Positive Leadership Strengths-based development StrengthscopeLeader

How to get the best out of yourself, your team and the organization to increase motivation, performance and engagement.

CoAchieve

Leadership coaching

Leadership development

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"Positive leaders emphasize and build on employees' strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses, and this emphasis creates an attraction to forming strong interpersonal ties. The orientation is toward enabling thriving and flourishing at least as much as addressing obstacles and impediments. It is not the same as merely being nice, charismatic, trustworthy, or a servant leader. Rather, it incorporates these attributes and supplements them with a focus on strategies that provide strengths based, positive energy to individuals and organizations"

(Kim Cameron, 2012).

In today's highly competitive, complex and fast-changing environment, organizations that are most likely to succeed are those which are not only able to recruit and retain the most talented people, but are also able to energize them to achieve performance excellence, positive stretch and continuous learning to ensure sustained high performance in rapidly changing times.

Leaders can't be superheroes or all-rounders. Rather, they need to optimize their unique strengths and be workplace energizers, unlocking the potential, energy, opinions and ideas of others to deliver excellent results and value to customers/stakeholders.

Strengths -based Leadership | Positive Leadership, implies a human-centered approach, a focus on developing the potential, the strengths of people and the stimulation of autonomy, mastery, purpose and connection. This kind of leadership also fits in with the current paradigm shifts, we increasingly see that management models, management styles are no longer based on hierarchy, micromanagement, power and control.

"There is significant evidence for the link between strengths -based approaches and enhanced leadership effectiveness. And there are multiple benefits to strengths -based approaches beyond enhanced leadership, including engagement, positivity, well -being and goal attainment." (Strengths -based Leadership Coaching in organizations. An evidence -based guide to positive leadership development, Doug MacKie).

"At the heart of effective transformation is strong, human-centred leadership and people practices guiding teams to success.

"People at the center, talent at the center and believe in your own capabilities, that is how you serve your customers better. " (Source: HRM for the future - Prof.dr. Rob H.W. Vinke)

"See your employees as your most important stakeholder because they will take good care of your customers and they will then take good care of the shareholders." (Source: Human Capital Trends 2017 Bersin by Deloitte).

Human-centered Leadership

Workplaces no longer necessarily refer to a physical office space as teams are increasingly working virtually to collaborate across global offices. The coronavirus pandemic showed many organizations that working from home was not only possible but, in some cases, preferable. Workplace culture will define businesses and connect teams more than ever and positive human-centered cultures provide the conditions for employees to thrive and perform at their peak.

Positive businesses achieve high performance and profitability by bringing out the best in their people to help them grow, and by leveraging their unique strengths and talents, designing work to empower people and make work meaningful. - Spreitzer & Cameron, 2012, Applying a POS Lens to Bring out the Best in Organizations

Some of the world's most successful companies employ aspects of positive leadership and positive people practices, promoting purpose beyond profit, positive relationships and cultivating collaborative learning cultures. Microsoft credits its business and cultural transformation to growth mindset, which inspires staff to be curious and seek ongoing development. Growth mindset is central to the company's new leadership framework and articulated in Microsoft's mission statement: "to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more". By rejecting the idea that talent is fixed, Microsoft provides opportunities for individuals to challenge themselves and experience different roles, identifying potential leaders in the process.

Satya Nadella took over from Steve Ballmer in 2014 and adopted a new vision and leadership style. He transformed a stagnant organization into a high technological innovator accelerating up the scoreboard in Fortune 500 ranking. Nadella has acquired the dominant position in both "Fortune's Businessperson of the Year 2019" and "Best CEOs for Diversity 2020".

During the pandemic, Microsoft was the first organization to provide 3 months parental leave to their employees whose schools were shut down. According to an article on Nadella's Leadership style in Berrett Koehler Publishers (2019) Nadella changed the leadership and culture by emphasizing embracing individual empowerment, positivity, empathy and growth of employees. (Prakash, D., Bisla, M., & Rastogi, S. G. (2021). Understanding Authentic Leadership Style: The Satya Nadella Microsoft Approach)

Just as no two businesses work exactly alike, no two great leaders share the same characteristics. Studies show that leadership is contextual and not defined by a fixed set of traits or common set of competencies. Leaders become great because they have a clear understanding of their purpose, values and strengths and know how to use them effectively. They also create the conditions where others can fully use their strengths, skills and individual differences to complete their best work and contribute to the organization's success.

The most successful managers don't lead from a position of command and control, they bring out the best of their people, they know what their own and what their employee's strengths are. People thrive when their strengths are recognized, appreciated, and utilized, when they are being coached and get ample opportunities to develop. It builds confidence, increases self-esteem and people take more ownership.

Executives have by far the greatest influence on productivity, commitment, and job satisfaction of the team. This is increasingly apparent from research, including research agency Gallup and long-term research at Google (Duhigg, 2016). An effective, strong leader is a good coach, gives confidence, has a genuine interest in and attention to the success and well-being of employees, is helpful in the development of employees, is result-oriented, has a clear vision and strategy, has crucial technical skills, listens well and shares information.

Leadership styles are increasingly distancing themselves from hierarchy, micromanagement, power and control. The directive style of management is outdated; other demands are placed on managers. Nowadays we need leaders that are good at personal leadership and lead from authenticity and strength instead of power. In addition to hard skills and IQ, soft skills and emotional intelligence are becoming increasingly important.

"Anyone who manages to create the right environment for the greatest talents will automatically attract them" (Bock, 2015).

"One should waste as little effort as possible on improving areas of low competence. It takes far more energy to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence."

~Peter Drucker

Strengths-based Leadership

Various leadership studies have shown that managers and employees do not have the same perception of the leadership style of the manager. Employees find their manager often too directive and task oriented with little attention to their development, while most managers say that they provide people-oriented leadership.

77% of the leaders think very positively about their own leadership qualities and see themselves as an inspiring and motivating leader. 88% of employees think very differently about this. They lack attention, feel unheard, not appreciated, and uninvolved. (Source: "How Leaders Think" Harvard Business Review - 2018

Positive, strengths-based leadership is aimed at strengthening what works and growing and flourishing: from functioning to flourishing. Recognizing, developing and optimally deploying talents provides positive energy and intrinsic motivation. It strengthens self-awareness and self-management and leads to better performance and commitment to the organization. By consciously deploying talents, talents are developed into strengths.

Managers who focus on someone's strengths experience better performance from their people, more motivation and positive energy. Which leads to more effort and the willingness to go the extra mile, the discretionary contribution.

Increasing competition, disruptive technologies, more mobile and demanding talent, doing more with less. With all the change and speed and complexity around us, leaders have never had it so tough. On the other hand, that level of pace makes things very simple. The one constant in those shifting surroundings is you. And so knowing and understanding what you bring as a leader, your strengths and risks, the positive and negative ripples that you send out, becomes an essential, so that you can be authentic, and do it skillfully.

"You have to encourage people and look at their strengths. Not at the weaknesses. At least 80% of your communication as a manager must be positive."

(Covey, 2010)

Using strengths leads to positive emotions, better and innovative behavior

(Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2015)

Peter Drucker, the management guru often referred to as the 'father of management": "The effective executive makes strengths productive. (S)he knows that one cannot build on weaknesses. To achieve results, one has to use all the available strengths – the strengths of associates, the strengths of the superior, and one's own strengths. These strengths are the true opportunities."

Research by Gallup shows that the differences in engagement can be explained for about 70% by the qualities of the leader. Leaders who communicate clearly and frequently, focus on strengths, give confidence, and clearly indicate direction and involve their team members, have a more engaged team. There is quite a difference between how most managers perceive and value their own qualities and leadership style and how the stakeholders view this. Introspection is only one side of the story; it can be very enlightening to know how others see your strengths and behavior and to what extent they want to see more or less of it (with 360-degree feedback).

Strengths are qualities that energize us and we are great at (or have potential to become great at.) A strengths-based approach to organizational development:

• Engages employees and leaders
• Creates a happy, high-performance workforce
• Builds customer loyalty
• Delivers lasting value

Research from the Corporate Leadership Council reveals that managers/leaders who operated with a strengths emphasis unlocked 36.4% higher performance from their employees whereas Managers/Leaders with a weakness emphasis reduced their employees' performance by 26.8%. We have the greatest potential for performance growth in our areas of natural strengths.

"Our time is limited, so don't waste it living someone else's life...have the courage to follow your heart and intuition."
- Steve Jobs

"You can't manage others if you don't manage yourself first."
- Peter Drucker

Authentic Leadership

Be more of yourself, with skill. Effective leaders know better than to try to be someone there are not. They are comfortable in their own ´skins´ and do not try too hard to emulate other leaders. They stay true to who they are and make sure they have the right people around them to make up for obvious weaknesses or areas of non-strength. Individuals who surround themselves with similar personalities will always be at a disadvantage in the long run to those who are secure enough in themselves to enlist stakeholders with complementary strengths.

Self-Awareness

An essential quality of leadership is self -awareness. The strengths-based method helps you to gain much more self-insight and enables you to work from your own values and strengths. By working from your personal values and strengths you become more authentic and therefore more credible, which also gives you more confidence. People with a strong sense of self are often more authentic and honest, they know the effect of their feelings on themselves, on others and on their own functioning. The decisions and actions of people with self-insight are in line with their strengths and values and therefore their work gives them more energy and satisfaction. It can make us better at our jobs, better communicators in the workplace, and enhance our self-confidence and job-related wellbeing (Sutton, Williams, & Allinson, 2015).

