Leadership tools

Optimizing leadership strengths, reducing risks
Optimizing Strengths

Similar to the ancient Asian ‘Yin–Yang’ principle, we believe that leadership development is about balancing two opposite and interdependent dualities — optimizing strengths and reducing the effect of performance risks, including weaknesses.
We have developed a simple and powerful approach to optimizing your strengths. We call it the 3-Es Strengths Optimization Approach: Experience, Engage and Educate. You can use this when you want to develop an underdeveloped strength (i.e. one where your level of skill and effectiveness is low) or when you want to take your strength from ‘good to great’.

It is based on the well-researched and practised 70:20:10 adult learning model which shows that the most effective learners develop 70 percent of their learning from on-the-job experiences, 20 percent from engaging support from others and 10 percent from formal education and training.

In considering how you can optimize your leadership strengths, think through the following and complete the table below:

**Experience:** What on-the-job experiences (project work, stretch assignments, team roles, etc.) will help stretch you outside your comfort zone to maximise your strengths?

**Engage:** Who can you engage as coach, mentor, feedback-giver, etc. to help you develop your strengths to the next level?

**Educate:** What education and training will you need to become more effective in areas of natural strength?
Adopt a “less is more” principle and try to identify no more than 2–3 actions to focus on at any one time to maximize your chances of success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths I will optimize to improve my leadership</th>
<th>Experience: 70%</th>
<th>Engage: 20%</th>
<th>Educate: 10%</th>
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Reducing risks

Performance risks are things that can get in the way of you achieving your leadership goals and peak performance. Don’t ignore these risks. Build awareness of the most critical risks to your performance and find ways to reduce these to maximize your leadership success.

There are three main types of performance risk:

**Strengths in overdrive**

This is when certain strengths (or a combination of strengths) are over-used, or used in the wrong situation or with the wrong person, resulting in unintended negative outcomes.

**Limiting weaknesses**

Limiting weaknesses are weaknesses that represent a genuine blocker to achieving success in your goal, job or career.

**Internal and external blockers**

There are two types:

- Internal blockers are self-limiting beliefs and assumptions (e.g. low self-confidence) that hold you back from using your strengths.
- External blockers are work environment factors impacting your development and performance.

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**Reduce performance risks** (inc. overdrive and weaknesses)

- **Dial up or dial down** the volume of your strengths
- **Draw on** people whose strengths are different from yours
- **Develop** and practice new skills and habits
There are three potential strategies to reduce performance risks:

- **Dial up or dial down your strength**: What strengths can be dialed up or dialed down to match the needs of the situation and reduce the impact of performance risks?

- **Draw on people with strengths different from yours**: Who can you partner with who has strengths that complement your own to overcome risk areas?

- **Developing new habits**: What new habits and skills do you need to develop to reduce risk areas? How can you develop these through on-the-job experiences, engaging others and education?

Think about the biggest risks to your leadership and how you can reduce these by completing the table below.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Risk areas I need to reduce</th>
<th>Strategy/actions to reduce risk</th>
<th>Daily habits to implement the change</th>
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Strengths Partnership Ltd

Strengths Partnership (www.strengthspartnership.com) is a global leader in business psychology and leadership development dedicated to helping organizations deliver positive workplaces and peak performance.

Our Strengthscope® system (www.strengthscope.com) is the world’s most complete and innovative strengths profiling system that helps energize peak performance at work.

We have five consulting practice areas: Leadership Development, Organization Development, Team Development, Talent Assessment and Strengths Coaching.

Our values shape our culture and the way we work with clients. We strive to live our values of Passion, Pragmatism, Professionalism and Partnership everyday through our actions and decisions.