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**Using Strengths for Personal, Staff, and Team Development**

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**Objectives**

1. Deepen knowledge of the philosophy, principles, and practices of strengths-based leadership.
2. Understand and become more aware of your personal strengths and the strengths of others.
3. Practice applying a strength-based lens to personal, staff, and team development.

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**StrengthsFinder Talent Themes Reflection**

1. Name your 5 talent themes:
2. What were your initial reactions to when you first saw these themes?
3. What resonated and why? What surprised you?
4. What didn’t resonate and why? What was missing?
5. What, if any, judgements came up? (e.g. Did you like some talents more than others? Did you wish you had one that you didn’t?)
6. How did this list of talents compare to your own self-reflection?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **SHIFT FROM:** |  | **SHIFT TOWARD:** |
| **Call-out culture**  Shaming people for making mistakes,  focus on regulating each other’s  language, ostracizing members of a  group for not automatically knowing the  norms of that group, etc. | 🡺 | **Build-up culture**  Appreciating and lifting up principled action and  leadership where we see it, while offering  constructive feedback to strengthen anti-racist  practice. |
| **Critiquing from the sidelines**  Critiquing people, organizations, or  movements that we aren’t a part of  working to change.  Inability to work with  contradictions and complications. | 🡺 | **Leading from the center**  Recognizing that we’ve all internalized  oppressive ideas, and engaging people and  organizations to make necessary changes  whenever possible. |
| **Deficit-based thinking**  Constant focus on identifying weaknesses  and pointing out what is lacking. | 🡺 | **Asset-based thinking**  Seeing and building on strengths, nurturing what  is working, acting on opportunities. |
| **Individual focus**  “How can I be the single best white, anti-  racist activist with the sharpest critique  /most specialized language/busiest  schedule?” | 🡺 | **Collective action**  “How can we find ways to bring more and more  people into social justice work, from lots of entry  points, to grow vibrant mass movements?” |
| **Obsession With Productivity**  “I am worth as many hours as I put in,  meetings I go to, events I plan.” Focus on  ‘deliverables’ rather than quality of work  and relationships built. | 🡺 | **Whole Movements**  Valuing whole people and varied participation in  building liberatory movements. Building  relationships with integrity. |

**Example: Catalyst Project’s Culture Shift**

**These are some ways Catalyst is working to shift white anti-racist culture:**

**Strengths Overview [[1]](#footnote-1)**

Strengths are the result of maximized talents. Specifically, a strength is mastery created when one’s most powerful talents are refined with practice and combined with acquired relevant skills and knowledge. They can be expressed in different ways, for example:

* Activities – tasks that make you engaged and energized
* Relationships – what you do for others, how you feel valued and competent
* Learning – specific ways you learn for optimal experience

The strengths-based development process encourages individuals to build strengths by acquiring skills (i.e., basic abilities) and knowledge (i.e., what you know, including facts and meaning-making from experiences) that can complement your greatest talents in application to specific tasks.

**A strength is composed of:**

* **Skills**: your basic abilities to perform the fundamental steps of a task, such as your basic ability to move through the fundamental steps of operating a computer. Skills do not naturally exist within us; they must be acquired through formal or informal training and practice.
* **Knowledge**: simply what you know, such as your awareness of facts and your grasp of the rules of a game. Knowledge does not naturally exist within us; it must be acquired through formal or informal education.
* **Talents**: the ways in which you naturally think, feel, and behave, such as the inner drive to compete, sensitivity to the needs of others, and the tendency to be outgoing at social gatherings. Although talents must come into existence naturally and cannot be acquired like skills and knowledge, we each have unique talents within us.

**Talent x (Skill + Knowledge)**

**=**

**Strength**

Talents are manifested in life experiences characterized by:

* Yearnings: the things we want to do more of in life because we enjoy them so much!
* Rapid learning: a specific talent is there when learning something new is easy to comprehend and master.
* Satisfactions: We get a feeling of reward, success, accomplishment or other ways that tap into what motivates us
* Timelessness: work and activities are "in the flow" when we lose track of time engaging in them.

