach out to her colleagues and ask that they participate in this study. Most of the women were eager to say yes and to learn of the subsequent results. Alfus-Rothman and Connolly began their study of extraordinary businesswomen. For the purposes of consistency, Alfus-Rothman used these definitions:

**C-Suite:** High achievement was defined as managing a P&L of \$250 million or more. Participants were recruited from the Committee of 200 (C200), an organization for pre-eminent women presidents, CEOs, and senior executives.

**E-Suite:** High achievement was defined as building a business to at least \$5 million in revenue. Participants may have started and grown the business from scratch or—if inherited—changed focus or direction significantly. They were recruited from the Women Presidents’ Organization (WPO) and C200.

“These women tend to make a difference in everything they do,” says Wendy Alfus-Rothman. “They have bigger budgets, higher goals, manage more people, and are more visible. Pointing them towards their track of peak effectiveness has enormous implications for the employer, co-workers, subordinates, and many other stakeholders. Large numbers of people are affected by their competency and suitability to their leadership roles.”

Seventy-two study participants took three validated [personality and motivation tests](#) published by Hogan Assessments. Alfus-Rothman partnered with [Paul Connolly, Ph.D.](#) of [Performance Programs, Inc.](#), an authorized distributor and certification trainer for Hogan. At the end of the study, a baseline had been established for high achieving women in both the corporate executive suite and the entrepreneurial world. They created a special report called ***The Suite Spot***, in which women who aim for leadership positions can make more informed decisions about which track suits them best.

## **Both Are Relentlessly Driven. Other Important Similarities and Differences Emerge.**

The study showed that high-profile entrepreneurial and corporate women have more in common than not. **Courageous, commanding, and charismatic, they all share competitive drive and uncompromising ambition.** “These women can't help but take initiative in everything they do-likely in every aspect of their lives,” says Alfus-Rothman. “And, based on the rest of their profiles, they are the kind of people who would be likely to succeed in many venues.”

Other key similarities between Es and Cs:

- **Adaptability:** Both groups have the ability to adapt to circumstances and moderate their behavior, as required by specific situations. They can adjust the way they interact with people and respond to events in order to create the outcomes they desire. This makes them particularly skilled at adapting to changing circumstances, reading the tone of a room, and moving their own agenda forward.
- **Courage:** Another area where Es and Cs are alike is in the way they react under pressure. “These women do not withdraw but remain boldly upfront and center,” says Alfus-Rothman. “They definitely stay in the game and expect to push through to the finish line.” Not ones to rely on hints and veiled suggestions, they are able to be direct and forthcoming in their communication.
- **Charisma:** Both E- and C-suite achievers share a high degree of charm and charisma. They know how to get along with others (though E's typically have a harder time managing morale) and enjoy social interaction. While both groups value public acknowledgment for hard work and success, they can also share credit and recognition with others. Neither needs to be a “glory hog.”
- **Energy & Creativity:** They both share a healthy dose of creativity and vision. Willing to take risks, these women are able to take a stand and make quick decisions, advocating change and innovation. Furthermore, they have the energy to make those changes actually happen. They favor environments that allow experimentation and exploration.
- **Self-Discipline & Resilience:** Neither E's nor C's dwell nor brood over past mistakes, choosing instead to learn from them and move on.
- **Accountability:** E- and C-suite women both set high expectations for themselves and for others. Both evaluate themselves in terms of what they can get done, and the tangible results they can produce.
- **Independence:** Both E and C Suites are self-starters, and work without the need for direction from others. Both are willing to take chances and test limits.

These similarities are significant and consistent for both groups of high achieving women. There are also significant behavioral differences between them in the areas of emotional expressiveness, rule orientation, employee development, and inter-personal style.

“The more pronounced those differences become,” says Alfus-Rothman, “the more likely an individual fits with one specific track vs. the other.”

