

## Strengths-Based Leadership

Which leadership style will prevail in the future?

If you want to improve employee engagement and productivity while reducing turnover, your organization must build on individual and team strengths.

Nearly a decade ago, Gallup unveiled the results of a 30-year research project on leadership strengths. More than 3 million people have since taken the *StrengthsFinder* assessment, which forms the core of several noteworthy books:

1. *Now, Discover Your Strengths* by Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton (Free Press, 2001)
2. *StrengthsFinder 2.0* by Tom Rath (Gallup Press, 2007)
3. *Go Put Your Strengths to Work: 6 Powerful Steps to Achieve Outstanding Performance* by Marcus Buckingham (Free Press, 2007)

In *Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams, and Why People Follow*, New York Times bestselling author Tom Rath and leadership consultant Barry Conchie reveal the results of extensive Gallup research. Based on their analyses, three keys to effective leadership emerge:

1. **Know your strengths**—and invest in others' strengths.
2. **Hire people with the right strengths** for your team.
3. Understand and meet your followers' **four basic needs**: trust, compassion, stability and hope.

### 3 Keys to Effective Leadership

1. **The most effective leaders continuously invest in strengths.**

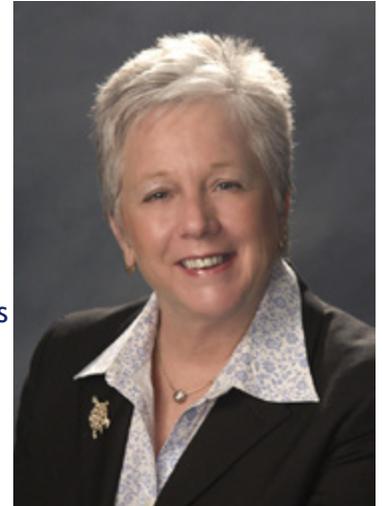
When leaders fail to focus on individuals' strengths, the odds of employee engagement drop to a dismal 1 in 11 (9%). But when leaders focus on employees' strengths, the odds soar to almost 3 in 4 (73%).

That translates to an *eightfold increase* in the odds of engaging individuals in their work, leading to greatly increased organizational and personal gains.

### A Message from Nancy...

I have a couple of questions to ask you:

1. Is your business as successful as you think it should be?
2. Are you and your team able to pinpoint the solutions necessary to create positive changes to get where you need to go?



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Employees enjoy greater self-confidence when they learn about their strengths (as opposed to focusing on their weaknesses).

Emphasizing what people do right boosts their overall engagement and productivity. They learn their roles faster and more quickly adapt to variances. They not only produce more, but the quality of their work improves. Gallup has also found powerful links between top talent and crucial business outcomes, including higher productivity, sales and profitability, lower turnover and fewer unscheduled absences.

## 2. The most effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and maximize their team.

The best leaders needn't be well rounded, but their teams are. Strong teams have a balance of strengths in four specific leadership domains:

- **Execution:** Great leaders know how to make things happen. They work tirelessly to implement solutions and realize success.
- **Influence:** Leaders help their teams reach a broader audience by selling ideas inside and outside the organization.
- **Relationship-Building:** Leaders are the glue that holds a team together. They create an environment in which groups perform harmoniously for optimal results.
- **Strategic Thinking:** Leaders keep everyone focused on the possibilities for a better future.

## 3. The most effective leaders understand their followers' needs.

*“A leader is someone who can get things done through other people.”* ~ Warren Buffett, business magnate

People follow leaders for very specific reasons. While researchers have spent the bulk of their time and funding on analyses of leaders' individual traits, the follower's point of view has gone largely unexplored.

As noted earlier, Gallup's study of 10,000 followers reveals four basic needs. They want their leaders to display:

- **Trust:** Respect, integrity and honesty
- **Compassion:** Caring, friendship, happiness and love
- **Stability:** Security, strength, support and peace
- **Hope:** Direction, faith and guidance

## Measuring Strengths

Gallup's new online *StrengthsFinder* assessment helps you identify which of 34 theme-based strengths you have and they fit into the four domains of leadership strength: execution, Influence, relationship-building and strategic thinking.

You can also take advantage of similar free online tools.

## Defining Strengths

Strengths development requires you to understand several key terms:

A strength is your ability to consistently produce positive outcomes through near-perfect performance in a specific task. It is composed of:

- **Skills**—your ability to perform a task's fundamental steps. Skills do not naturally exist within us; they must be acquired through formal or informal training and practice.
- **Knowledge**—what you know, such as your awareness of historical dates and your grasp of the rules of a game. Knowledge must be acquired through formal or informal education.
- **Talents**—how you naturally think, feel and behave (i.e., the inner drive to compete, sensitivity to others' needs, being outgoing at social gatherings). Talents are innate and unique to each of us.