These trait-like “raw materials” are believed to be the products of normal healthy development and successful experiences over childhood and adolescence.

The purpose of a strengths-based approach to leadership development is to facilitate personal development and growth. It can be used as a springboard for discussion with managers, friends, colleagues and advisers, and as a tool for self-awareness. Accordingly, feedback about talents and strengths development often forms the basis of further exploration that help individuals capitalize on their greatest talents and apply them to new challenges.

*“What would happen if we studied what was right with people?”*

- Donald Clifton

**Why Strengths? It Works!**

Gallup studied more than one million work teams, conducted more than 20,000 in-depth interviews with leaders, and drew on 50 years of Gallup Polls. Millions of employees and students worldwide have participated in the research. These studies indicate that people who have the opportunity to focus on their strengths every day are *six times* as likely to be engaged in their jobs and more than *three times* as likely to report having an excellent quality of life in general. This has significant implications for management and supervision. Consider these data from the research:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **If your manager primarily:** | **The chances of your being actively disengaged are:** |
| * Ignores you | * 40% |
| * Focuses on your weaknesses | * 22% |
| * Focuses on your strengths | * 1% |

Many learning programs are aimed at helping people become what they are not by focusing our attention on areas where we do not have natural talent or strengths.

*I had to leave home so I could find myself, find my own intrinsic nature buried under the personality that had been imposed on me.*

-Gloria Anzaldúa, Writer

Strengths based leadership on the other hand is a counter approach to the overly negative orientation of mainstream culture which is deficit based and focuses on individuals’ areas of lacking and weakness.

**Strengths-based leadership is more effective on multiple levels:**

Personal/individual success: fulfillment, satisfaction, achievement, happiness. We are more likely to succeed, be personally engaged at work, and satisfied in life if we maximize our strengths.

*“The strengths philosophy is the assertion that individuals are able to gain far more when they expend effort to build on their greatest talents than when they spend a comparable amount of effort to remediate their weaknesses.”*

Organizational success: employee engagement, productivity, organizational results.

*“In the workplace, when an organization's leadership fails to focus on individuals' strengths, the odds of an employee being engaged are a dismal 1 in 11 (9%). But when an organization's leadership focuses on the strengths of its employees, the odds soar to almost 3 in 4 (73%). When leaders focus on and invest in their employees' strengths, the odds of each person being engaged goes up* eightfold*.”*

Team success: While no individual is strong at everything, ideally the best teams are well rounded with individuals who collectively possess the range of strengths required to achieve the team’s purpose.

**Understanding and Managing for Weaknesses**

Just as critical to understanding and investing in strengths is the need to understand and manage for areas of weakness. Put more precisely, areas of weakness are things that:

*As long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold her down, so it means you cannot soar as you otherwise might.*

-Marian Anderson, Singer

* are depleting
* are frustrating
* burn us out
* make us defensive or lack confidence
* are areas of slow learning

We don’t always have the option to stop doing those things that do not play to our strengths and yet weaknesses can get in the way of excellent performance, and ultimately happiness.

**Understanding and Managing for Weaknesses (cont’d)**

Therefore, we need to understand them and assess their source. Is it because:

* A skills weakness that can be mitigated through practice?
* A knowledge weakness that can mitigated through learning?
* An absence of inherent talent that will never develop into a strength?

The next step is to develop a strategy for managing the area of weakness:

* Can you get good enough; reach a baseline of acceptable performance?
* Can you institute a support system or partner up with someone who is strong here?
* Can you use a strength to compensate and overshadow it?
* Can you stop doing it?

­**StrengthsFinder Assessment**

StrengthsFinder is actually a *talent theme* finder. It is an online measure of personal talent that identifies areas where an individual’s greatest potential for building strengths exists. By identifying one’s top themes of talent, the tool provides a starting point in the identification of specific personal talents.