### Key Differences

- **Emotional Expressiveness:** The E-Suite personality tends to be more overtly intense, self-critical, and openly emotional. Entrepreneurs tend to be more impatient and urgent even when others are not—they worry more about failure, and have a more confrontational and blunt interpersonal style. C’s tend to show greater outward calm and composure. They care more about upward mobility, and have a more relationship oriented interpersonal style. In other words, C’s tend to be easier to get along with and play well with others in times of stress.
- **Rule Orientation & Boundaries:** With regard to innovation and creativity, C-suite achievers know how to work the system and stretch the rules within a specified framework. They know how to manipulate *within* the system and make it work for them. E-suites prefer to make their own the rules, create brand new frameworks, and challenge convention. BOTH have the tenacity and energy to make their ideas reality.
- **Training & Employee Development:** While both value training and education; E-suites have a more practical, no-nonsense approach to learning. They tend to want to apply information in a hands-on, timely, and particularly useful way. C-suites are more inclined towards learning for its own sake, without the need to know where the information will lead yet confident that knowledge is powerful.
- **Interpersonal Style:** While both are perceived as clever and forward thinking and both enjoy expressing their views, E’s tend to be more unconventional, eccentric and unpredictable - again making it less likely for them to work within the system. They can also be less aware of how their behavior affects others. Nevertheless they both make themselves invaluable, and enjoy the influence they wield and the differences they can make.
- **Decision-Making:** E’s will take *greater* and more unconventional risks (including those that may be ill-advised), motivated more by their passion, belief in their own intuition and their willingness to push limits. They have fewer regrets, more impulsivity, and are less willing to follow other people’s rules regardless of the consequences. “We can definitely predict a little more colorful behavior from Es,” says Alfus-Rothman. “These tendencies are often problematic in corporate life and can lead to expensive disruptions and derailments for an ambitious E if she finds herself in an environment where conformity is valued.

These similarities and differences have meaningful implications for career selection and development, says Alfus-Rothman.

### Potential Applications of Suite Spot Research

1. **Employers and recruiters** can use the distinction between Es and Cs for recruitment and selection, increasing their chances of “best-fit” hires by matching a candidate’s strengths to the job requirements. Good fit also leads to improved retention. Employers can identify advancement opportunities that fit an individual’s strengths and interests and increase the succession pool through targeted training interventions.

2. **Career coaches, university career offices and alumni services** can help women graduates plan appropriate professional tracks through thoughtful examination of best-fit career opportunities.

3. **Individual women** entering or re-entering the workforce can select an appropriate professional track with increased confidence. For mid-career advancement, women can target development and learning activities more appropriately. For career transitions, women can make informed decisions about pursuing new opportunities in the track not previously chosen. For many executive women, these insights help them understand how to seek cultures and jobs that will fit them best.

## Summary

High achievers of both genders are more likely to reach greater levels of success at any endeavor. They tend to have an unrelenting competitive drive, creativity, resilience, flexibility, and courage regardless of the venue. They also share the ability to moderate their behavior as required to achieve their desired outcomes, and the stamina to withstand risk and adversity.

Those qualities, combined with the cluster of behaviors identified below, will lead towards a greater likelihood of success in the Corporate Suite.

- The ability and desire to work within the system,
- to play by the rules,
- and to get along well with others even as they stretch their capacity.

Those qualities, combined with the cluster of behaviors identified below, will lead towards a greater likelihood of success in the Entrepreneurial Suite.

- Eccentricity and a colorful character,
- impatience and urgency,
- and a willingness to challenge convention & relentlessly push people past their comfort zone.

Although this research focuses on a relatively small group—high achieving businesswomen— these women have impact far beyond that of the average worker. The Suite Spot Study provides an in-depth look at their personalities and motives and may be the first study of its kind. The study shows that high achieving women have more in common with each other than not, but important differences in style make some better suited for entrepreneurial activity while others achieve best in the corporate world. This is important information—whether you are the individual, a potential employer, investor, or career coach. Women at these visible levels affect the very outcome of the business endeavor. As a result of these significant findings, the authors recommend that the E and C style differences be taken into consideration when planning career moves, training or development.

