

The Importance of Using Our Strengths:

Are You Making A BIG MISTAKE by NOT asking these 2 critical questions?

1. How am I going to use my strengths at work today?
2. How can I strengthen a strength, or use the strength in a new way?

The workplace is a prime example of where your strengths are taken for granted, and your shortfalls are given much of the attention. When a person takes a 360° Assessment and it shows one is excellent at delegation, it would be quite unusual to think about strengthening this strength further, or to look for other ways or other venues to leverage this strength. Yet, think how much training would go toward a manager's development if a 360° showed the manager had very low scores working well with others. Research shows that people with *poor people skills* are sent to training and coaching seminars designed to help them with their deficiency in working well with others, with very little evidence of any significant improvement.

Lead researcher Marcus Buckingham, in the Gallup Organization twenty-year study of 200,000 managers, came to the conclusion that organizations cannot afford to just fix employees' weaknesses. Because fixing weaknesses often doesn't work, and at best it only helps people prevent failure. *It's within the strengths of employees that lie the true opportunities for world-class performance.*

According to the Gallup Study (and subsequent studies), only 17% of people spend most of their day working with their strengths.

Fact: Successful leaders focus most of their time utilizing, strengthening, and finding ways to use their strengths in new ways.

Myth: Most people believe they will be noticed and promoted by being extremely well rounded in our skills, with no extraordinary strengths to speak of.

Research: The Gallup Study around the world arrived at a surprising finding. Managers were asked to agree with one of these two statements:

- 1 People's greatest room for improvement and career advancement is in their areas of greatest strengths.
- 2 People's room for improvement as well as career advancement is in overcoming areas of greatest weaknesses.

41% agreed with statement #1

59% agreed with statement #2,

Metaphorically, statements #1 and #2 are as **MANY MILES APART** as the distance between the Taj Mahal



... and the Planet Saturn:



762,700,000 miles between the Taj Mahal and Saturn. Almost the same difference in the answers given to Statements # 1 and 2 above.

What's Different about this Action Planning Guide?

The INSIGHTMirror 360 Action Planning Guide rejects boiler-plate generalizations about enhancing your strengths and managing your weaknesses. Our guide is most unusual because it is more about fully utilizing one's strengths rather than fixing one's weaknesses.

You have to deal with weaknesses! If you don't manage the weeds, you will soon be left with a once beautiful garden now left in decay.

Our mindsets are culturally *hardwired* to overlook our strengths and obsessed to focus on fixing our weaknesses.

On the very first page of your INSIGHTMirror 360 Feedback Report we encouraged you to spend more time looking for your strengths instead of dwelling on your weaknesses. Yet, regardless of how much willpower you exerted, you probably, just by habit, did just the opposite. Perhaps we are hard-wired to be in a mindset that hones in our weaknesses and simply takes our strengths for granted.

It's as if a myth was drilled into our heads since early childhood that if I *really put my mind* to it, I can do almost anything. This notion is ingrained in our language: "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again." "Practice makes perfect." These superhero slogans shape our mindsets that all weaknesses can and should be overcome, and somehow we can be could at everything. Nonsense! With some practice as shown in Section IV, this mindset can be transformed.

Dr. Daniel Coleman, Emotional Intelligence, 1995
One of the most important and influential books in the last 20 years, New York Times Book Section, 2009.
We should spend less time ranking children (and adults) and more time helping them to identify their natural gifts and *strengths*.

The single most important contribution education can make to a child's development is to help him toward a field where his talents best suit him, where he will be satisfied and competent."

If President Lincoln took a 360°, according to his law partner and friend William Henderson, it would demonstrate that he was a terrible administrator. Henderson asserted that Lincoln conducted administrative affairs in the same haphazard fashion he filed his legal papers: by using his top hat as a filing cabinet.

Two Superb Examples on Strengths:

1. At the 1984 Olympics, the Chinese captured the gold medal in ping-pong. Their coach, Liu Guoliang, was asked: Tell us about your team's training regimen. Liu Guoliang answered: "We practice eight hours a day perfecting our strengths." Asked the reporter, "Could you be a little more specific?" The coach replied: "Here is our philosophy. If you develop your strengths to the maximum, the strengths become so great they overwhelm all weaknesses. Our best player, Kong Linghui plays only his forehand. Though he cannot play backhand, and his competition knows this, his forehand is so invincible that it cannot be beaten." Source: Dr. Donald O. Clifton, Soar with Your Strengths.

2. A particularly interesting experiment used video to record a bowling match. For one team, researchers at Case Western Reserve edited out all of the mistakes and showed the team the film of everything they had done right. For the second team, they edited out everything done right and used the more traditional training strategizing how to correct them. While both teams improved, the team seeing what they did right (their strengths) had 100% greater improvement than the team that was shown their mistakes.

(Almost) MUST READING:

The information you receive in your Feedback Report is a compilation of people's perceptions. The perceptions may be objectively incorrect, but that's a moot point.

People's perceptions are their reality, and it is important that you appreciate this fact if you wish to change some of their perceptions