



If I asked you to name each of your staff's top three strengths, would you be able to do it?

Would it match their own answers?

What if I ask your other team members?

Would all of those strengths match up?

One of the biggest shifts you can make from struggling supervisor to thriving leader is shifting from a mindset where your job is to fix what you think is wrong with everybody to a mindset where your job is to identify and leverage your staff's strengths to give them the opportunity to do what they do best every day, to really maximize the impact on your team.

In the broadest sense it matters because people who have the opportunity to access their strengths are happier, they create higher morale, their productivity is better, and they stick around longer.

If you want to look at each of these data points, you can go ahead and pause the video.

I want to highlight two of them for you.

The first one which says that staff who have the opportunity to use their strengths every day are six times more likely to be engaged, and the third one that references people who know their strengths.

It's important as a leader to understand that not everybody even knows what their strengths are. It's really important to help them figure that out.

Unfortunately, only a third of people say they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day.

As a leader, you have great opportunity and power to shift this and do everything you can to make sure every staff on your team has the opportunity to do what they do best every day.

The first step is to be able to help your team identify what their strengths actually are. There are lots of ways to go about it. I encourage you to try each of these and identify where the same answers keep coming up. Then it shows you that this really is a strength because everybody sees it in a similar way.

The first step is, as with most things we do, self-reflection.

Ask your staff to think about what they think their strengths are and what they are basing that on.



Have they been told over the years they're good at that thing?

Have they received recognition or awards for that thing?

Is it just something they know deep down inside they're good at?

You can also encourage them to take self-assessments.

There's value in self-assessments. There's also a limited value, so don't put all your stock in one assessment. Take the results with everything else to help paint the bigger picture of what your staff's strengths are.

You can find some free strengths assessments in the external resource section.

Also is there an opportunity for your staff to be externally assessed?

Are there certain exams or evaluation processes that they go through?

Do you have people who come in to observe what they're doing and evaluate them based on whatever the work is that they do and the field that you're in?

What might that look like?

Finally, observations are a great way to get first-hand insight into what your staff does.

You can be the observer as the leader as well as your team can peer observe what their colleagues are doing.

Depending on the work your team does, this might be really easy and natural to provide these observation opportunities or it might be really weird and awkward. You might have to be creative.

Wherever you can, allow staff to observe one another so they can really see where each staff shines.

The sweet spot we're really talking about here is what does your staff enjoy?

What are they good at?

Generally this is the same but not always.

What does the team need?

That's really what we're talking about when it comes to identifying the strength and then leveraging it.

As the leader, it's your role to be flexible.



This is a process and like all processes, it takes time. There's no finish line. It's always going to be changing. You need to make the commitment to invest in this process.

Understand that things will change.

You might get to a place where you feel like you have a good understanding of what everyone's strengths are, they're all doing work that maximizes those strengths and then something changes- the type of work you're doing changes, someone on your team leaves, a new team member is added, team members' interests change... who knows?

Things are constantly changing.

Be adaptable and flexible to those changes.

One of the most important places you can do this is in hiring.

Traditionally when we hire we have a job description and we hire someone to do that job and do all the tasks listed in that job description.

For most people they're not going to equally be good at or equally enjoy every single task that was part of that job description.

So once someone's on board, how can you be flexible and then start to shift some of those tasks and responsibilities to people who would enjoy them more and be more effective at them?

Then you can give that person some of theirs.

It's ongoing and it's not perfect. You'll have to play around with it a lot. Don't be so stuck that, 'this is what the job description says, so that's the way we have to do it.'

Finally, be open to providing new opportunities for people.

As we shared in the beginning, not everyone even knows what their strengths are.

When there are professional growth opportunities, be generous with those opportunities because people might discover something they never knew they were good at.

Once you have a good handle on what all of your staff's strengths are, you can use this as you set up different projects and committees.

For example, in some cases you might be looking for complementary strengths.

You might need someone who's the big picture person and then someone who's the detailed person.



Then you will be able to assign people to those roles much more easily, once you understand what their strengths are.

In other cases you might be looking for supplementary strengths where you really need all your tech people on one thing or all your best writers or all your best, whatever.

You can learn how to create those teams with a strengths-based approach.

When you're doing performance reviews, whatever that looks like where you are.

Try to break the habit and tradition of most performance reviews, which is only looking back and really spending a lot of time on things that didn't go well.

You want to use performance review season to highlight all the growth and the good stuff that happened even if the goals weren't met.

If there was growth throughout the year, that should absolutely be highlighted and you should spend the majority of that conversation looking ahead.

What were some of the lessons learned and how can you build on the growth that's already happened?

Finally, let everybody know people love to be recognized and valued and appreciated for what they do well.

Don't be shy about shouting out your team and letting the rest of your organization know the wonderful stuff they're doing. The other benefit to this is that your staff will know who to go to when they need help with that thing.

If they know someone's a really good proofreader or really good at fixing things on the website or who knows, then they know they can go to that person because everybody knows that's one of their strengths.

Don't limit this to just your team.

This is good for you to think about in your own leadership.

Go through the process of self-assessment and self-reflection and getting feedback to figure out what your own strengths are.

How can you carve out opportunities for yourself to leverage and maximize those strengths?

In the areas that are not so great for you, do you invest the time to make them better or do you maybe delegate or hire somebody to fill in the gaps?

This is a really powerful shift in your leadership to start focusing on strengths.



To be the one to hold the spotlight on your staff and let them shine and really give them the space and the opportunity to do what they do best every day.

So, the most important question for you is, how do you plan to leverage your team's strengths?