## Appendix A: Research Overview

As mentioned earlier, data was gathered and analyzed through three widely used personality assessments from [Hogan Assessment Systems](#) of Tulsa, OK. These measurements were selected for their scientific excellence and their 30-year research history. Author Robert Hogan, Ph.D. was one of the

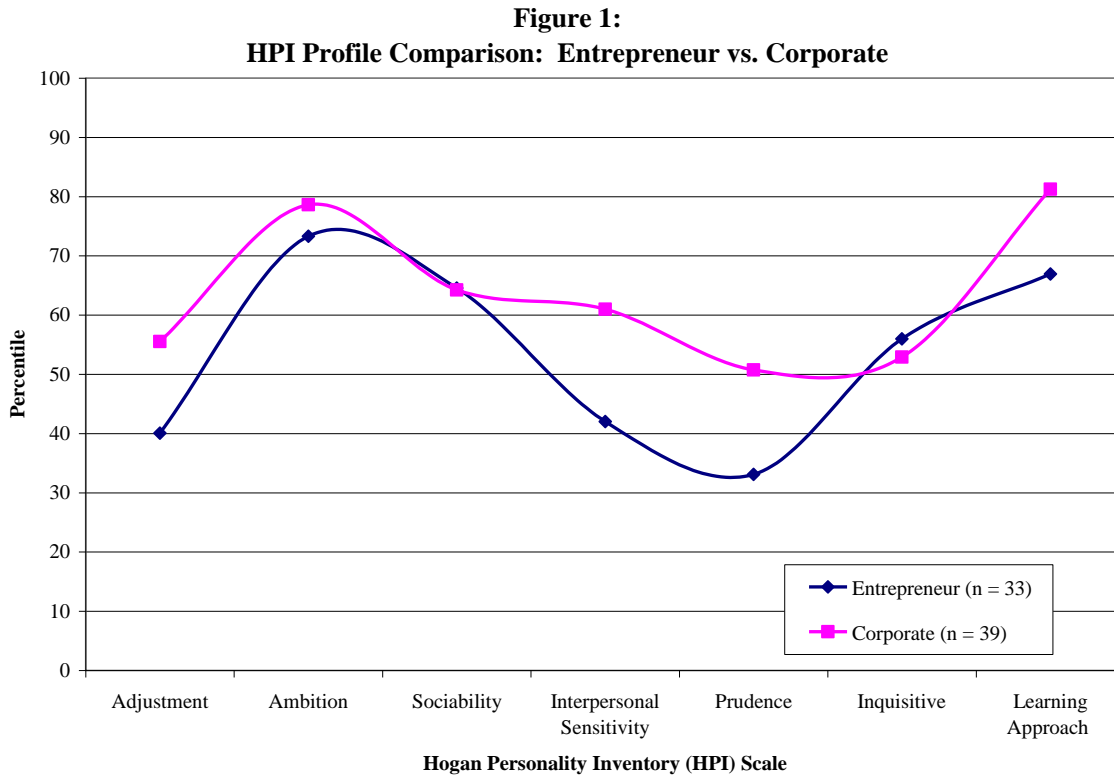
pioneers in the use of personality measurements for the workplace. Today his work forms the basis for three instruments published by Hogan Assessments: Hogan Personality Inventory, Hogan Development Survey, and the Motives, Values, Preferences Inventory. The three instruments are described below:

- The Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI) identifies how a person is unique, and then compares that person to the demands of a leadership position. The HPI scale titles include Adjustment (ability to moderate one's emotions and moods), Ambition, Sociability, Interpersonal Sensitivity, Prudence (degree to which one is conforming and dependable), Inquisitive, Learning Approach (intrinsic motivation to learn vs. motivation to learn for practical reasons).
- The Hogan Development Survey (HDS) shows how a person is likely to act under stress, and is widely used to predict executive career derailment. HDS scale titles include Excitable, Skeptical, Cautious, Reserved, Leisurely, Bold, Mischievous, Colorful, Imaginative, Diligent, and Dutiful.
- The Motives, Values and Preferences Inventory (MVPI) profiles values and motivation, shining a light on how an individual would like her work life to be. It also identifies the kind of culture a leader is likely to create. MVPI scale titles include Recognition, Power, Hedonism, Altruistic, Affiliation, Tradition, Security, Commerce, Aesthetics, and Science (exploring and understanding how things work).

The authors worked with the research staff at Hogan Assessment Systems to compare each participant's scores to the study group, as well as to the Hogan database of high achieving male and female executives.