Self -knowledge and self-awareness increases the ability to properly assess our own emotions when they arise or are "triggered", enabling us to deal with certain situations in a more effective way. Emotional intelligence is about self- knowledge (including knowing which direction you want to take in your life, what your norms and values are), about empathy (recognizing and being able to direct your own emotions, recognizing other people's emotions and dealing with them), impulse control (self-control and being able to set long -term goals over short -term gratification).

Effective Leadership

Effective leadership starts with strong personal leadership. It is important that you are aware of your own values, assumptions, pitfalls, strengths and weaknesses, your vision and expectations.

By working on your own growth and development you will also encourage others to do the same. As a leader you are an important role model, which is why awareness of your leadership style and the effect of your behavior on employees is of great importance. Only when you know yourself well, with all your talents and performance risks, can you also better recognize and use the strengths of your employees. Self-knowledge is essential, firstly you need to know and cultivate your own strengths.

Context is also important, sometimes a certain leadership style does not suit the organization (culture) for example. Clients that participated in my leadership programs sometimes found out that they were losing a lot of energy at work because the balance between their own aspirations, personal values and strengths and the demands and the culture of the organization were out of balance.

"Leaders with high self-awareness typically know their limitations and strengths and exhibit a sense of humor about themselves. They exhibit a gracefulness in learning when they need to improve, and welcome constructive criticism and feedback. Based on his confident self-assessment, a leader knows when to ask for help and what to focus on to develop new leadership strengths."
- Daniel Goleman

Leaders often find it remarkably difficult to state their strengths themselves. And discovering your strengths is not enough, you also need to know how to use and dose them. Research on derailed leaders indicates that these leaders exaggerated their strengths (strengths in overdrive) and were not corrected in this. Self-assurance can, for example, turn into megalomaniacal behavior and courage can turn into reckless behavior with all the negative consequences that can be expected.

Self-awareness is the key for emotional intelligence and truly effective leaders are distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill (Daniel Goleman).

Some thought-provoking questions to ask yourself

1. What roles and tasks energize you most?

2. What are your unique strengths and skills and how can you optimize these?

3. At the end of your career, what would you have liked to have achieved? Taking this into account, what goal would you like to accomplish in the next year?

4. What is the biggest risk area (weakness, overdone strength or mental barrier) you need to address to achieve your goals?

5. Who can support you to achieve your goals?

6. Why should anyone be led by you?

7. What are you doing for others to make their lives better?

8. What have you always wanted to do that you can start doing next week?

9. What type of work-life balance now will ensure you have no regrets in 10 years' time?

10. What three words would you like others to use to describe you when you're not in the room

11. How do your strengths help you be successful in your current role?

12. Do you have an opportunity to do what you do best every day?

13. What actions can you take to create a stronger connection of your strengths with your leadership role?

14. Looking at your strengths and the strengths of your team, how might you work together most effectively?

As a leader you are often caught up in the day to day hustle and you "don't have time" , don't take the time to self-reflect. Take a few moments to answer these statements about yourself:

The time I am at my best is …

I feel strong and authentic when I …

What I enjoy doing most is …

I am proud of …

I really enjoy learning about …

The best job I ever had was …

The best project I've ever been involved with was…

The best leader I've ever worked for is/was…

Build strong teams

By better appreciating your own strengths and those of others you become better at investigating (by asking good questions and listening) what it is that energizes and motivates others. Research shows that the most cohesive and successful teams have a diverse and complementary range of strengths.

Team effectiveness is not just about the quality of its component parts; it's also about how effectively these parts – particularly team members' strengths – are combined and optimized to deliver excellent results.

Strengths can also become a performance risk, this happens when they go in 'overdrive', that is exaggerated strengths that do not lead to the intended results - for example, someone overusing her persuasiveness - that leads to her not listening to ideas of others. For many people, stress, or a certain situation / interaction triggers one or more strengths to go in overdrive. If you can recognize when, where and why some of your strengths go into overdrive, you are in a much better position to control this and become more flexible in deploying it, in the right amount, at the right time and with the right people.

When people work from their own talents and strength, they experience more satisfaction, less work pressure and they will perform better. Employees who are aware of their strengths and are encouraged to develop them score high on personal well -being and feel more engaged.

If the work is not in line with personal strengths, it can lead to unrest, dissatisfaction and loss of energy. Knowing, developing, and optimally deploying strengths gives positive energy, intrinsic motivation, strengthens self -direction and leads to high performance.

By consciously deploying talents, talents are developed into strengths. And research shows that the more attention there is within organizations for diversity and the unique talents of employees, the more positive the effect is on the motivation and employability of employees.

Do you recognize and develop the strengths of your team members? Do you have an eye for the complementary strengths in your team and do you also use them?

"Leadership is communicating to another person their worth and potential so clearly they are inspired to see it in themselves."
— Stephen R. Covey.

THE JOB OF A LEADER IS TO BUILD A COMPLEMENTARY TEAM, WHERE EVERY STRENGTH IS MADE EFFECTIVE AND EACH WEAKNESS IS MADE IRRELEVANT. - Stephen Covey.

"It's not that we ignore our weaknesses; rather, we make our weaknesses irrelevant by working effectively with others so that we compensate for our weaknesses through their strengths and they compensate for their weaknesses through our strengths." - Stephen M. R. Covey, The Speed of Trust

Invest in building complementary teams. Create project teams based on complementary strengths. Effective teamwork is imperative for leaders in order to do more with less, improve collaboration, raise performance and ensure the pace and quality of innovation is high. Helping individuals identify their strengths and how these can best be deployed to contribute to team goals will create higher levels of clarity and accountability as well as promoting greater levels of autonomy. Encouraging complementary partnering within the team, where team members support colleagues in areas where they are weaker or less developed with their standout strengths, is also a powerful way to improve team morale, trust and effectiveness.

Building a high level of strengths awareness enables the team to adapt to changing goals, stakeholder needs and processes more quickly, as well as pinpointing strength and skill areas that might be lacking to meet future requirements.

Although many organizations are still structured along functional lines, this is changing fast in recognition of the fact that exceptional delivery in every type of organization now requires strong teamwork. This is more important today than ever, as undertaking complex knowledge work requires drawing on specialized skills from across the organization, regardless of function, geography or level. Rapid globalization, the accelerating pace of change and disruptive technological innovation requires highly agile and collaborative teams to gain competitive advantage and high levels of growth. Teamwork can also help attract, retain and develop talent as they provide team members with far more enjoyment, support and learning than their individual roles can offer.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement implies that employees deliver high performance and are committed and emotionally connected to the work and the organization. Employees have a positive attitude towards the mission, vision and strategy of the organization. It is mainly about attitude, behavior and results. The core elements are; emotional engagement, dedication, drive, focus, flow, energy, connection, high performance, going the extra mile.

Engagement is not the same as happiness or satisfaction. Engaged employees are also satisfied, but satisfied or happy employees are not automatically also engaged.

Employee satisfaction surveys do not measure employee engagement. Measuring satisfaction does not really provide valuable information. "Satisfaction is a form of pleasure, but also of inactivity. Employee satisfaction measures a passive form of pleasure. You prefer not to see that in organizations."(Prof. Dr. W. van Rhenen).

Engaged employees raise the bar and are willing to make an extra effort to achieve their goals. They are ambassadors for the organization and ensure a positive and productive relationship with customers. Engagement requires focused intentions and concrete actions such as components of the employee experience on the part of the employee and the organization.

Rarely has a topic received such overwhelming interest from HR practitioners and line managers as employee engagement. This trend has been amplified by strong evidence from recent research suggesting that employee engagement is directly related with customer satisfaction and financial indicators of performance such as sales growth and revenue.

However, based on our own experience, most of the efforts we see in organisations aimed at strengthening employee engagement are significantly misguided. Why? Because the main underlying assumption is flawed – that employees are all engaged in the same way. This leads companies to approach employee engagement from a systems and process perspective, rolling out "one size fits all" solutions that may appeal to some employees, but generally fall short of the overriding purpose – to engage all or at least the vast majority of employees.

In their attempt to energise employees and motivate extraordinary performance, efforts we typically see are new reward programmes, investment in standardised training or personal development workshops and new employee relations programmes aimed at enhancing employees' wellbeing. We are not suggesting that such programmes are without merit and measurable benefit. However, they fail to take account of the most critical aspect of employee engagement – the importance of the employees' personal experience of engagement and the role his/her underlying strengths play in freeing up positive energy and discretionary effort. Our experience suggests that rather than seeking quick-fix, generic solutions to engagement, the starting point should be to understand employees' unique strengths.

Say, Stay, Strive

A widely used framework for assessing engagement is the 'Say, Stay, Strive' model. The model is often associated with global HR consulting firms such as Towers Perrin and Hewitt Associates, and states that engaged employees will…

1. …advocate the organisation as a good place to work ('say')

2. …remain with the organisation if offered a similar role with similar terms and conditions elsewhere ('stay')

3. …apply discretionary effort, going 'above and beyond' what they are asked to do at work ('strive').

Daniel Pink's (2009) recent writings on motivation have also captured and popularised a number of these ideas, summarising key human motivators and drivers of engagement at work as being:

• Autonomy (being in control of work)

• Mastery (being competent and skilled)

• Purpose (work having meaning).

