Learn, Leverage, Lead
Strengths-based Strategies for Coaching Others

March 5, 2010

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DISCUSSION: Why do Conversations about Talent Matter?

Strengths Awareness → Confidence → Self-Efficacy → Motivation to excel → Engagement
Apply strengths to areas needing improvement → Greater likelihood of success

Gallup Poll: Engagement as a function of recognition of talent.

- Engaged
- Not Engaged
- Actively
- Disengaged
“I have never met a successful leader who wasn’t aware of his talents and working to sharpen them”

-Wesley Clark, Former NATO Supreme Allied Commander

DISCUSSION: Learn Your Own Strengths

• Figure out where and how your strengths can help you in your current position.
• Improve your skills and knowledge to sharpen your strengths.
• Intentionally redesign your job toward your strengths.
• Donate your strengths to the team whenever possible.

DISCUSSION: Strengths Development Framework: Scope and Sequence
**ACTIVITY: Importance of Questions**

- Look to good examples.
- Practice Changing “tells” to “asks”.
- Remember good questions asked of you or questions you would like to be asked.
- Pre plan questions.

Try to change each tell below into an ask.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TELL (Statement)</th>
<th>ASK (Question)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From what you say I can tell you are really competitive.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have heard people say you take on too much work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are so good at making work flow smoothly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could never read as much as you.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION: Coaching Blind Spots

- Be aware of your bias.
- People take different paths to the same destination.

Valuing

Appreciating

Respecting

Understanding

Judging
ACTIVITY: Coaching Blind Spots

No theme of talent is better or worse than any other. The goal of a Strengths Performance Coach is to help individuals leverage their talents—regardless of the themes they come from—as a foundation of strengths development.

Write a theme name in each blank below and then discuss what you wrote with a partner in your group. The benefit of being candid is avoiding a blind spot.

1. If I were really honest, my first reaction to _________ was less than positive.
2. I know a person who has a lot of talent in _________, and I find this person difficult to work with.
3. I’ll need to watch for ____________ in action so I can see firsthand how this theme can be helpful in a role.
4. I wish I had more _______ talent.
5. I wonder what my world would look like if I had more _______ talent.
6. I need a better understanding of _________ talent.
7. I fear I may have a difficult time being a great coach when it comes to _________.
8. I think _____________ is a really valuable theme.
9. Wouldn’t it be nice if everyone had a lot of _______________ talent?
**ACTIVITY: Coaching Landmines**

Consider a possible response to the landmines below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Possible Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t like it!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was having a bad day when I took this and I want to take it again.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t believe it!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have too much _____(insert theme).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would it change if I took it again?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you going to use this information to hire and fire.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This did not tell me anything I did not already know.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCE: Coaching Tips

1. Your value it to help them see the power of their own greatest talents.

2. Check to see if the person understands what you are saying.

3. Offer the person an opportunity to talk about talents from a particular theme.

4. Think themes. Pick up on their vocabulary. Understand the types of talents associated with them.

5. Individuals develop in response to another human being.

6. As the person what they expect from the session.

7. Start where the person is.

8. Acceptance cannot be forced.

9. Questions are the key to discovery.

10. Talk 20% of the time. Listen 80% of the time.
DISCUSSION: Creation of Strength Based Teams

- Good leaders and managers pay attention to strengths when forming teams.
- Productive teams have a variety of strengths represented and a balance of strengths and weaknesses.
- People need not be well rounded, teams should be.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXECUTING</th>
<th>INFLUENCING</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP BUILDING</th>
<th>STRATEGIC THINKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>Activator</td>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Analytical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranger</td>
<td>Command</td>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Connectedness</td>
<td>Futuristic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Ideation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative</td>
<td>Maximizer</td>
<td>Harmony</td>
<td>Input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Self-Assurance</td>
<td>Includer</td>
<td>Intellection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Individualization</td>
<td>Learner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Woo</td>
<td>Positivity</td>
<td>Strategic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restorative</td>
<td></td>
<td>Relator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What Strong Teams Have in Common

- Conflict doesn’t destroy strong teams because strong teams focus on results.
- Strong teams prioritize what’s best for the organization and then move forward.
- Members of strong teams are as committed to their personal lives as they are to their work.
- Strong teams embrace diversity.
- Strong teams manage for talent.
DISCUSSION: Strengths Based Management

Strength Based Meetings
- Publish each department member’s strengths.
- At each staff meeting have one member share his most dominant strength with the group.
- Discuss situations where she can donate her strength more often.
- Share his most dominant weakness.
- Discuss how the department can help her stop using her weakness.

Strength Based Performance Reviews
- How much time do you spend discussing how to fix weaknesses?
- How much time do you spend discussing strengths?
- Can you change that paradigm?

The Strategy of the Strengths Chat
One of the best ways to identify each person’s unique talents and motivations is to ask if you simple questions and to listen carefully to the answers. Have a strengths chat.

- Brainstorm places where a great manager would have a strengths chat with others?

What are some basic starter questions that can be used during a strengths chat?
- Where can I expect to see the best of you?
- What tasks associated with this project/position do you look forward to the most?
- What do you love about your job?
- What was the best day at work, you had in the last three months? What were you doing and why did you enjoy it so much?
- Where and when can I lean most heavily on you?
- What was the best praise or recognition you’ve ever received?
- When should I tread lightly with you?
- What kinds of situations, should I actively steer you away from?
- What tasks associated with the project/position do you dread?
- What about your job do you loathe?
- What’s the best way for you to learn a new skill?
Strengths chat tips for managers

- Remember a strengths chat is not a goal setting session or a performance review but a conversation directed at ways to allow the employee to play to their strengths more often.
- Listen. Do not confirm or deny whether or not the employee is correct about their strengths or weaknesses.
- Paraphrase back your understanding of their self described strengths.
- Listen for phrases like; I can’t wait to... or I love it when...or I can’t stand it when...
- Do not talk about abilities, skill sets, style or performance. It is a conversation about what makes the employee feel strong.

Strengths Commitment

- What is one thing you will do differently starting tomorrow based on what you have learned today?
SUGGESTED READING