## Scores on the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI)

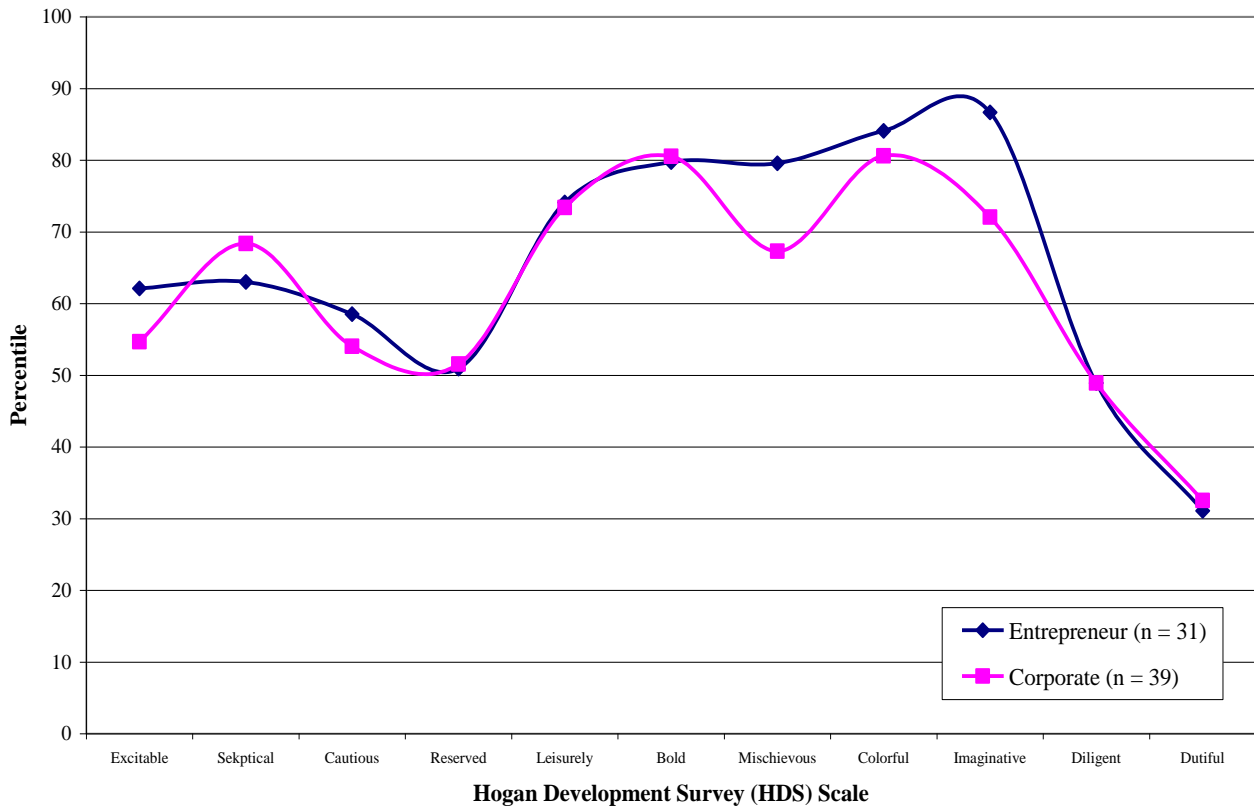
Figure 1 shows how the two groups of high achieving women scored on the HPI. As noted earlier, both Es and Cs have very high ambition. However, corporate womens' Adjustment, Interpersonal Sensitivity, Prudence, and Learning Approach scores are significantly higher than those of Entrepreneurs. Ambition, Sociability, and Inquisitive scores are essentially the same for both groups. The frequency analysis in Figure 1 highlights Entrepreneurs' and Corporate professionals' scores.



## Hogan Development Survey (HDS)

Figure 2 shows the study results from the HDS. Again, both E- and C-suite women have more in common than not. Entrepreneurs have higher scores on the Imaginative scale, which means they may be somewhat unpredictable or eccentric in thought and action. E-suite women are also higher on the Mischievous scale, which indicates they have more impulsivity and tendency to test limits.