Those employees who experience sufficient levels of each of these factors are argued to be more engaged and more productive in their work.
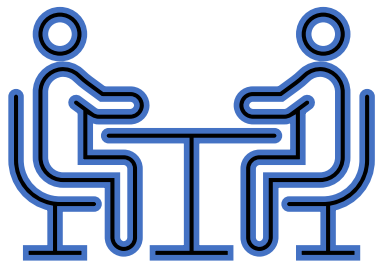
Stress and well-being at work are generally thought to be influenced by many of the variables captured by the motivation and engagement researchers. For example, stress levels are reportedly directly related to levels of autonomy and mastery in work tasks, as well as role clarity and involvement in decisions (HSE, 2008). In addition, researchers have found that social support and positive, productive relationships at work are central to employees experiencing well-being and lowered stress at work.

Schaufeli and Bakker (2010) have recently explored the concept of engagement, developing a three dimensional model, comprising:

• Vigour – a sense of energy for work

• Dedication – a sense of pride in one's work and challenge from it

• Absorption – being engrossed in work and experiencing a sense of 'flow' (a term popularised by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi).

Engagement and the progress principle
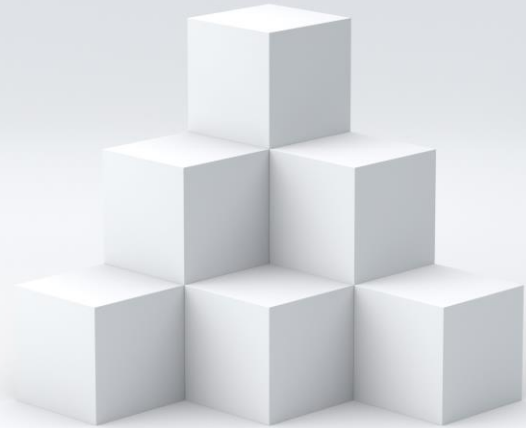
Small wins – seemingly minor progress events – can yield significant inner work life benefits. We need to celebrate small victories. In doing so, we recognize the progress we've made. Keep a diary of daily successes. Make sure you celebrate success. It's key to maintaining long-term motivation " (Teresa Amabile).

Teresa Amabile (professor at Harvard Business School) is a social psychologist and researches the influence of the immediate work environment on creativity, productivity and motivation. And she is (together with Steven Kramer) the author of the international bestseller "The progress principle: using small wins to ignite joy, engagement, and creativity at work". According to her, there is a "disengagement crisis". What motivates people is progress and to have an eye for what you have already achieved.

Based on research within many different organizations, she searched for answers to questions such as what gives energy in the work and what motivates people to give the best of themselves. That research - based on many "diary notes of employees - showed that making progress on a meaningful task motivates everyone, she calls this" The Progress Principle. "

Making progress in your work, no matter how small, ensures a good "Inner Work Life". Everyday events at work can negatively or positively influence the 'Inner Work Lives' of employees, progress in meaningful work for the employee ensures the most optimal 'Inner Work Lives'. During this survey, the managers were asked to name 5 things that motivate people (for example, reward and recognition) and to classify them according to their importance. The outcome was that only 5% of executives ranked "making progress" at the top of the rankings. Managers do not value the importance of consciously paying attention to making progress, while making progress appeared to be one of the most motivating factors in the work, according to the research results. It is important to communicate more about and focus more on progress achieved.

Incidentally, it also appeared that negative experiences such as setbacks, failures and obstacles can have up to 3 times as strong a demotivating effect. That is why it is important to remove obstructing and negative influences as much as possible. Managers play an important role in this, they can identify and remove obstacles and thus ensure that employees can make unimpeded progress. The importance of celebrating success is still too much ignored by many managers.

Just like winning sports teams, great business teams take time together to recognize and share successes and milestones. As a team leader, it is important to ensure time and space for celebration and refection is not overlooked. This time is crucial to boost the team's confidence and morale and enable them to reflect on how they've done.

By putting into practice, the following key principles, leaders can accelerate the team's morale and confidence:

1. Invite ideas from the team on how they wish to celebrate success but use the 'surprise factor' on occasion.

2. Be creative in the use of no or low cost ways to recognize effort and results (e.g., going out for drinks after work or allowing the team to go home a few hours early on Friday). Remember that there are loads of alternatives to paying people for their contribution.

3. Call out outstanding contributions of individuals as well as collective efforts and outcomes to reinforce positive behaviours.

4. Ensure the team's success is made visible to senior executives within the organization to boost feelings of pride and purpose in the team.

5. Be inclusive in your recognition and don't forget those working remotely or stakeholders outside the team who have contributed to success.

To ensure the team continues to achieve success, the leader should look for ways to continuously stretch people beyond their comfort zones to increase their flexibility, but also to keep them motivated and enthused. The trick is to stretch, but take care not to stretch too far, so you need to know your team well and then to recognize and reward people when they meet the stretch targets.

A culture of open feedback and learning should also be cultivated. It can be as simple as providing time for team members to share one strength they value in each other and one idea for improvement. The leader should ensure that learning and feedback is not simply an internally-directed exercise; feedback should also be sought from the team's most important customers/stakeholders to help the team learn and grow. This can be invited and shared directly by the leader or by team members themselves.

Trust

Trust in leadership is also closely linked to employee engagement. Leaders who effectively use their strengths generate greater levels of confidence by stakeholders.

A lack of trust leads to demotivation and distrust among employees, it consumes energy and is ineffective. You are simply highly dependent on the qualities, motivation, trust, commitment, and performance of your employees. By not giving trust you usually do not receive trust. Mutual trust is crucial for strong teams and strong organizations

A positive organizational culture requires an emotionally safe climate in which employees feel seen and heard and where they are allowed and able to develop their strengths. People also want to feel connected to the organization they work for. It still happens too often that the vision, mission, values and goals of the organization are not clear. By really involving employees - instead of rolling out programs "top-down", they start to feel more genuinely responsible for the business results.

Trust is the foundation of any relationship, be it personal or business. The directive, authoritarian style of leadership lacks the basis of trust.

From organizational research and leadership research, trust emerges as the keyword for leadership. It is important to create a culture of safety for employees. Without trust you have no open, honest communication and no commitment. One of the preconditions for a team to function well is that the team members experience a high degree of safety.

Build trust and credibility. Trust is also a vital ingredient to persuasion. If co-workers don't see their leaders as trustworthy, they are unlikely to engage with them, let alone be persuaded by their arguments. Leaders can increase their trust by:

I. Showing they trust others in their daily interactions, including getting to know them on a personal level, asking for their help in areas of strength and listening in a non-judgmental and curious way
II. By acting in an authentic and consistent way in accordance with their strengths, values and purpose
III. Showing vulnerability by acknowledging weaker areas and other performance risks; in other words, not trying to come across as "superhuman"
IV. By delivering on what they commit to and not making excuses for shortfalls
V. By giving credit to co-workers for their efforts and contribution to achievements, as well as taking ownership for mistakes and problems arising from their decisions.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

You can develop leadership, but the focus is usually on acquiring competencies and technical skills, and that is not enough. Leadership development programs are also often designed to tackle weaknesses and improving certain competencies where one's aptitude is lacking. A lot of time and energy is spent ´fixing´ these weaknesses and most managers are not even aware of their strengths.

Peter Drucker, the father of management thinking and author of "Managing Oneself," said, "It takes far more energy and work to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence."

"Are you building on strengths, or are you trying to compensate for your weaknesses? If you focus your energy on compensating for weaknesses, you end up with a large set of strong weaknesses. Make sure that you continue to develop your strengths and dare to trust them," (Bas Kodden, MMC, 2018).

The leadership training industry is valued globally at $370 billion and strengthening and diversifying the current and future leadership bench is identified as one of the top three priorities for HR Directors. Yet, McKinsey states organizations are failing to unlock the true value of development with 'one-size fits all' leadership programs, which lack consideration of individual business context, underestimate workplace culture, do not engender action and fail to measure results. Leadership development programs also fail to prepare individuals adequately for the future; neglecting to cultivate the mindset, change capabilities, emotional agility, resilience, and grit needed to deal with unprecedented levels of change.

Strengthscope

Leadership tools

"The human touch or soft skills have become even more critical than technical skills in the wake of AI. When it comes to leadership development, soft skills take the centre stage and form the crux of any initiative. Adaptive thinking, Empathy, Sensitivity and Resilience are some of the key abilities needed in today´s leaders."

(source: Rethink Employee Experience, The Dale Carnegie Book on L&D Best Practices).

"Leadership development is evolving, what stops the positive and strengths-based approaches to leadership development being just another fad in the leadership development business? Positive leadership is integrated with the existing leadership development literature. It seeks to extend existing well validated and reliable models rather than propose an entirely new and exclusive approach.

Positive leadership theories are increasingly integrating moral and ethical concerns. Positive leadership development including strengths-based approaches is part of a broader trend that advocates a more inclusive and developmental approach to leadership talent. In addition to developing leaders and leadership, strengths-based approaches also help develop engagement and psychological capital in their followers (van Woerkom and Meyers, 2014)

Positive leadership development offers a welcome counterbalance to the traditional deficit focus in leadership development." Source: Strengths-based Leadership Coaching in organizations. An evidence-based guide to positive leadership development, Doug MacKie

"A common pitfall of learning programs is an outsize focus on the content—even though it is usually not a lack of knowledge that holds leaders back from realizing their full potential. Therefore, it's critical that learning programs prompt leaders to engage with and shift their underlying beliefs, assumptions, and emotions to bring about lasting mindset changes" (source: McKinsey)

In general, there is too much emphasis on developing hard skills whilst soft skills are becoming more and more important. "Soft skills are power skills. They are the skills that give you real 'power' at work.' –Josh Bersin, Deloitte. Too often, the "hard skills" are considered the most important skills. But soft skills are far from "soft", they are crucial and lasting qualities for achieving hard results.