A *talent theme* is a category of talents, which are defined as recurring and consistent patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior. Your five signature themes serve as a starting point in the discovery of your talents that can be productively applied to achieve success.

The tool’s intended purpose is to facilitate personal development and growth. It can be used as a springboard for discussion with managers, friends, colleagues and advisers, and as a tool for self-awareness. Accordingly, feedback about talents and strengths development often forms the basis of further exploration that help individuals capitalize on their greatest talents and apply them to new challenges.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ***What it is:*** | ***What it isn’t:*** |
| Tool for development | Tool for hiring |
| Identifies how you are wired | Tool for promotion or advancement |
| Identify the “right” vs. “wrong” or “good” vs. “bad” talents |
| Helps you understand the lens through which you view the world | Labeling people |
| Common language to integrate within the organization | One-size-fits all approach |
| Maximizes productivity | An excuse to NOT do something because it is not my strength |
| Where you find your energy vs. what exhausts you | Complete explanation of who you are and why you do things |

**Leading Self: Understanding Your Strengths**

**EXERCISE: Curiosity Interview**

You will each take turns being a speaker and being a listener.

*When you are the speaker:* Answer one of the following questions:

1. When you were a child, what did you love to do?
2. If you could spend tomorrow doing anything you wanted, what would it be? Describe it to your partner.
3. What is a job you have loved? What made you love it?

*When you are the listener:* Listen for any qualities, values, or talents you hear in the speaker’s stories. Write them down on a piece of paper as you are listening. You can write nouns, adjectives, or phrases that the speaker uses that capture the spirit of a talent, or you can write down images that come to you. Show an example with one phrase written on paper.

**Listener**: If you need to, use the following open-ended questions to help draw the story out of the speaker. Remember to stay open and curious as you listen – the goal is to better understand the speaker and their story.  *(continued on next page)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **What?**   * What was the moment? * What happened? What happened next? * What were you feeling? * What did you discover? | **Who?**   * Who inspires you to be in the flow or at your best? * Who do you have for company at those times? * Who do you inspire to be at their best? |
| **When?**   * When was this? * When else have you experienced something like this? | **Where?**   * Where is it easiest to get in the flow? * Where do you want to go next in your work? |
| **How?**   * How did this happen? * How consciously did you create the event? * How did you see yourself differently afterwards? | **~~Why~~?**  Just for the sake of experimentation, avoid WHY questions.  For some people they sound judgmental or critical. |

**DEBRIEF:**

1. What did you learn about yourself in this activity?
2. What surprised you?
3. What was affirmed?
4. How did it feel?
5. Did your talent themes show up in your story? If so, where and how? If not, what other talents did you see?

**Leading Others: Strengths Snapshot**

**EXAMPLE:**

**Kad’s Top 5 Strengths**

Input

Intellection

Connectedness

Learner

Ideation

Wildcard: Love

Wildcard: Humor

Wildcard: Listening

Wildcard: Creativity

**What you should know about how to work with me…**

*I can spend all day dreaming up new ideas and possibilities while I'm less energized by moving forward tactical bits of work. I enjoy contemplating new ideas, healthy competition of ideas, and thinking about multiple pieces of my work as if it were a chessboard. I also enjoy working in teams and communicating in a way that celebrates our unique contributions to the team and putting together team-puzzles to ensure everyone feels involved and appreciated.*

*You should also know that I am extremely hungry for growth in my working environments. When I feel stagnant or like I am not learning or receiving new information, I am not at my best. In fact, I am operating at a sub-par level. When I see a clear path towards growth I move forward with the most passion and energy in my work.*