**Figure 2:**  
**HDS Profile Comparison: Entrepreneur vs. Corporate**

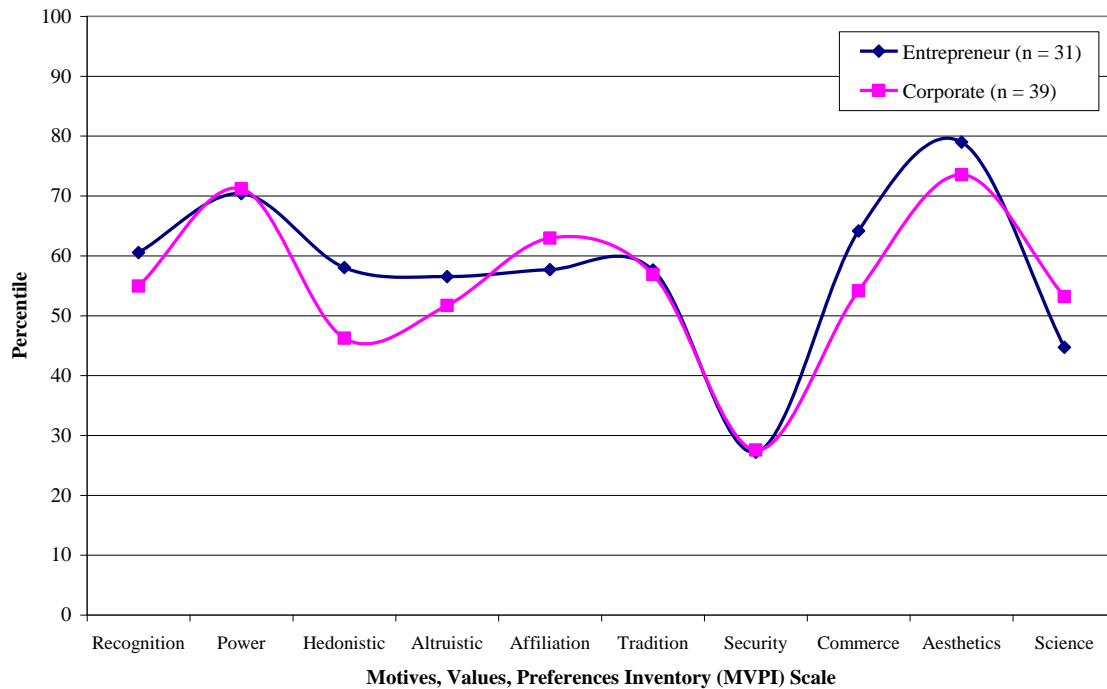




## Motives, Values and Preferences Inventory (MVPI)

MVPI study results are shown in Figure 3. When it comes to motives and values, Es and Cs are motivated by similar work-related drivers, prefer similar work environments and hold similar work-related values. Above all, they both value Aesthetics, which is all about a lifestyle geared towards quality, innovation, and problem-solving.

**Figure 3:**  
**MVPI Profile Comparison: Entrepreneur vs. Corporate**



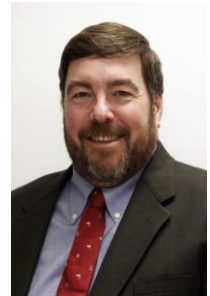
## About the Authors

This report is based on original research conducted by Wenroth Consulting and colleagues at Performance Programs, Inc. The research documents the motivations and personality traits associated with successful female entrepreneurs and corporate executives. We believe this research to be the first of its kind.



**Wenroth Consulting Group** (New York, NY) is a woman-owned firm with an active involvement in several women's business organizations. This provided access to an unusual population of extraordinary women who graciously agreed to participate in the study behind this report. Wenroth Consulting has provided career management and business coaching to hundreds of male and female executives and corporations for over eighteen years.  
(<http://www.wenrothgroup.com>)

**Performance Programs, Inc.** (Old Saybrook, CT) is a research firm specializing in industrial psychology and psychometrics. Founded in 1987, PPI has provided thousands of surveys, tests, and assessments to organizations worldwide.  
(<http://www.performanceprograms.com>)



## Acknowledgements

We thank the women from the Committee of 200 and from the Women Presidents' Organization. Without their participation and extraordinary patience, we would not have been able to complete this research and create this study, which led to the creation of *The Suite Spot Report*.

Thanks to Hogan Assessments for their support during research.

## How to Get the Suite Spot Report for Organizations or Individuals

**The Suite Spot Report is available online:**

[http://www.performanceprograms.com/surveys/Suite\\_Spot.html](http://www.performanceprograms.com/surveys/Suite_Spot.html)

OR Call

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Paul Connolly at 1-800-565-4223 or email [paul@performanceprograms.com](mailto:paul@performanceprograms.com).