Change is inevitable, yet current leadership training and development models are not creating positive, strong leaders ready to embrace and exploit it. Developing positive, strengths-based leadership has proven to be effective for motivating teams and supporting strong business growth.

VUCA
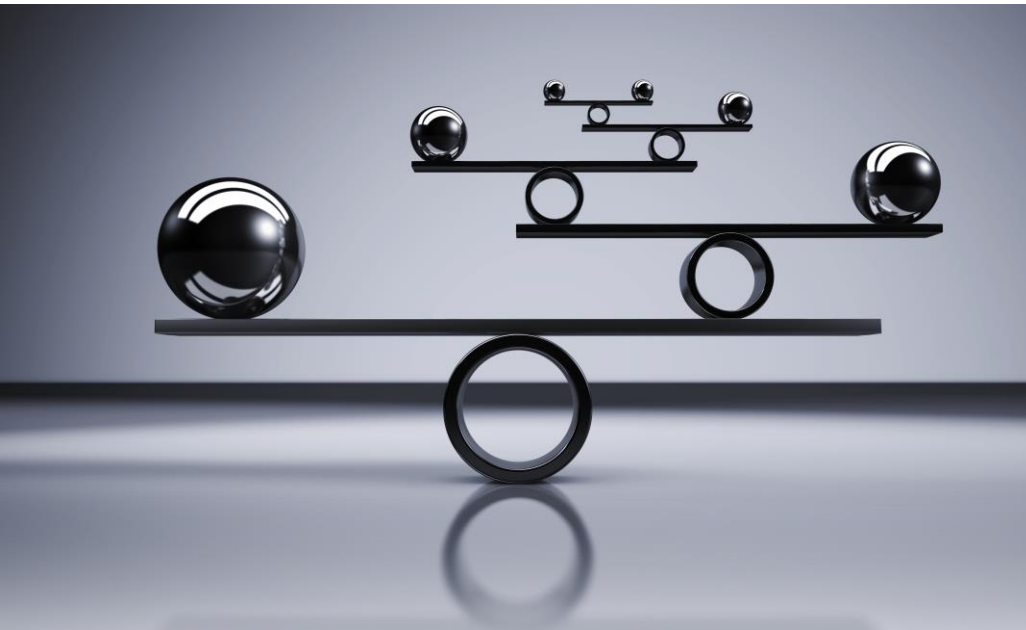
Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity — VUCA — are the realities of today, and as noted futurist and author Bob Johansen says, "It won't be getting easier. Leaders must accept this reality." In his book, Leaders Make the Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for an Uncertain World, Johansen says that leaders increasingly will face challenges that have no solutions. Of course, they will have to make decisions anyway. "Leaders will be buffeted, but they need not allow themselves to be overwhelmed, depressed or immobilized. Leaders must do more than just respond to the whirl of events, though respond they must.

They must be positive change agents in the midst of chaos, creating the future. Some things can get better, even as other things get worse." Johansen notes that the VUCA acronym can be turned around to a more positive framing of effective leadership:

• Volatility leads to Vision.
• Uncertainty yields to Understanding.
• Complexity yields to Clarity.
• Ambiguity yields to Agility.

Source: (Center for Creative Leadership)

Unlock potential,
Release your strengths

Deloitte has set up the new Performance Management system based on the strengths-based approach. Large-scale research within the organization has shown that the best performing teams consist of people who can use their strengths every day (… that the defining characteristic of the very best teams at Deloitte is that they are strengths oriented). It goes without saying for most managers to make good use of the talents of employees, but in practice it turns out to be difficult. Discovering, developing, and harnessing the power of people is not that easy. But to increase productivity, performance, employability, motivation, engagement and well-being of employees and to retain talent, it is crucial that managers recognize and utilize the talent of employees. Not recognizing potential and talent or leaving it unused has a negative impact on productivity, motivation, and performance. Moreover, your high performing and driven employees will leave the organization.

The strengths-based approach leads to (much) higher motivation and to (much) better results than the traditional approach. (Source: Ben Tiggelaar: Why we need positive leadership).

Developing weaknesses is often experienced as annoying, demotivating and energy-consuming, while developing strengths strengthens, motivates, and gives more energy and self-confidence. Mark Lammers who, together with the Dutch women's hockey team, won the world title as a coach: "You win with your strong points. A game has never been won on the weaknesses of any of the players on my team. Why should you focus on this? Focus on the strengths, everyone has talents. It's better to make the sixes in your team an eight than a player who scores a four to a six." In performance appraisals too, the focus is still too often on what needs to be improved. While people are more engaged and motivated when their manager focuses on their strengths.

A large-scale study by the Corporate Leadership Council has shown that a focus on strengths during performance conversations has a significant positive influence on performance (even up to 37% increase), while a focus on weaknesses or areas for improvement resulted in a decrease in performance (by 27%)!

Managers who focus on someone's strengths experience better performance from their people, more motivation and positive energy, commitment, and a willingness to go the extra mile for the company. This is especially true for good or excellent performers, employees who perform poorly should also be held accountable for this.

The transactional style, a directive style of management no longer suffices in most cases. Talent-oriented, strengths-based leadership works much better to increase motivation, self-management, and performance. This leadership style focuses on the strengths and intrinsic needs of employees and on providing the right support to make people excel.

> "I define a leader as anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential."
>
> – Brené Brown

Too much potential within organizations remains dormant, effective leaders tap into and enable the full potential of employees. They put their team members in situations that will leverage their strengths. It is your job as a leader to help your team members discover and stimulate how they can take their potential to the next level both individually and together.

As a leader, you can unleash the potential in others every day. You must inspire the people around you to perform optimally and to achieve the results you want to achieve with them. You must be able to connect, inspire, influence, strengthen and facilitate others and provide a safe environment that gives your team the opportunity to put their ideas and talents into action.

Give them plenty of opportunities to unlock their potential and encourage self-leadership. Create space for personal growth where people are inspired, challenged, and encouraged. Encourage your team members to use their unique strengths for themselves and to help, strengthen and empower others.

A manager who is actively engaged in personal development and self-reflection can also be an inspiring role model for others. A good manager recognizes, among other things, that he or she can always continue to learn and is a role model for others. He/she is willing to invest heavily in the further development of personal qualities and in developing and refining a powerful and positive leadership style.

"Positive Psychology is the scientific study of human flourishing, and an applied approach to optimal functioning. It has also been defined as the study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals, communities and organisations to thrive." Source: Positive Psychology Institute

Investing in things that bring us more positive emotions is an investment in our future. Choosing Hope over Fear.

 - Dr. Barbara Fredrickson

Especially during stressful situations, people can lose their "cool", you may have experienced some "hot-headed" people in your life. Emotions are contagious, both negative and positive. We naturally tend to focus mainly on the negative, the negativity bias.

Negative emotions narrow our attention, we develop a "tunnel vision" and we enter a downward spiral. Dr. Barbara Fredrickson has been researching the effect of negative and positive emotions on our well-being for decades. Fredrickson's work has shed light on how and why positive emotions are good for us. She has developed the broaden-and-build theory; whereas negative emotions (for example fear) cause narrowing, constricted behavior, positive emotions ensure that we broaden our horizons. When we experience positive emotions there is room for creativity, new ideas and behaviors. The focus is on opportunities and growth instead of limitations and stagnation. It increases learning capacity, agility, resilience, and capacity for change.

The "build effect" occurs when you make it a habit to consciously seek out those happy mood states. The condition is the 3: 1 ratio; you must experience at least three times as many positive as negative emotions. Positive emotions (such as gratitude, hope, serenity, interest, pride, entertainment, inspiration, admiration) promote our resilience and well-being in general.

To increase positivity, according to Fredrickson, we can do the following; let good experiences affect you more consciously and enjoy them, being friendly, being absorbed in what you do (flow), connecting with others, going outside / enjoying nature, opening your mind for example through mindfulness / meditation, doing what you are strong at. Most people have a positivity ratio of 2 to 1. According to Fredrickson, increasing that ratio from 2 to 3-to-1 is a big step, comparing it in terms of difficulty to a behavioral change needed to lose weight or to stop smoking. Not easy, but achievable with some good will.

Trying to suppress or ignore negative emotions altogether is not desirable, they can of course be useful and only positive thinking is not realistic. "Toxic positivity is the assumption, either by one's self or others, that despite a person's emotional pain or difficult situation, they should only have a positive mindset or 'positive vibes'" (Dr. Jaime Zuckerman, clinical psychologist). Toxic positivity can be described as rejecting, denying, or displacing "any acknowledgement of stress, negativity, and possible disabling features of trauma" (Sokal, Trudel, & Babb, 2020).

Toxic positivity in the workplace can damage relationships and business productivity. Positive psychology is not happyology and it is not only about positive thinking. Its primary objective is to understand how people can flourish, what their strengths are and how these can be leveraged and applied in everyday life to encourage people to grow and thrive. Martin Seligman's Theory of Authentic Happiness demonstrates the necessity for negativity. The premise of this theory is that authentic happiness involves developing one's strengths (Mageed & Mohamed, 2020). To develop strengths, you must know your needs for improvement. With only positive statements, there is no room for constructive feedback, which is crucial for advancement.