## Finding Your Strengths

We display our strengths each day, and we don't necessarily require a formal assessment to discover where we excel.

- Our **yearnings** can reveal the presence of a talent, particularly when we recognize them early in life. A yearning can be described as an internal force—an almost magnetic attraction that leads you to a particular activity or environment time and again.
- **Rapid learning** also signals talent. Your brain may light up when you undertake a new challenge. You'll feel a whole bank of switches flick to the “on” position and feel invigorated.
- If you feel great **satisfaction** (psychological fulfillment) when meeting new challenges, you've likely identified a talent. Pay close attention to situations that bring you these en-ergizing feelings. If you can identify them, you're well on your way to pinpointing some of your dominant talents.
- If you're so engrossed in an activity that you lose track of time (**timelessness**), you're engaged at a deep, natural level—another indicator of talent.
- **Glimpses of excellence** are flashes of outstanding performance observed by you or others. In these moments, the task at hand has tapped some of your greatest talents.

Talents are the foundation for developing your strengths. Use your *StrengthsFinder* report or another assessment tool to identify them. Hone them for a more fulfilling life.

## 34 Personal Strengths

The Gallup Organization identified 34 distinct personal strengths after interviewing 1.7 million professionals over 40 years:

Gallup's 34 Strengths StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath (Gallup Press, 2007)		
1	Achiever	Constantly driven to accomplish tasks
2	Activator	Sets things in motion
3	Adaptability	Adept at accommodating changes in direction/plan
4	Analytical	Requires data/proof to make sense of circumstances
5	Arranger	Enjoys orchestrating many tasks/variables
6	Belief	Strives to find ultimate meaning in everything he/she does
7	Command	Embraces leadership positions without fearing confrontation
8	Communication	Uses words to inspire action and education
9	Competition	Thrives on comparison and competition
10	Connectedness	Seeks to unite others through commonalities
11	Consistency	Treats everyone the same to avoid unfair advantage
12	Context	Reviews the past to make better decisions
13	Deliberative	Proceeds with caution and a planned approach
14	Developer	Sees others' untapped potential
15	Discipline	Makes sense of the world by imposing order
16	Empathy	In tune with others' emotions
17	Focus	Has a clear sense of direction
18	Futuristic	Eyes the future to drive today's success
19	Harmony	Seeks to avoid conflict and achieve consensus
20	Ideation	Sees underlying concepts that unite disparate ideas
21	Includer	Instinctively works to include everyone
22	Individualization	Draws upon individuals' uniqueness to create successful teams
23	Input	Constantly collects information/objects for future use
24	Intellection	Enjoys thinking and thought-provoking conversation; can compress complex concepts into simplified models
25	Learner	Constantly challenged; learns new skills/information to feel successful
26	Maximizer	Takes people and projects from great to excellent
27	Positivity	Injects levity into any situation
28	Relator	Most comfortable with fewer, deeper relationships
29	Responsibility	Always follows through on commitments
30	Restorative	Thrives on solving difficult problems
31	Self-Assurance	Stays true to beliefs; self-confident
32	Significance	Others to see him/her as significant
33	Strategic	Can see a clear direction in complex situations
34	Woo	Can easily persuade

Each of these strengths contributes to the four leadership domains: Execution, Influence, Relationship Building and Strategic Thinking.

**Gallup Leadership Strengths**  
*Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders, Teams and Why People Follow*  
 by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie (Gallup Press, 2013)

EXECUTION		
ACHIEVER ARRANGER BELIEF	CONSISTENCY DELIBERATIVE DISCIPLINE	FOCUS RESPONSIBILITY RESTORATIVE
INFLUENCING		
ACTIVATOR COMMAND COMMUNICATION	COMPETITION MAXIMIZER SELF-ASSURANCE	SIGNIFICANCE WOO
RELATIONSHIP BUILDING		
ADAPTABILITY DEVELOPER CONNECTEDNESS	EMPATHY HARMONY INCLUDER	INDIVIDUALIZATION POSITIVITY RELATOR
STRATEGIC THINKING		
ANALYTICAL CONTEXT FUTURISTIC	IDEATION INPUT INTELLECTION	LEARNER STRATEGIC

## Growing Strengths for the Future

*“People have several times more potential for growth when they invest energy in developing their strengths instead of correcting their deficiencies.”- Tom Rath*

**M**any people fall into the trap of trying to “fix” their deficits and flaws instead of expanding their strengths.

Use the Gallup data to identify your talents and convert them into strengths. You can then increase your leadership effectiveness and build stronger, balanced teams.

Remember: Leaders stay true to who they are. They make sure they have the right people around them. Those who surround themselves with similar personalities will always be at a disadvantage, as they’re too insecure to enlist partners and team members with complementary strengths.

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