*The other thing you should know about me is I was raised by a disciplined Black woman in my grandmother, who took tremendous pride in her faith and her ability to see the best in people. For me, that helps me see folks whom I work with for who they are striving to be and to lift up their best intentions in building trusting working relationships, even when work is stressful or frustrating. Additionally, I come from a family where we have jokes for days. I love humor and laughter - it is my drug of choice. So whenever levity can be encouraged in a work setting I am here for it.*

**Strengths Snapshot: YOUR TURN**

Wildcard:

Wildcard:

My Top 5 Signature Themes

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Wildcard:

Wildcard:

**What you should know about how to work with me…**

**Strengths Snapshot: YOUR TURN (cont’d)**

**Debrief:**

In the same groups, explore implications for working with others by discussing the following questions:

What does your supervisor need to understand about you?

* How should they communicate with you?
* How can you build a strong relationship?
* How should they understand what motivates you?
* How should they approach your professional development?
* What kinds of accomplishments are most important to you?
* How should they recognize those accomplishments?

**More Strategies for Identifying Strengths in Others**

The following represents strategies for identifying talents and strengths in staff:

* Ask them to complete the StrengthsFinder or StandOut assessments
* Conduct a “curiosity interview”
* Inquire – ask staff questions about what they enjoy working on, when they’re at their best, etc.,
* Revisit professional development plans. Do they balance activities that focus on challenges with activities that leverage strengths?
* Discuss how you can support them to manage their weaknesses.

**Strengths Activity: FREE a Strength**

**PREPARATION:**

Select an activity that is one of your Strengths.

Think of activities that you do that make you feel strong (energized, powerful, satisfied, happy, engaged, confident), not activities determined by others.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| When doing this, I am thinking.... | I can’t wait to start  This is fun  I could do this forever  This is my calling  This is perfect for me |
| When doing this, I am feeling.... | Powerful, passionate  Enthusiastic  Natural, authentic  Smooth, confident |
| When doing this, I want to.... | Find a way to do more of it  Learn more about it  Find role models and people to learn from  Look for others who are really good at it |

**Ask yourself what matters.**

**EXAMPLE:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One of my strengths is:  *Preparing presentations on leadership.* | |
| 1. Does it matter WHY I am doing this activity?  *Yes, I don’t like preparing just for the sake of organizing my thoughts. I need to know that it will be information that will be utilized and useful to people.* | 2. Does it matter WHEN I do this activity?  *Yes, I can’t do this kind of work later in the day, it has to be early and it has to be in a quiet place with few distractions.* |
| 3. Does it matter WHO I do this activity with/for/to?  *Kind of. The audience has to be engaged, they have to want this content and we have to have similar goals and values. But within that, it could be any type of group (staff, colleagues, boards, clients, etc.)* | 4. Does it matter WHAT the activity is about?  *Yes. While I like developing all kinds of materials and content, I do have to enjoy it myself. If it were a session on how to play fantasy football I would not be as fulfilled*. |
| Strength Statement:  *I feel strong when I am preparing presentations or training content on topics that I enjoy, when I have ample time to prepare adequately, and will deliver the session for people who do similar work or share my values.* | |

**YOUR TURN:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One of my strengths is: | |
| 1. Does it matter WHY I am doing this activity? | 2. Does it matter WHEN I do this activity? |
| 3. Does it matter WHO I do this activity with/for/to? | 4. Does it matter WHAT the activity is about? |
| Strength Statement: | |

**FREE a Strength:**

You will make the greatest contribution not by trying to transform yourself into someone different but instead by focusing on and enhancing who you already are.

This exercise should be applied to your strengths one at a time.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **F** | FOCUS  Identify how and where this specific Strength helps you in your current role. |
| **R** | RELEASE  Find the missed opportunities in your current role. |
| **E** | EDUCATE  Learn new skills and techniques to build this Strength. |
| **E** | EXPAND  Build your job around this Strength. |

**Directions**:

1. Write your selected Strength below.
2. With your partner, use the following questions to FREE your chosen Strength. Switch handouts.
3. Partner A interview Partner B and write down the answers that your partner gives you.
4. Then Partner B interviews Partner A.