The trouble is that, in general a negativity bias prevails, and this switches us towards being more open to the negative than the positive. There's negativity all around us and sometimes that can make things feel stuck, like we can't move forward. It's relatively easy to get caught up in those negative feelings so our focus can become even more negative. It can lead us to a place of '*stuckness*'. Having an attitude or mindset that helps you focus on strengths and solutions rather than weaknesses and problems can be one of the keys to achieving peak performance and success. There are two paths that people tend to alternate between. These are described below. It is important to understand where you are at any point in time, and be able to change course if needed.

Developing and maintaining a positive mindset is essential to great leadership.

Developing and maintaining a positive mindset is essential to great leadership. It builds a culture of hope, optimism, resilience and confidence, all of which are instrumental in helping inspire people to create a better future and achieve the organization's vision. What we now know from neuroscience is that almost any leader, regardless of their personality and how negative they are, can learn to become more positive in their approach and build a high-performing workplace where people optimize their strengths, deliver innovative solutions and stay focused on possibilities arising from uncertain and fast-changing times we are facing.

Path of Limitation

• Thoughts and actions are narrowed and focused on problems, issues, failures, weaknesses and independent action.

• Performance is based on a negative mindset of fear, mistrust, and pessimism.

• This can result in a culture of learned helplessness with people feeling stuck, isolated and full of self doubt and targets being missed.

Path of Possibility™

• Thoughts and actions are broadened and focused on strengths, successes, opportunities, solutions and building collaborative partnerships.

• Performance is based on trust, hope, optimism, purpose and energy-boosting habits. • This leads to a sense of powerfulness, positive energy and meaningful work life.

Every day we face challenges and opportunities. How we choose to respond is a 'moment of truth', as it impacts our effectiveness in navigating our lives. Most people find themselves alternating between the two paths. Their assumptions and interpretation of a situation place them at some point on either path and influence how they respond to the situation.

If you know what it is that energises you, where you feel at your strongest and most in control, and you can key into those strengths, then you're likely to be able to move towards a positive mindset and make the best choices about actions you can take in any uncertain situation that you face. The strengths approach, particularly knowing your strengths, provides a gateway, a bridge, to the path of possibility.

The path of limitation happens when we interpret a context or situation through a negative lens. This can sometimes lead us to focus on the negative, on for example weaknesses, threats and problems. Here, we experience negative emotions and a narrowing of choices as we're placing ourselves under stress and pressure…we're often facing a flight or fight or freeze situation. This can lead us to not trust others, to be fearful and may well sap our energy, ultimately leading to self-doubt, feeling helpless and even becoming disengaged. And we all spend time here some of the time. It is what it is. And it's ok to feel those feelings, to understand them and to learn from them – what are they telling you, what led you to those feelings, are those thoughts true, do you want to stick with the feelings and thinkings a little more and stay curious as to what else they might mean?

The path of possibility is the path we tread when we view a situation through a more positive lens, so rather than seeing weaknesses, threats and problems, we focus on strengths, opportunities and solutions. This leads to a more positive emotional chain reaction, where we then experience positive emotions and an opening up of our choices, as neurologically we are not in a stress situation and so we can access the decision-making and problem-solving centres of our brain. Our performance in the situation is then underpinned by trust, hope in the future, and a sense of energy and empowerment. We feel powerful rather than helpless, engaged and self-confident rather than doubting ourselves; in short, we feel strong.

Staying positive in tough times

Every day leaders face tough challenges and changes impacting their organizations. Choosing how to respond in any given situation provides a "moment of truth" which determines how a leader is perceived and their impact on the organization's results.

Most leaders find themselves alternating between the two paths outlined in the diagram below.

Their assumptions, beliefs and interpretation of a situation place them at some point on either path and directly influence how they react to their circumstances. However, some leaders have a tendency to stay more on one path than the other based on their personality, background and how they perceive their circumstances.

The lower path, the 'Path of Limitation' drives thought and actions narrowed by a negative mindset that focuses on problems, issues, failures, weaknesses and independent action. It results in fear, mistrust and pessimism. This in turn fuels a culture of learned helplessness where individuals and teams feel isolated and unable to progress. This self-doubt leads to lower performance and undesirable and unintended consequences, such as missing business targets.

The upper path, the 'Path of Possibility', is more productive. Thoughts and actions are broadened and focused on strengths, successes, opportunities, solutions and building collaborative partnerships. Leadership is based on trust, hope, optimism, purpose and energy-boosting habits. This leads to a sense of powerfulness, positive energy, confidence and meaning at work, which fuels higher performance.

Most leaders don't want to be negative and aren't even aware when they end up spending most of the time on the lower path. This happens for several reasons, the most common being:

1. They are naturally more pessimistic and critically minded in nature and when these behaviours are overdone or used inappropriately, they can be perceived as too negative.

2. They experience tough events at home and/or at work that push them into the negative zone. Even the most upbeat and optimistic leader can end up with a negative mindset if they experience cumulative events which cause distress, such as marital problems or major reorganizations creating uncertainty and insecurity. This can result in them feeling helpless, disengaged and lacking in confidence.

3. A minority of leaders might deliberately remain negative and critical to avoid taking responsibility to lead on making the situation better. It is easier and often less risky for a leader to blame others for problems, issues, and weaknesses in the workplace than to lead positively to get things altered.
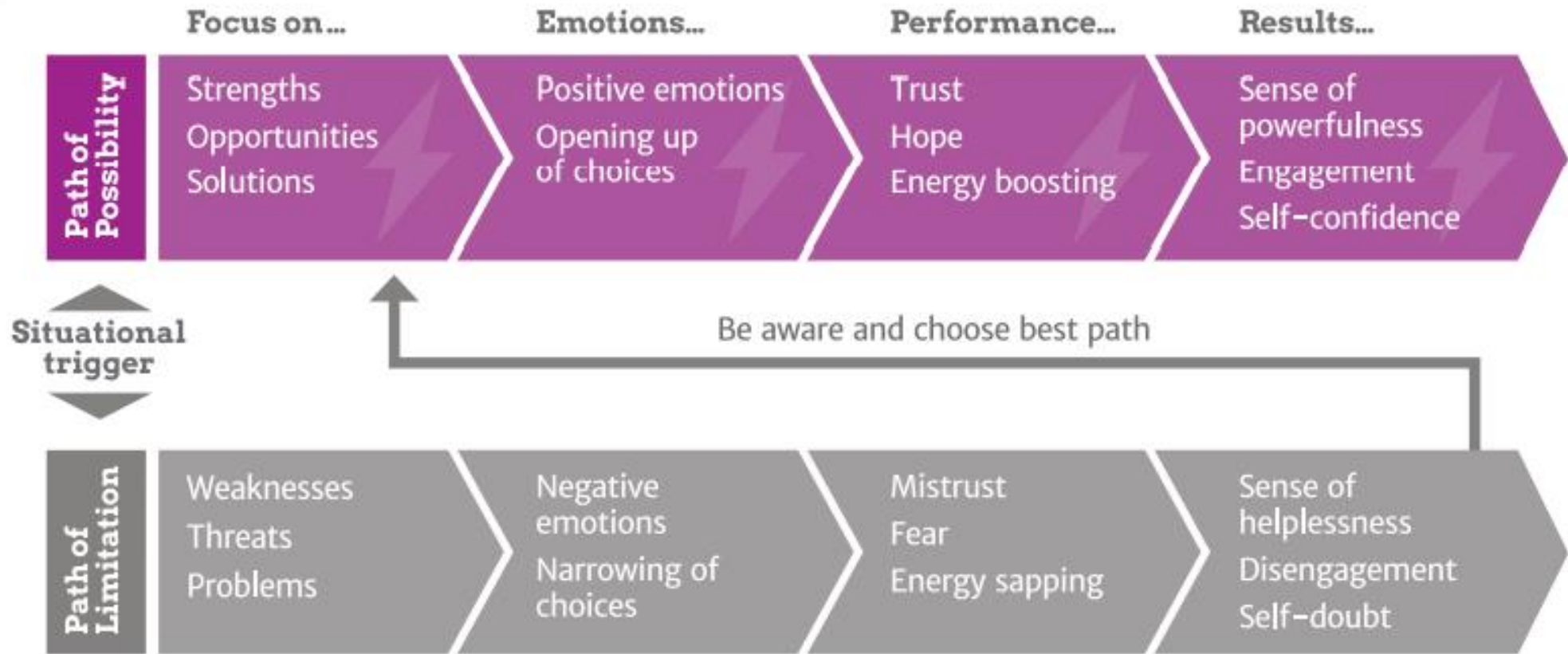
By adopting these straightforward principles, leaders can become more aware of their mindset, how it impacts others and develop a more positive outlook

Know what triggers your negativity and pivot It is important to understand where you are at any point in time, and to understand the implications of your mindset on your performance and that of others who you work with.

Identifying specific triggers (people, events, etc.) that move you to the 'Path of Limitation' will enable you to pivot and stay on the performance-enhancing positive path.

Research shows that even if leaders are naturally pessimistic and critical, they can consciously choose to focus more attention on the positive aspects of performance. After a few months, new habits will develop around this more positive mindset which will feel natural to apply.

Specific ideas of how leaders can shift their mindset to focus on the positive include:

I.   Keeping a diary of what went well during each day and how these successes can be built upon
II. Discovering the strengths of their people and helping them optimize these using a strengths profiler like Strengthscope®
III. Learning 'flip thinking' techniques to think about problems and issues using a more positive lens. Frame issues as questions which encourages a search for new and creative solutions. So rather than saying: "Budgets have been cut by 30% so we can't deliver our sales number" it is far better to ask something like: "How can we achieve our sales targets by finding new and smarter ways to win business?"
IV. Starting every meeting by inviting team members to share their successes as well as support they need to achieve even better results.

