When Strengths Run Amok

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Bob Kaplan

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Few managers know their strengths

"Most Americans do not know what their strengths are. When you ask them, they look at you with a blank stare."

- Peter Drucker

Competence & Awareness


Rating Agreement

Over-raters
Weakest performers, most likely to derail

Under-raters
Learners; highest performers and most likely to be promoted

Talented & Unaware

"Rate this leader’s overall effectiveness on a scale from 1 to 10, where 5 is adequate and 10 is outstanding."
N = 421 senior managers
Hey, Rocky, watch me pull a rabbit out of my hat. This time for sure. Nothing up my sleeves. Presto!

Again?! But that trick never works.

Hmmm... guess I don't know my own strength!

Not knowing their strengths, they're liable to go overboard

Overkill is Real
Percentage rated “too much” by coworkers

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<th></th>
<th>Forceful</th>
<th>Enabling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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55%

Rated “too much” on one or more dimension

N = 421 senior managers

Self-awareness
Percentage of self-raters who agree they do “too much”

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<th>Forceful</th>
<th>Enabling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>28%</td>
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47%

Of over-doers don't realize they overdo it

N = 421 senior managers
Overused strengths crowd out the other side

...a full range of motion; able to freely use opposing approaches, unrestricted by bias in favor of some and avoidance of others.
Correlations with Versatility

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<tr>
<td>Team Productivity</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Vitality</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived effectiveness</td>
<td>.71</td>
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In Practice

What can coaches do? What can the field do?

What Coaches are Up Against

Two blindspots and a misconception
What Coaches Can Do

Two Remedies

Remedy #1
Administer positive feedback, plenty of it.

Underestimate Your Ability

Do too much
Positive FB

Remedy #2
Use counterweights.

What the Field Can Do

Two Recommendations

The Problem
A big blindspot in how managers are assessed and developed

Recommendation #1
Make a place for strengths overused.
Recommendation #2

Put a focus on lopsidedness.

Too much

Too little

"Yin"  "Yang"

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