**One of my Strengths is:**

**Q1: How often/when do you use this Strength at work right now?**

**Q2: How has this Strength helped you be successful in your job?**

**Q3: What new situations can you envision for yourself to use this Strength more?**

**Q4: What new systems or techniques can you try to really accelerate this Strength?**

**Q5: What new skills can you learn to leverage this Strength?**

**Q6: How can you expand your role to make better use of this Strength?**

**Q7: How can you use this Strength more in one of your key areas of responsibility?**

**Strengths Work: Take Action**

Look back at all the questions you answered to FREE your Strength.

1. Note the actions you wrote down.
2. Star the top two action items that you think will make the most difference to maximize this Strength. Write these action items below.

Make sure your actions are specific and have a timeline.

*“If you are going to make the greatest contribution possible for the longest period of time, you’ve got to base that contribution around activities that are, in and of themselves satisfying to you.”*

**Action 1:**

Complete Date:

**Action 2:**

Complete Date:

**Strengths Activity: STOP a Weakness**

**PREPARATION:**

Select an activity that is one of your weaknesses.

Think of activities that you do that make you feel weak (depleted, frustrated, dissatisfied, unhappy, disengaged, lacking confidence).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| When doing this, I am thinking.... | I hate it when I have to do this  Will this ever end?  This is going to take forever  Thank goodness this is nearly over  Can I sit this one out? |
| When doing this, I am feeling.... | Frustrated, fragmented  Disjointed, awkward  Drained, despondent  Bored, distracted |
| When doing this, I want to.... | Avoid having to do it again  Get someone else to do it  Shove it aside and ignore it  Do anything else instead |

**Ask yourself what matters.**

**EXAMPLE:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One of my weaknesses is:  *Giving people negative feedback when they do not follow-through on expectations or do not meet commitments.* | |
| 1. Does it matter WHY I am doing this activity?  *Any conversation that requires me to hold people accountable is hard for me, especially if my feelings are hurt or I feel personally disrespected.* | 2. Does it matter WHEN I do this activity?  *It’s always hard, but I do need time to prepare my thoughts so that I can be clear and open minded to the conversation.* |
| 3. Does it matter WHO I do this activity with/for/to?  *Yes. If it is someone I am closer to, it’s more difficult.* | 4. Does it matter WHAT the activity is about?  *No, it could be about anything.* |
| Weakness Statement:  *I feel weak when I have to give people feedback, especially those I am closest to, negative feedback about an expectation or commitment that they did not meet. It is hardest when I personally feel disrespected.* | |

**YOUR TURN:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One of my weaknesses is: | |
| 1. Does it matter WHY I am doing this activity? | 2. Does it matter WHEN I do this activity? |
| 3. Does it matter WHO I do this activity with/for/to? | 4. Does it matter WHAT the activity is about? |
| Weakness Statement: | |

**STOP a Weakness:**

You can take ownership of your life and learn strategies to mitigate those activities that weaken (deplete, frustrate, dissatisfy) you.

This exercise should be applied to your weaknesses one at a time.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **S** | STOP  Simply eliminate this activity. |
| **T** | TEAM UP  Partner with others who are strengthened by this activity. |
| **O** | OFFER UP  Volunteer to swap your weakness for a colleague’s strength. |
| **P** | PERCEIVE  Look at your weakness from a different perspective. |

**Directions**:

1. Write your selected weakness below.
2. With your partner, use the following questions to help you STOP your chosen weakness. Switch handouts.
3. Partner A interview Partner B and write down the answers that your partner gives you.
4. Then Partner B interviews Partner A.