Maintaining a positive mindset as a leader doesn't mean you need to be happy and upbeat all the time. Express negative feelings, but don't dwell on them. A positive, strengths-based approach doesn't encourage people to suppress emotions. It highlights the need to remain aware of them and the implications for a leader's behaviour and results. So, if a leader is upset or angry, we encourage them to talk about these feelings in an open and constructive way and focus on finding solutions with the help of co-workers. This enables them to overcome their negative emotions more quickly and constructively.

Energy

Many leaders are feeling overwhelmed, stressed and frustrated with their workloads and constant change. They take on too much, work too hard and end up feeling burnt out. The impact of this doesn't only damage their physical and psychological well-being, but undermines the effective functioning of their organization and family. For example, recent research has found that erratic and disruptive behaviour at work can be caused by sleep deprivation.

Research and decades of experience coaching and developing leaders, show that managers who learn to effectively manage their time and energy at work can be more productive, energized and happy at work and at home. They also lead teams who are happier and perform better than teams led by energy-sapping workaholics who drive people to burnout, despair, and resignation.

Development solely aimed at improving competencies that need to be improved, from a deficiency or gap-based approach, seldom works motivating, inspiring and energizing. Strengths are more personal, offer the most room for positive and sustainable growth and can be of great significance for innovation, knowledge, intrinsic motivation and creativity. Moreover, you prevent burnouts if you let people do what they are good at, using strengths gives positive energy.

Never before has there been so much attention for themes around happiness, job satisfaction, well-being, and engagement. But at the same time, the numbers for burnouts, disengagement, and depression are shocking. Work related stress and burnouts are occupational disease number 1 in the Netherlands. "For many organizations, the employees are the heart of the business. Yet too often, the well-being of those employees is thought to be in terms of illness, health and unhealthy lifestyle. Dr. W. van Rhenen, Chief Medical Officer of ArboNed at the UVA has conducted research into what can prevent burnout and what makes employees enthusiastic.

The starting point of the study was the energy of the employee, with a value that varies from the minimum (burnout) to the optimum (enthusiasm). The aim of the study was to show what the effect is of on the one hand the stressful elements in the work, such as work pressure (stressors) and on the other hand the elements that promote job satisfaction (motivators)

- Make time and space to refresh and replenish your energies

- Make sure you have the right mix of work for you that's engaging and interesting

- Ask for help and support sooner so that you don't sink – collaborate, delegate, share

- Know and play to your core strengths as much as you can

- Know your values and work to your purpose

Energy sources at work are for instance social support from colleagues, autonomy, development opportunities, doing work that suits you and gives you pleasure, and receiving feedback.

Most people intuitively know that working from our personal strengths is good for us; both in our personal life and at work. We are most drawn to what we are good at, what gives us satisfaction, positive energy, and what we just enjoy doing.

But at work we regularly end up in roles that do not really suit us and that do not get the best out of ourselves because we don't get the opportunity to use and develop our unique qualities. As a result, we become dissatisfied with our work and motivation, performance, and enthusiasm decrease. Often these negative feelings also seep through into our personal lives and for some people it can mean that they are heading towards a burnout.

In addition to burnouts, more and more 'bore-outs' are also occurring in the business world, for example because people work below their level, are insufficiently challenged, their qualities are not deployed, and there is little or no opportunity for development. A bore-out makes people tired, insecure, and unhappy, performance and engagement will decrease.

People who are given the opportunity to optimize their talents are happier, more resilient, healthier and more productive. Various studies have shown that a positive approach to people in organizations reduces work-related stress and burnout complaints. My clients keep a kind of diary for a while in which they keep track of which activities and which interactions are energizing and where and when they lose energy. This can really be an eye opener. The tip is of course, do more that gives you positive energy and less of what drains you, charging the battery is important!

What are strengths?

One common mistake that we make is to confuse our skills with our strengths. Just because we have developed a competency at something, does not mean that it is one of our strengths.

A strength is something that energises us, that motivates us and that contributes to our personal growth.

Strengths are unique and sustainable, and it can provide insight into why someone is (intrinsically) motivated and is willing to make an extra effort for the organization.

It is not the same as competencies; this involves knowledge and skills, usually in the context of the organizational objectives. Based on my competencies, I can be very suitable for a certain position, but that does not imply that I am the best fit for the job, this only occurs if my strengths are also recognized and fully utilized within the organization. It is important to understand what makes you tick? What are you passionate about? What kind of work or tasks do you feel most affinity with?

In most hiring decisions, managers place more emphasis on a person's existing knowledge, skills and experience to do the job rather than their strengths and aspirations. The danger of this practice is that it takes little account of a person's passion to put in sustained effort to deliver and grow in the role and to make necessary changes as the job and organisation evolves. Engagement and productivity levels of people hired in this way may therefore decline sharply when job requirements shift in response to external changes in the environment. The most effective leaders put strengths first in the hiring process.

Attracting and retaining talent is becoming increasingly difficult, so avoid "brain drain" and make sure that you keep an eye on existing talent within the organization, by spotting, appreciating, and developing talents. Make better use of the available talents of all employees within the organization; professionals also attach great importance to personal development.

Research also shows that when employees feel that their strengths are valued by their employer and that they are given the opportunity to develop and use them, they experience more positive emotions. In addition, they are more innovative and more helpful.

Positive Organizational Culture

Peter Drucker was a well-known American writer and management consultant, and he is probably the earliest proponent of a strengths based approach to leadership. In the 1950's he argued that organizations built on strengths offer the greatest potential for growth, performance and individual fulfillment.

Professionals usually have the hard skills, the technical skills, but excelling in, for example, an IT or financial position, does not necessarily mean that you are also a good manager. This also requires people management skills, "soft skills" such as empathy, compassion and the willingness and ability to help others develop, flourish and thrive.

You build a positive organizational culture by working towards goals based on shared values and vision, based on trust and commitment. The culture of an organization is strongly determined by the norms and core values, the history, "storytelling" and the manners between employees.

Transparency: the culture of a company is now more visible than ever, partly through social media (Glassdoor, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn etc.). So, you want employees to become the ambassadors of your organization. People who are proud of their organization and see their leaders as supportive and inspiring take on more responsibility than their actual job description "prescribes". These types of employees are excellent ambassadors for your organization (Organizational Citizen Behavior). They strengthen the reputation of the company and are more inclined to recommend the organization to external parties.

Prior to the strengths-based approach to leadership development, the emphasis on employee development in most organizations was principally centred on overcoming deficits or weaknesses. A compelling body of evidence over the past two decades shows the limitations of focusing on resolving weaknesses. This is an approach that tends to undermine engagement, performance and confidence.

'Strengths' practitioners recommend moving away from this deficit-orientated approach towards one that is focused on leaders' and employees' strengths, helping them use these to maximise performance outcomes. However, weaknesses and other performance risks should not be ignored.

These include limiting weaknesses, overdone strengths – or strengths that are overused or used in the wrong way and cause unintended negative outcomes – and sources of interference. The latter can be either internal, such as psychological blockers frustrating peak performance, self-limiting beliefs and poor self-confidence. Or they can be external, such as an incompatible corporate culture or lack of sufficient resources.

We advocate three simple strategies for dealing with such risks: using your own strengths to compensate for risk areas, bringing in others with strengths you lack to complement you, and building new habits to mitigate areas of risk and prevent failure.

Adopt a 80/20 rule in your personal development: spend 80% of your development time discovering and building on your strengths, with the remainder allocated to overcoming risk areas, specifically limiting weaknesses and overdone strengths.

Every Manager Should Have a Leadership Coach – The one thing people are never good at is seeing themselves as others see them. A coach really, really helps.

- former Google CEO and chairman Eric Schmidt

Why all leaders should be strengths coaches

Why coaching is so powerful? When highly successful people like Microsoft's Founder, Bill Gates, and Google's ex CEO, Eric Schmidt, talk openly about the importance of coaching, you know it must be important. But why is it important and how do we coach in a way that is both effective and efficient?

Coaching is now regarded by leadership and business psychologists as one of the most powerful ways to help people learn and accelerate their performance and success. The main reasons for this are:

- It assumes people have the strengths and capacities to discover solutions for themselves. When a person finds his/her own answers, they are far more likely to own and implement these with vigour and in a way that works for them

- It is highly contextualised learning and takes account of individual differences, including their unique personality and ways they make sense of and deal with day-to-day challenges

- It provides an ideal opportunity for refection and consideration of different pathways for achieving goals and the impact of these

- It provides the ideal space for the leader to support, challenge and provide feedback to move the person beyond their comfort zone to greater success.

There are plenty of opportunities for a leader to have a coaching conversation. Some of the most common are: during regular catch-up meetings, in performance goal-setting and review meetings, during personal development conversations, when providing feedback, before delegating work and when someone asks for help or is struggling with a task.

A proven approach to get the most out of people in a turbulent world.

One of the major shifts we are seeing in companies is a move from a weakness-based to a strengths-based people management culture. Leading companies like Facebook, Sainsbury's, Deloitte, GSK and BT all recognize the value of helping employees discover and optimize their natural strengths so they can contribute maximum value to the organization. This approach is based on refreshingly different assumptions. The underlying belief is that personal strengths – qualities that energize us and we are great at (or have potential to become great at) – lie at the heart of performance excellence.

