Focus on Strengths NOT Weaknesses

We’ve bought this idea that we must “fix” weaknesses. The problem is it’s wrong!

Extensive research by the Gallup organisation shows that while we can’t totally ignore weaknesses, the way to excellent performance is to use and develop our strengths.

You need to focus on strengths and manage weaknesses, because:

1. Working on weaknesses may prevent failure but building strengths is what leads to success. If weakness is due to a lack of natural talent, hard work to develop knowledge and skills only results in modest improvement, average not excellent performance. On the other hand, putting the same amount of work into an area of strength takes good to great. So, an investment in strengths development yields a higher return.

2. Developing natural talents and strengths is highly motivating. People learn faster and enjoy it more. Employees who have opportunities to use their strengths everyday are highly engaged. Employee engagement is linked to every business bottom-line result, including staff retention. So developing strengths enables people to make their best contribution.

3. Being stronger in one area than another is natural. Look at team sports. Team players, are placed in the positions where they can contribute most. On the soccer field you don’t have all strikers, you also need the defenders and the goalie, you have the players who are great at getting the ball to the strikers so that they can score and the team wins. Players practice their strengths working to improve what they are good at. A high performing team is one that recognises and values differences because that’s what makes the team.

4. How productive are you when you feel strong as opposed to when you feel weak? Working on weaknesses emphasises the deficit in your ability. It heightens negative feelings about yourself and lowers self-esteem. Worry and struggle are not consistent with high performance. Working hard to improve weaknesses at the expense of applying strengths detracts from overall performance.

5. There are ways to manage weaknesses that do not rob you of the opportunity to build strengths. Not every short-coming has to be eradicated in order to excel. It’s a matter of choosing when to work hard and when to work around.

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