**One of my weaknesses is:**

**Q1: Is this activity critical to your job? Can you just stop doing it?**

**Q2: If you can’t stop doing it, how can you significantly reduce the amount of time you spend on it?**

**Q3: Do you know anyone that you work with that really likes doing this activity? Could you arrange to swap activities?**

**Q4: Can someone teach you a skill or technique to help you get this activity done more efficiently and easily?**

**Q5: How can you make this activity more fun to do?**

**Q6: Which of your strengths can you leverage to get this activity done more easily?**

**Q7: If you have to do this activity, how can you shift your perspective on the way you do it or think about it?**

**Strengths Work: Take Action**

Look back at all the questions you answered to STOP your weakness.

1. Note the actions you wrote down.
2. Star the top two action items that you think will make the most difference to minimize this weakness. Write these action items below.

Make sure your actions are specific and have a timeline.

*“You’ve got a finite amount of time to dedicate to your achievements, and that time taken up with activities that weaken you is a rather bad use of your time.”*

*“The one thing you need to know about sustained individual success is to find out what you don’t like doing, and stop doing it.”*

**Action 1:**

Complete Date:

**Action 2:**

Complete Date:

**Leading Teams**

|  |
| --- |
| **The 4 Domains of Leadership Strength** |
| Executing  Influencing  Relationship Building  Strategic Thinking |

Those with a dominant strength in executing know how to make things happen. They implement solutions and have the ability to “catch” an idea and make it a reality.

Those with a dominant strength in influencing help their team reach a much broader audience. They sell the team’s ideas inside and outside the organization. They can take charge, speak up, or make sure the group is heard.

Those with a dominant strength in relationship building provide the essential glue that holds the team together. They have a unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts.

Those with a dominant strength in strategic thinking keep us all focused on what could be. They constantly absorb and analyze information and help the team make better decisions. They continually stretch our thinking for the future.

How the 34 themes sort into the four domains of leadership strength:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Executing** | **Influencing** | **Relationship Building** | **Strategic Thinking** |
| Achiever  Arranger  Belief  Consistency  Deliberative  Discipline  Focus  Responsibility  Restorative | Activator  Command  Communication  Competition  Maximizer  Self-Assurance  Significance  Woo | Adaptability  Developer  Connectedness  Empathy  Harmony  Includer  Individualization  Positivity  Relator | Analytical  Context  Futuristic  Ideation  Input  Intellection  Learner  Strategic |

**When a team is well-rounded, it is made-up of individuals with complementary talents. Here’s how a well-balanced team achieves results:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Leadership Strength Domain** | **How Members with This Leadership Strength Contribute to Team Results** | **The Risks of Gap/Absence of Strengths** |
| **EXECUTING** | Take action  Drive implementation  Ensure team is responsible for outcomes  Steadfast and hard working | Incompletion and poor quality: *Missed deadlines and inability to complete projects leads to stagnation, financial losses and team frustration.* |
| **INFLUENCING** | Speak up and ensure the team’s needs are heard  Take charge when needed  Confident; conveys assurance and strength of team  Compelling and persuasive | Impact of team degraded/ impact weakened: *Inside the organization the team’s relevance and impact is not understood or seen as less important than others.* |
| **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING** | Builds trust  Establishes a shared culture among team members  Members are open to feedback  Healthy debate and ability to manage conflict | Fragmentation and personal goals trump organizational goals: *Without strong relationships and a shared culture the team might not easily give one another feedback, conflict is not healthy and the team is more likely to compete rather than stay focused on shared goals.* |
| **STRATEGIC THINKING** | Stays focused on vision/high-level goal  Generates ideas  Engages in creativity  Stimulates new thinking/discussion | Mediocrity and irrelevance: *Work can become rote, not keeping pace with changing needs of clients, does not innovate, learn and adapt.* |

**Exercise: Strengths‐Based Teams**

Individual Round Robin

Share your top signature themes and then share what people should know about how to work with you (from your snapshot on page 12).