Achieving or exceeding one's goals begins with a good understanding of one's natural strengths and pathways to optimize these while at the same time tackling any risks/blockers to peak performance. The evidence behind the approach is extremely compelling with productivity increases up to 40% being achieved when employees are engaged at work and encouraged to play to their strengths more of the time.

Strengths coaching is therefore a particularly powerful way to accelerate learning, performance and success. It involves creating a positive and trusting relationship which helps the individual (or team) find ways to achieve success through optimizing their strengths, reducing performance risk and facilitating effective learning. The approach offers numerous benefits including:

I	Drives innovation and a solutions-focused team
II	Boosts resilience, confidence and well-being
III	Increases motivation and engagement
IV	Reduces defensiveness and barriers to difficult behaviour change
V	Improves self-awareness and self-management
VI	Delivers improved results.

By helping your people to optimize their strengths, as well as developing strategies to reduce performance risks, you can help them perform better and progress towards their personal goals in an efficient and motivating way.

Contrary to common misconception that the strengths approach involves focusing only on strengths, it actually involves helping people to achieve their goals through both optimizing their strengths and reducing what we call "performance risks" – weaknesses, overdone strengths and psychological barriers such as low self-confidence. Overdone strengths are strengths used in the wrong way or at the wrong time that lead to poor results.

Research and our own experience show that most people encounter problems with their performance and/or relationships not because of obvious weaknesses they have, but because of overdone strengths. For example, people who are too confident become arrogant and those that are too compassionate can't deal with tough situations in a firm and objective way. Because the approach is positive and focuses on helping people discover and leverage their strengths using solutions-focused and empowering techniques, the conversation is more open and honest and some of the defensiveness we see in more traditional coaching approaches is reduced

To help people perform at their best and support them through growing turbulence and stress faced in most workplaces today, leaders need to learn how to be energizers and strengths coaches. Because it is positive, empowering and stretching, strengths coaching is a proven way to help people find their own solutions to challenges, so they achieve ever greater levels of success. Just as importantly, it is more effective in helping reduce performance risks and barriers that undermine peak performance and productive relationships.

The strengths-based approach is an innovative process that is more powerful than typical coaching approaches in building self-awareness, positive energy, learning agility and peak performance as it achieves change through:

- Building a positive mindset

- Focusing on strengths, solutions and opportunities

- Encouraging continuous stretch and improvement, growth mindset

- Using more powerful techniques to tackle performance risks including weaker areas and overdone strengths

- Building productive habits that last

- Ensuring effective use of energy to achieve goals and well-being simultaneously
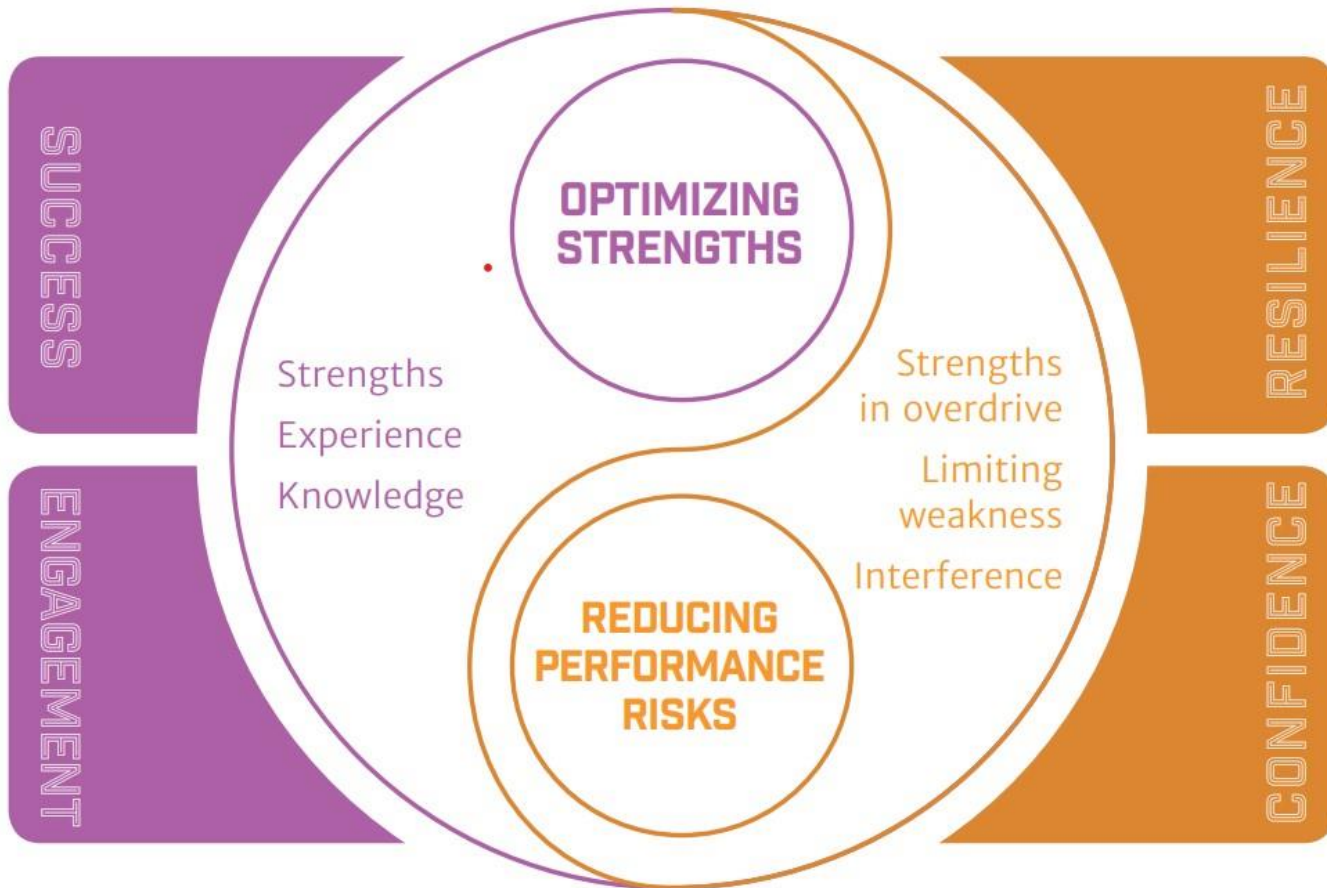
Coaching increases people's self-awareness, self-learning capability and self-management. Coaches using a strengths-focused approach with their clients explore what most energizes their clients – and so are already talking about areas that the client is likely to be great at – or are more able to become great at. Strengths-focused coaching supports clients to use their strengths to overcome performance risks such as limiting weaknesses and strengths going into overdrive, and how to stretch their strengths to take them to a whole new level in terms of success outcomes in the workplace. Delivering on goals that are set during a coaching session is made easier when playing to strengths – as we are using what already energizes us.

Coaching is releasing someone's potential qualities and talents so that he or she performs as well as possible. It is the opposite of a "command & control" way of leadership. To be able to coach others well, a high degree of self-knowledge is firstly important. What are your own beliefs, obstacles, pitfalls, assumptions, motivations, values, aspirations, strengths and weaknesses? You must be able to combine the leadership and coaching role well and finding the right balance is not so easy. As a manager you have different hats and sometimes you just must give very concrete advice, information and instructions.

Coaching does not only benefit you as a leader, but it often also exerts a positive ripple effect on your team and the organization.

The proven StrengthscopeLeader assessment and development system helps leaders build greater awareness of how to lead in a way that is consistent with their strengths, as well as tackling weaker areas and other performance risks that can undermine their performance. This positive and empowering approach enables leaders to simultaneously unlock the dual benefits of a positive work culture and excellent business results. It is designed for executives, leaders and managers who want to strengthen their leadership skills, develop an authentic leadership style, effective leadership habits and improve performance and employee engagement.

The StrengthscopeLeader™ profile report details leaders':

- Unique strengths
- Weaker areas (including areas where they are using their strengths in overdrive, possibly leading to unintended performance shortfalls)
- Effectiveness across critical behaviours
- Impact on key outcomes and performance drivers

Unleashing your leadership potential

"Leaders who use their strengths effectively and develop high performance leadership behaviours are rated as more effective."

StrengthscopeLeader™

PRACTITIONER

With the speed of change and increasing complexity that surrounds us, businesses and their leaders have never had it so tough. Increasing competition, disruptive technologies, remote working are just a few of the challenges companies are having to face.

In the face of shifting contexts, leaders must remain the constant. Knowing and understanding what you bring as a leader – your specific strengths and vulnerabilities – is essential to being able to show up under pressure.

Using the StrengthscopeLeader™ assessment and program combined with coaching sessions will enable leaders to develop the self-awareness necessary to hone in on their 'leadership edge' and to develop skills essential to leading effectively.

This is a highly interactive and pragmatic program. In addition to the online assessment you will get access to many exercises, tools and resources designed to convert strengths awareness into success.

The British Psychological Society
Registered Test

Some Strengthscope clients are:

Strengthscope® Users

BNP PARIBAS
NOVARTIS
BT
pwc
Santander
accenture
High performance. Delivered.
gsk GlaxoSmithKline
Genentech
A Member of the Roche Group
facebook
photoboxgroup
Microsoft
RBS
The Royal Bank of Scotland
SONY
Deloitte.
YAHOO!
Statoil
ALLEN & OVERY
UBS
ASDA
Save the Children
TESCO
LEGO
eDF ENERGY
bp
P&G

CoAchieve

Do you want to unlock your potential and play to your strengths? Would you like to develop an authentic, positive, effective leadership style and strengthen your leadership skills, discover how to lead your employees to high engagement, increased performance and increased job satisfaction?

