

## ***Why Strengths Matter in Development and Training***

Are Your Training and Developing Efforts Failing Short?

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Dental offices can invest a lot of time and money hiring, training, and developing their teams. Does it really pay off? A simple answer could be, well sure, such investments can enhance skills and boost effectiveness, affectiveness, and innovation. Yet far too often, leaders and managers overlook a crucial element: complementing employees' knowledge, skills, and experience by maximizing the power of their innate ***Talents***.

### ***Moving toward a strengths-based solution***

Not everyone can excel at a particular task, even with training, effort, and a positive attitude. Though training can help a person improve, most employees will not achieve excellence performing a task unless their talents align naturally to perform that task with excellence in the first place.

Gallup research confirms, people and organizations who know and use their strengths tend to be better performers. Workers who received strengths feedback had turnover rates that were lower than for employees who received no feedback. In a study, which looked at comparative productivity data, found teams with managers who received strengths feedback showed greater productivity post-intervention than teams with managers who received no feedback. And a Gallup study of business units, ranging from small to large, found units with managers who received strengths feedback showed greater profitability post-intervention relative to units in which the manager received no feedback.

Organizations who want to boost productivity and innovation can find a way to help employees apply their natural abilities to the day-to-day requirements of their role. Implementing a strengths-based approach often demands a fresh mindset; the old ways will not do. The questions below can help employees figure out how they can best apply their talents in their role -- and can help developmental managers and leaders learn how to use a strengths-based approach to boost organizational performance.

***Employees:*** If you are involved in activities, which you already naturally are inclined to do well, your attitude toward work is different and you contribute more to your workplace compared with someone who may have similar skills, yet less natural ability. ***Doing what you do best is essential to being a star performer at work.***

*Employees* - You can ask yourself these questions:

#### **Do I know what I do best every day?**

What do I enjoy most in my day-to-day activities at work?

How much time do I spend doing what I enjoy most?

What part of my current role energizes me?

What were my greatest accomplishments in the past six months?

In my work, can I connect my talents to my accomplishments?

#### **Do others know what I do best every day?**

Am I communicating to the right people about what I do best?

Have I gathered input and feedback from the right people on how to apply my talents in my role?

Is there a career path that my manager and I can agree on, which builds on what

I do best?

***Developmental Managers:***

You have a different challenge: to embed strengths into your workgroup's culture and everyday process. *Managers* who want to capitalize on employee talents can first understand each employee is unique and brings distinct talents to their role. To gain the most benefits from significantly boosting employee engagement and satisfaction along with productivity and profitability, can require changed behavior on your part along with a need to discard some long-held premises.

Learn to use the ***Career Conference*** as a way of affirming and listening to each person on your team; to set them up for success, to increase their engagement in their own learning and growing, and for you to better understand how *Job Descriptions* can be best when they are dynamic and uniquely fitted to each team member over time.

As a ***Developmental Manager***, you can ask yourself these questions:

Do employees clearly understand the priorities in their day-to-day work?

Are there information flow barriers in your organization?

Do workers have the resources and support they need from teams outside their workgroups? This is crucial to superior performance.

Do people feel comfortable asking for help and giving opinions?

What channels of formal and informal communication can they use to voice opinions and share ideas across the organization?

What can you do to use everyday, which encourages points of contact to create conversations with an individual and/or team which can lead to significantly increasing employee effectiveness, affectiveness, engagement and satisfaction along with boosting productivity and profitability?

***Leaders:***

As a *Leader* you have an opportunity to transform an organization's culture by implementing a strengths-based approach to employee development. Transformational change requires more than providing training to current employees. It demands a strategic approach to identifying the best performers in a role and finding more employees who are like the very best.

As a ***Development and Emerging Leader***, you can ask yourself these questions:

Does your organization have systems in place to study your best performers and replicate excellence and high performance across the organization?

Do you have a scientific way to identify the unique and differentiating talents of high performers?

Once identified, can you integrate those attributes with workforce planning, career progression, and succession management to ensure that the right people with the right talents are in the right roles?

Are you providing opportunities for star employees to grow in their roles?

Are you building, appreciating, and communicating excellence at all levels?

As an organization, are you providing the right opportunities to people, based on their natural abilities?

Are you promoting the right people into management and leadership roles?

Employees, managers, and leaders are encouraged to answer these questions as candidly as possible. Your solutions, be they individual, sub-groups, total team, or organizational level, will be influenced by the questions you ask, your willingness to walk away from the old ways of developing, and your ability to transform your culture to realize real competitive advantages. You can dedicate your every day work to the advancement of these *best practices* within your organization and create and sustain a better and stronger workplace. An organization's advantage is gained through its people who can truly be more effective, affective, engaged and find satisfaction in their work, which in turn they then perform appropriately faster, better, and with greater ease.

There is an *Ethic of Courage and Congruence*, which emerges over time in those who seek to offer *Positive Health Choices* to their patients/clients within the framework of a *Strengths-Based Organization*; relentlessly pursuing innovation, technological advancements, and a *best practices* approach to growth and development. Often the word *Integral* is used by some authors to describe an *Integrity* deep within a person, which develops and finds its strength through a life well lived from the inside-out as apposed to the outside-in; that person can be spoken of as *Authentic*. A classic dictionary definition of *Integral*, not related to math, is; *belonging as an essential part of the whole; necessary to completeness; constituent: an integral part.*

Helping employees apply their talents in their roles is just a first step on the road to your organization's continuous improvement. In the long run, selecting, training, and developing, the right employees will be much more impactful than training the wrong ones and leads to significantly increasing employee effectiveness, affectiveness, engagement, and satisfaction along with boosting productivity and profitability? This too is within your reach and can be your experience!

## **A Conceptual Formula of Developmental Management/Leadership**

Donald O. Clifton, PhD

**Talent x (Relationship + Expectation + Recognition) = Growth**