Team Discussion (25 min)

Plot your team strengths on the team chart (see next page). And then, discuss your strengths (and learning edges) using these prompting questions as a guide:

* What might this mean about how we work together?
* How does each of us want to contribute to the team’s success?
* How are our talents complementary?
* Given our collective themes, what might we be missing? How might we compensate?
* What might get in the way of success for this team?

**EXERCISE: What Does Your Team Look Like?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **EXECUTING** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Achiever** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Arranger** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Belief** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Consistency** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Deliberative** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Discipline** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Focus** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Responsibility** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Restorative** |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **INFLUENCING** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Activator** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Command** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Communication** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Competition** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Maximizer** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Self-Assurance** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Significance** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Woo** |  |  |  |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Adaptability** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Developer** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Connectedness** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Empathy** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Harmony** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Includer** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Individualization** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Positivity** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Relator** |  |  |  |  |  |  |

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| **STRATEGIC THINKING** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Analytical** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Context** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Futuristic** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Ideation** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Input** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Intellection** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Learner** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Strategic** |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Exercise: Planning to Plan**

Your committee has been assigned the task of planning the upcoming 2 day **Annual Board and Staff Retreat.** The retreat’s objectives are:

* Team building (board and staff)
* Review past year’s accomplishments from the 1) staff and 2) board
* Set strategic goals for the coming year

Your committee needs to manage communications with staff and board about the retreat plan, get their input and support. Coordinate the logistics, including facility, catering, transportation, and materials, etc. Design the agenda, decide on exercises, and sessions and coordinate presenters and facilitation.

Given what the committee needs to collectively accomplish:

* How are your talents complementary to the committee’s task?
* What talent gaps does the committee have? How will you compensate?
* Thinking about your individual strengths, how will you establish your committee’s structure and how you will work together?
* How does each of us want to contribute to the team’s success?

**Strategies for Creating Strengths-Based Organizations**

* Engage in several of the above activities to identify strengths in others
* Identify an instrument for measuring talent
* Study best performers in each role
* Teach the talent language
* Focus on outcomes and allow people to get to outcomes differently
* Educate staff about strengths
* Devise non-traditional ways to help each person grow without necessarily promoting up the “hierarchical” ladder

**Team Development**

**Designing the Partnership Alliance** (adapted from CRR Global ORSC)*90-minute meeting once in two months or three months – only about partnership, not about work. Preferably over lunch away from the office. Choose 3-5 questions per meeting to spur discussion.*

**I Identifying Intentions**

* What assumptions do you have of each other?
* Name your highest hopes and dreams for this partnership.
* Name your worst fears or lowest dreams for this partnership.

**II Creating the Atmosphere**

* What is the tone or relational environment you want to create?
* How do you each contribute in creating the experience you want?

