

LeadershipFAQs

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Missive 6

the
issue

how do I build on strengths if I don't know what they are?

by Bob Shank

Isn't it amazing – the keys to personal achievement are just as important when it comes to great leadership!

Build On Your Strengths

When I train executives and non-profit leaders, I help them understand the critical need to focus their primary energies in the areas of their personal strengths. This is not new. Peter Drucker has been telling us for years that superior achievement is a result of *"building on the islands of health and strength."* What's new in recent times is the recognition that this principle is central to superior leadership as well!

Build On THEIRS, Too!

Here's the simple truth – world-class leaders are world-class team builders. They not only build on their own personal strengths...they build on the individual strengths of each of their team members! Exceptional leaders develop a "nose" for assessing personal strengths – they staff accordingly and they assign work accordingly.

In '99, Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman reminded us of this very important principle in their ground-shaking book, *First, Break All The Rules*. They preached this simple first step in management leadership – clarify the natural talents of each team member, then make sure that

everyone is in their right spot. Match core strengths with roles. Simple, right? Not so fast...

Round Pegs – Square Holes

Here's the problem – they found that the vast majority of workplace team members could not identify their natural talents. It gets worse. Once team members were assessed by an objective instrument, Buckingham and Coffman found that 80% of these workers were in jobs where they were never able to use any of their top five strengths.

So Buckingham teamed with Donald Clifton to produce a follow-up book, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. They tell the sad story of America's obsession with weakness – our focus of energy and resources intended to correct weakness through education and training, rather than adding knowledge and skills to our core competencies. The book is a cogent apologetic for strength discovery and development.

Now, Discover Your Strengths

This brand-new book is a must-read for leaders – first, to become clear about their own toolbox of innate capabilities; second, to introduce a strength emphasis to the teams they lead.

In *Now, Discover Your Strengths*, you will be introduced to a web-accessed assessment tool that has

been validated by nearly 2 million users over the last 20 years. The process is simple – you respond intuitively to a series of statements presented on your screen. In about an hour, your responses are tabulated, analyzed, and summarized in a personal profile that describes your top five natural strengths.

Now, Build Your Teams

Business leaders are buying these books by the case to put in the hands of their team members. If you work in a large corporation with a cutting-edge human resources department, you may have comparable assessment capabilities. But in the vast majority of small to mid-range organizations, the rest of us need something that we can use! So...try this book and its accompanying resource – the exercise may enlighten both the leader and the led with brand-new insights about the uniquely created distinctiveness that is hard-wired into every one of us by the amazing Designer who reminds us that He *"...created [our] inmost being..."* and *that we are "...fearfully and wonderfully made."* (Psalm 139).

The Grace Center
For Leadership Development
www.leadershiptraq.com