

Building on your strengths

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Situation

As part of leadership development, the CIO of a healthcare products manufacturer engaged People Assured to help a high-potential IT Director better understand and leverage his strengths. A summary of the approach, findings and benefits is provided.

Action and Approach

Three facilitated discussions were held with the Director over the period of a month to discover, evaluate and agree actions to leverage his strengths. The tools used to inform and guide the process were: a tailored questionnaire, a face-to-face interview, an on-line self-assessment, and co-worker feedback on strengths.

Step 1: Discovery meeting:

Goal: Draw out a 'long list' of strengths:

- A questionnaire and self assessment were used to explore aptitude across a range of areas of competence (e.g. communication, problem solving, ideation, self-assurance and relationship management)
- Activities the Director most enjoyed from his current list of responsibilities (e.g. strategic planning) and non-work activity were listed
- Feedback on strengths from co-workers was reviewed and compared to the self assessment

Step 2: Option evaluation meeting:

Goal: Create a 'short-list' of strengths to leverage

The long list of strengths was prioritized according to a) How strong he/his co-workers believed he was in each area, and b) how appealing each area was to him (i.e. Strength x Appeal)

The table below (illustrative data only) is used explain the process:

Area	Strength (S) (5 is high)	Appeal (A) (5 is high)	S X A	% Time
Strategic planning & new initiatives	5	5	25	5
Team building & expectation management	4	5	20	15
Managing change (people/project issues)	4	4	16	10
Relationship management	4	3	12	10
Project management and execution	3	3	9	40
IT solutions knowledge	1	5	5	5

Totals do not add up to 100%

The estimated percentage of time spent on each area (final column) was also reviewed.

The above illustration highlights that strategic planning, team building and managing change are the three strongest areas, but combined are used less than one-third of available time. Project management, an area of lesser strength, consumes a significant portion of time.

The findings are a valuable input to discussions on future roles and responsibilities.

Step 3: Action planning meeting:

Goal: Agree actions to leverage strengths of greatest appeal

Opportunities to leverage strengths were evaluated both with the Director and (separately) his line manager (CIO) – considering responsibilities and activities both within and outside the IT organization.

The following table (illustrative data only) highlights actions to leverage strengths:

Strength	Action to leverage strength
Strategic planning	Offer support to the CIO on strategic plans, budgets and major initiatives
Team building and expectation management	Build on informal teambuilding. Be more proactive, add a little structure.
Managing change (people/project issues)	Ask international business sponsor for guidance in managing global teams
Relationship management	Develop international relations and look to take the lead when working with people of a similar culture
Project management and execution	Lead on project planning but seek to delegate delivery
Solution knowledge and delivery	Ask vendor partner if they can help transfer knowledge

Benefits

Understanding your strengths provides knowledge of where to focus to increase your potential and performance.

Knowing how much time is spent applying your strengths can inform whether they are receiving sufficient attention to reach their potential.

Corrective action to increase the time spent developing and leveraging your strengths will provide greater opportunity for advancement and satisfaction.

Quote

"It was very easy to work with People Assured. They took the time to understand the career development opportunities of our staff. I was surprised at how quickly they picked up the nuances of our leaders and were able to communicate our thoughts into an organized structure that has helped jump start our plans for developing future leaders. "

IT Director, Supply Chain, International Healthcare Company