Now Discover Your Strengths

Title: *Now, Discover Your Strengths*

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Book Summary:

Unfortunately, most of us have little sense of our talents and strengths. Instead, guided by parents, teachers, managers, and psychology's fascination with pathology, we become experts in our weaknesses and spend our lives trying to repair these flaws, while our strengths lie dormant and neglected.At the heart of this book is Gallup's StrengthsFinder assessment, the product of a 25-year, multimillion-dollar effort to identify the most prevalent human strengths. The program introduces 34 "themes" and reveals how they can be translated into personal and career success. In developing this program, Gallup conducted psychological profiles with more than 2 million individuals to help you learn how to focus and perfect these themes.

The book includes a unique access code that allows you to take StrengthsFinder, which analyzes your instinctive reactions and reveals your five most powerful Signature Themes. Once you know which themes you lead with, the book shows you how to use them for your own development, for your success as a manager, and for the success of your organization. With profound insights on how to turn talents into strengths, *Now, Discover Your Strengths* is one of the most groundbreaking and useful business books ever written.

Book Notes:

The great organization must not only accommodate the fact that each employee is different, *it must capitalize on these differences.* (5)

To break out of this weakness spiral and to launch the strengths revolution in your own organization, you must change your assumptions about people. Start with the right assumptions, and everything else that follows from there–how you select, measure, train, and develop your people–will be right. These are the two assumptions that guide the world's best managers:

1. Each person's talents are enduring and unique.
2. Each person's greatest room for growth is in the areas of his or her greatest strength. (8)

The definition of a strength that we will use throughout this book is quite specific: consistent near perfect performance in an activity. (25)

First, for an activity to be a strength you must be able to do it consistently. (26)
Second, you do not have to have strength in every aspect of your role in order to excel. (26)
Third, you will excel only by maximizing your strengths, never by fixing your weaknesses. (26)

That excellent performers must be well rounded is one of the most pervasive myths we hope to dispel in this

book. When we studied them, excellent performers were rarely well rounded. On the contrary, they were sharp. (26)

Talents are your naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior.
Knowledge consists of the facts and lessons learned.
Skills are the steps of an activity.
These three – talents, knowledge, and skills – combine to create your strengths. (29)

In many roles you can acquire the relevant knowledge and skills to the point where you are able to get by, but no matter what the role, if you lack necessary talents, you will never be able to have consistent near perfect performance. Thus, the key to building a bona fide strength is to identify your dominant talents and then refine them with knowledge and skills. (30)

Any recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior is a talent if this pattern can be productively applied. (48)

Unable to intellectualize every minute decision, you are compelled to react instinctively. Your brain does what nature always does in situations such as this: it finds and follows the path of least resistance, your talents. (57)

The point here is not that you should always forgo this kind of weakness fixing. The point is that you should see it for what it is: damage control, not development. And as we mentioned earlier, damage control can prevent failure, but it will never elevate you to excellence. (58)

First, if you want to reveal your talents, monitor your *spontaneous, top-of-mind reactions* to the situations you encounter. (67)

Hence, the best advice is not to focus on your strengths and ignore your weaknesses but, rather, to focus on your strengths and *find ways to manage* your weaknesses. (148)

Our definition of a weakness is *anything that gets in the way of excellent performance.* (148)

Whatever you set your mind to, *you will be most successful when you craft your role to play to your signature talents most of the time*. (167)

Since each person's talents are enduring, *you should spend a great deal of time and money selecting people properly in the first place.* (216)

Since the greatest room for each person's growth is in the areas of his greatest strength, *you should focus your training time and money on educating him about his strengths and figuring out ways to build on these strengths* rather than on remedially trying to plug his "skill gaps." (216)

Measuring each employee's impact on his fellow employees can prove equally challenging. The relationship between each manager and his employees, and between each employee and his peers, is so multifaceted that you can hardly blame the organizations that attempt to legislate this relationship with predetermined competencies. To reiterate what we said before, though, we suggest that a more effective approach is to measure the outcomes of a productive culture and then hold each manager accountable for creating these outcomes, using the style that fits her best. The following twelve questions define the outcomes of a productive culture. We recommend asking each manager's employees these twelve questions, using 5 point scale (5 for "strongly agree," 1 for "strongly disagree).

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work properly?

3. At work do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days have I received recognition or praise for good work?
5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission of my company make me feel like my work is important?
9. Are my coworkers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months have I talked with someone about my progress?
12. This last year have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow? (232)

If you want to keep a talented employee, show him not just that you care about him, not just that you will help him grow, but, more important, that you *know* him, that in the truest sense of the word you recognize him. (237)

Or as we described in *First, Break All the Rules*, you can train your managers to focus each meeting on three basic questions:

- What will the employee's main focus be for the next three months?
- What new discoveries (or items of learning) is he planning?
- What new partnerships (or relationships) is he hoping to build? (238)