**III Sharing Responsibility**

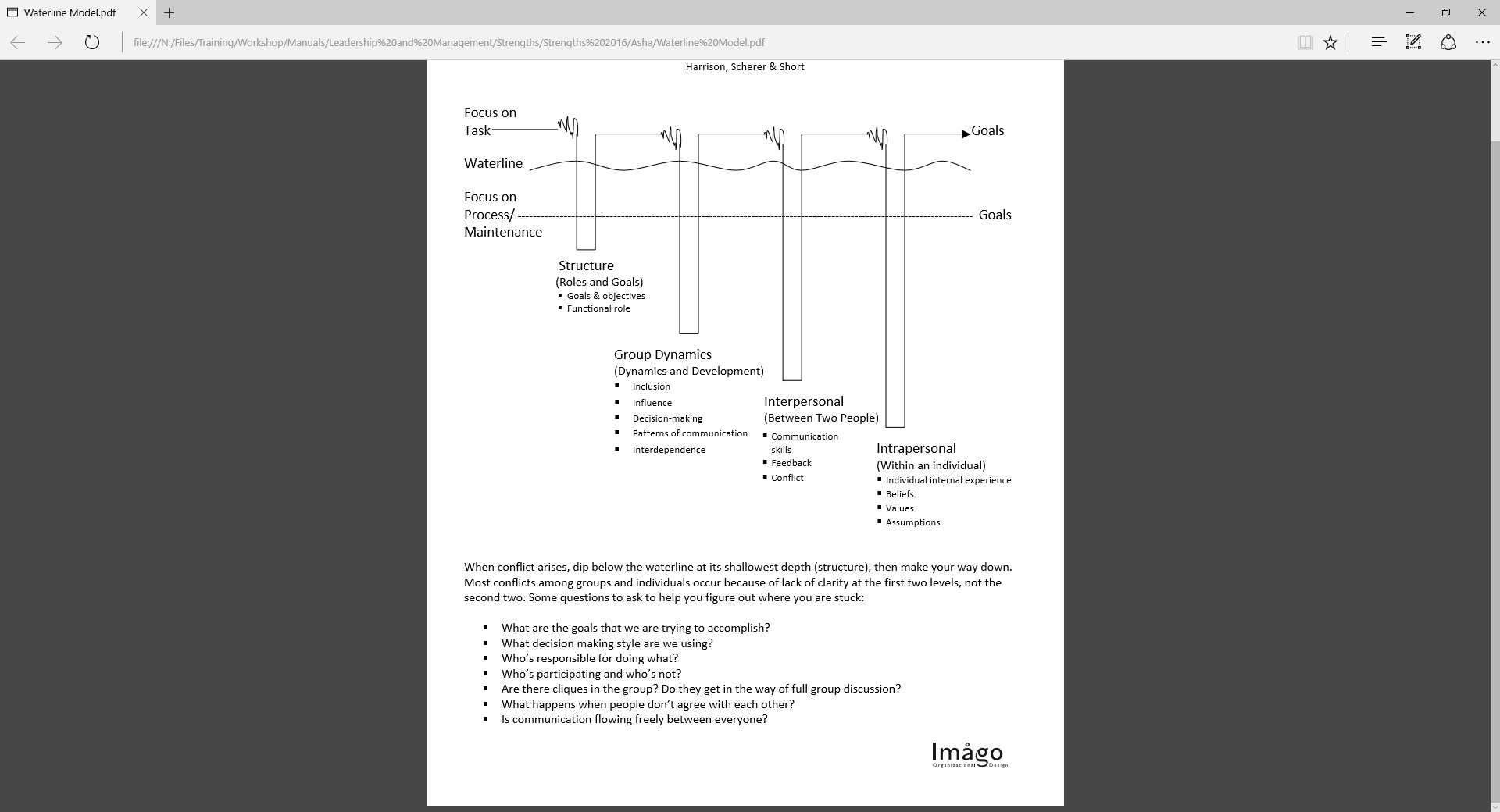
* What expectations do you have of each other’s roles?
* What can you count on from each other? Be specific!
* What requests do you have of each other?
* What commitment do you want to make regarding how and what information is shared with each other and with the board?

**IV Acknowledgement & Championing**

* How do you appreciate and fiercely support one another?
* Acknowledge or champion each other now.

**V Creating a Backup Plan**

* How do you choose to be with each other when conflict arises?
* What discussion do you want to have if one – or both – of you breaks an agreement?
* What will help you get back to your alliance if it gets slippery or starts to break?
* If one – or both – of you chooses to break the alliance, what is important to remember/to occur in that discussion?

**Team Development**

The Waterline Model (Harrison, Scherer, & Short)

**Wrap-up: Reflection Questions**

*What have I learned about myself; what have I learned about my talents and strengths?*

*What do I need to manage for?*

*How can I dedicate more time to identifying the talents and strengths of those I supervise?*

*How can I start to influence my organization’s culture?*

*What is one concrete next step that I will commit to?*

**Notes**

1. This session has been adapted from “Soar with Your Strengths”, Donald O’Clifton and “Now, Discover Your Strengths, Marcus Buckingham & Donald O’Clifton. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)