

## “Go Put Your Strengths To Work”

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Notes by Dave Kraft

An organization will excel only by amplifying strengths, never by simply fixing weaknesses. Peter Drucker wrote that the most competitive companies, just like the most competitive countries, get their strengths together and make their weaknesses irrelevant (8) The master lever for engaging people and driving performance is getting each person to play to his strengths. Each of us is at our most creative, our most innovative, and shows our best judgment precisely in our areas of greatest strength (9) It's about how to identify what is best and most effective in you, and then apply it in the real world (11) So our challenge now is to increase dramatically how often we play to our strengths. We simply need to learn how to take our existing job and each week reshape it around our strengths (16) Build you job around the best of you (18) The idea of putting on your own oxygen mask before you start trying to help those around you (19) Strengths can be defined as those activities in which I exhibit “consistent near-perfect performance; specific activities at which I do well and for which I still retain a powerful appetite; what you're good at and what you love to do (21)

You need to master the art of talking about your strengths without bragging and your weaknesses without whining (27) Learn how to take stock of your strengths and take control of your time (32) Questions to ask yourself: What should I do with my life? Where will I exceed? Where will I make the greatest impact? (51) You grow the most where you are already strong (55) Two of the benefits of focusing on your strengths would be: You will get to excel and be seen as an expert in one or two key areas and You will be on the cutting edge of new developments and trends in a few areas of your work. (61) A team is well rounded, precisely because each of the players is not. True teamwork occurs only when a complementary set of strengths comes together in a coordinated whole (64)

Three truths:

1. As you grow, you become more of who you already are
2. You will grow the most in your areas of greatest strengths

3. A good team member deliberately volunteers his strengths to the team most of the time (69)

If a person were to say he is good at working with people, it should be asked what exactly is he good at with people? Selling to them, taking care of them, coaching them, calming them down, inspiring them? If the answer to what I'm good at is making things happen it should be asked, what kinds of things do you make happen? Creating things, making things happen after others have created, making little things happen all at once? You strengths are defined specifically as things you do consistently and near perfectly (74) Strengths are made up of:

1. Talents 2. Skills 3. Knowledge (75)

How effective you feel at an activity is a solid 1<sup>st</sup> indicator of a strength. There will undoubtedly be some activities at which you are proficient but which don't energize you in the slightest. (77) Your strengths are those activities that make you feel strong (85) **Your appetites drive your abilities.** At least those that last. Your appetites determine which activities you yearn to practice and which ones you don't (86) What no one can do better than you is identify which activities you love and which you loathe (89) The concept of writing "strength statements" that are precise, distinct, specific, and blow you away every time you read them (95) I need a description of my strengths that is specific enough to make it clear to me, my colleagues, and my manager where I should spend more of my time (102)

At heart I am a hedgehog—know a lot about a little—not a fox (105) Without activities to invigorate you, you won't be very effective, creative, or resilient, at least not for long (109) The most direct way to identify your strengths is always to pay attention to how specific activities make you feel (111) The organized calendar for the congenitally disorganized (120) Don't move yourself into a role that is close to but not actually in your strength zone (124) We need to turn **the best of our job into the most of our job** (130) What are the one or two activities that, no matter what the week throws at you, you will push hard to do, and one or two activities they will push equally hard to avoid (133)

People will say that they'll try to do more of that or get better at this. Words such as *more, better or harder* should set alarm bells ringing and should prompt a follow up question, *Yes, but what specifically are you going to do?* (150) If certain activities make you feel drained, frustrated, or burned out, you should not be doing them, or at least not much of them and not for long (162) This thrills me, I love to do this, I can't wait to, I get so excited by; indicate strengths. I can't stand it when, I feel wasted when, I 'm so bored by; indicate weaknesses (212) Become a strength-based manager (232)

Questions to ask myself:

1. Which part of my job am I most passionate about?
2. Where have I had the greatest success in the last six months
3. Where do I feel I could make my greatest contribution
4. Based on my strengths (talent, skill and knowledge) where do I feel that I can provide the most value (237)

The key in work is to be simultaneously effective and invigorated (245)

Three questions regarding a new possible role for me:

1. What is the fundamental purpose of the role
2. Who are the people I'll be working with and for
3. What are the specific activities that will fill my week( 253)

Someone who is strategically impaired (261)

Long hours may tire you out, but they rarely burn you out. Fill your weeks with the wrong kinds of activities that weaken you and even regularly hours will start the burn. Pick a week; capture, clarify and confirm which activities strengthen and which weaken; then start the week-by-week process of pushing your time toward the former and away from the latter (262,263)

"And the day came when the risk it took to remain tight in the bud became more painful than the risk it took to blossom"—French writer, Anais Nin