The strengths-based approach is an innovative process that is more powerful than typical coaching approaches in building self-awareness, positive energy, learning agility and peak performance as it achieves change through:

- Building a positive mindset

- Focusing on strengths, solutions and opportunities

- Encouraging continuous stretch and improvement

- Using more powerful techniques to tackle performance risks including weaker areas and overdone strengths

- Building productive habits that last

- Ensuring you to achieve your goals with more ease

- Improving employee engagement and well-being

- Inspiring and motivating your team members to deliver better performance

The StrengthscopeLeader™ report is the only dedicated strengths-based 360 leadership profiler on the market today. It allows leaders to discover what it is that makes them truly unique and provides valuable feedback on how to bring their authentic style into their leadership role.

StrengthscopeLeader is for:

• Any leader looking to better understand their unique and authentic leadership style
• Leaders seeking 360 feedback on their effectiveness as a leader and people's confidence in them as a leader
• Leaders who want to understand how to be build a more inspired and engaged, high performance culture
• Leaders curious to know how their unique style impacts relationships, performance and team culture.

Where is StrengthscopeLeader™ used? It is ideal for:

• Any leader with more than two year's experience
• Any leadership programme including future leaders, high potential leaders and senior executives
• Executive coaching
• Building strong teams and improving employee engagement
• Strengthening the Management Team

StrengthscopeLeader™ provides leaders/managers with powerful self-awareness and helps them understand their unique leadership strengths and how they can bring the best of themselves to their roles to inspire and motivate their team members to deliver better performance. It is for leaders and managers who want to strengthen their leadership skills and get feedback from colleagues and other stakeholders on the effectiveness of their leadership approach.

The significant advantage of the Strengthscope tool is that it can be used in both an individual and a multi-rater format, allowing others to rate the individual's strengths and providing data on that crucial self– other alignment – Strength Based Leadership: An Evidence-Based Guide to Positive Leadership Development by Doug MacKie, 2016).

It will also give you insights into weaker areas (non-strengths) and other risks to performance, your performance on leadership habits essential to leadership effectiveness, and the level of confidence your team members have in your ability to positively impact the key outcomes essential to healthy organizational performance.

It offers an effective path to better understand:

- Your unique strengths and how these can be used to enhance performance / maximise effectiveness

- Potential performance risk areas including overdone strengths

- The perception you and your raters have about the visibility of your strengths and effectiveness

- The 4 leadership habits (sharing vision, sparking engagement, skillfully executing, sustaining progress) and the confidence others have in your performance over these key areas

- The confidence your raters have in your ability to perform in the 4 areas (emotional, thinking, execution, relational)

Leaders need to develop good self-awareness and make the most of who they are at their best. We refer to this as finding your 'leadership edge', which is derived from the unique and powerful strengths and qualities you bring to the way you lead.
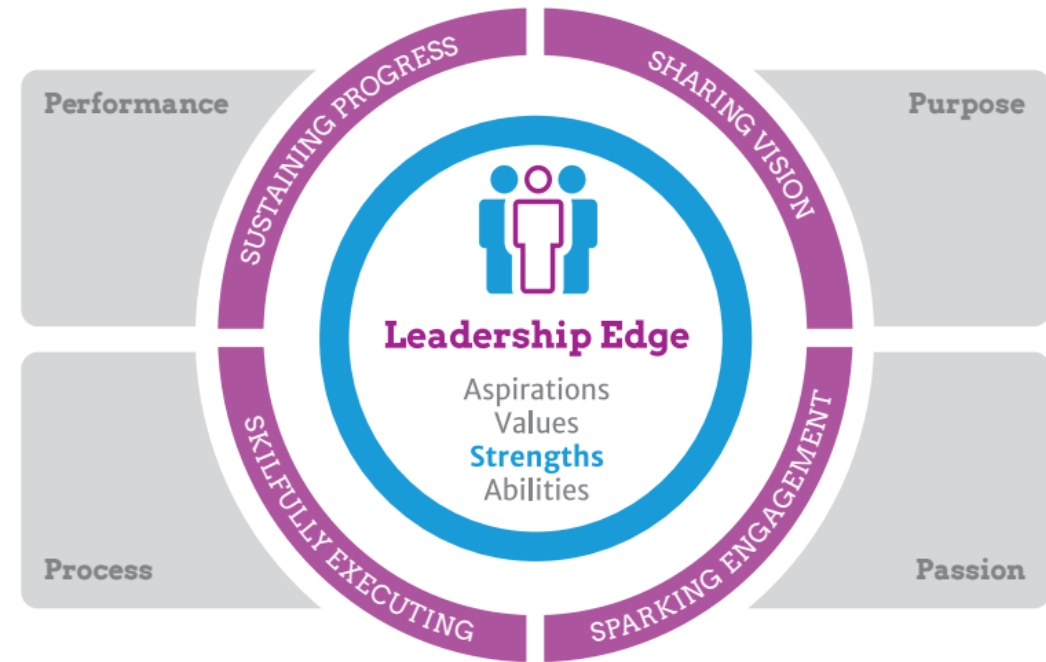
Once discovered and acted upon, your leadership edge inspires those around you to perform at their best and achieve exceptional results. It has four aspects;

- Aspirations – what you aspire to achieve through your leadership and contribution; the lasting legacy you wish to leave
- Values – principles and guiding beliefs that are important to you and anchor your career and life decisions
- Strengths – underlying qualities that energize you, things you are good at, or have the potential to be great at
- Abilities – natural or acquired talents and skills where you have an opportunity to shine.

This model of leadership is designed to form the basis of leaders' self-awareness, starting with the development of their "leadership edge" (their purpose, values, strengths and abilities), and continuing through to skill development in four key areas (sharing vision, sparking engagement, skilfully executing and sustaining progress).

Effective leaders develop four leadership habits that research has shown are essential for great leadership.

While your leadership edge is unique, any leader can develop his/her habits with focus, discipline and positive stretch.

The four habits are:

Continuously developing their leadership habits

Strengthscope®
Energizing Peak Performance

Sharing Vision → Purpose

Sparking Engagement → Passion

Skilfully Executing → Process
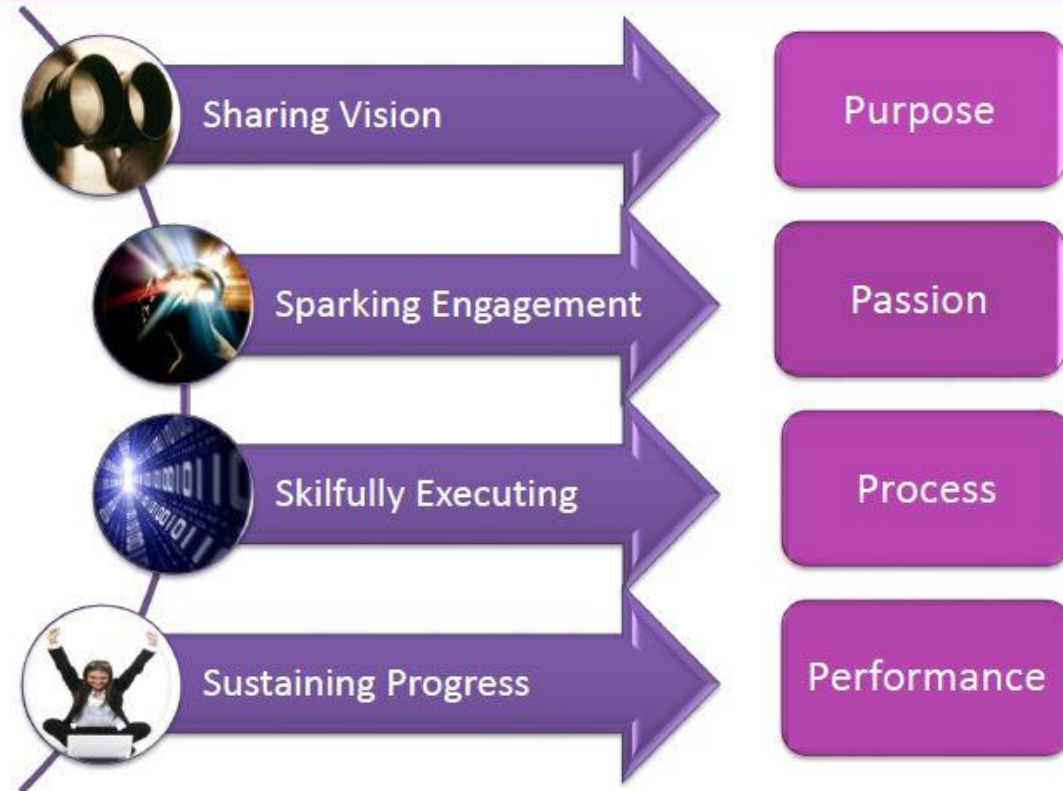
Sustaining Progress → Performance

Leadership outcomes

Leaders are only effective if they have a lasting and positive impact on their team and organization. The four crucial outcomes are:

- Purpose
  Clearly understood, compelling direction and goals.

- Passion
  A positive, highly motivating work environment.

- Process
  Well communicated and straightforward policies and processes to guide behaviour.

- Performance
  Reliable delivery of planned business outcomes.
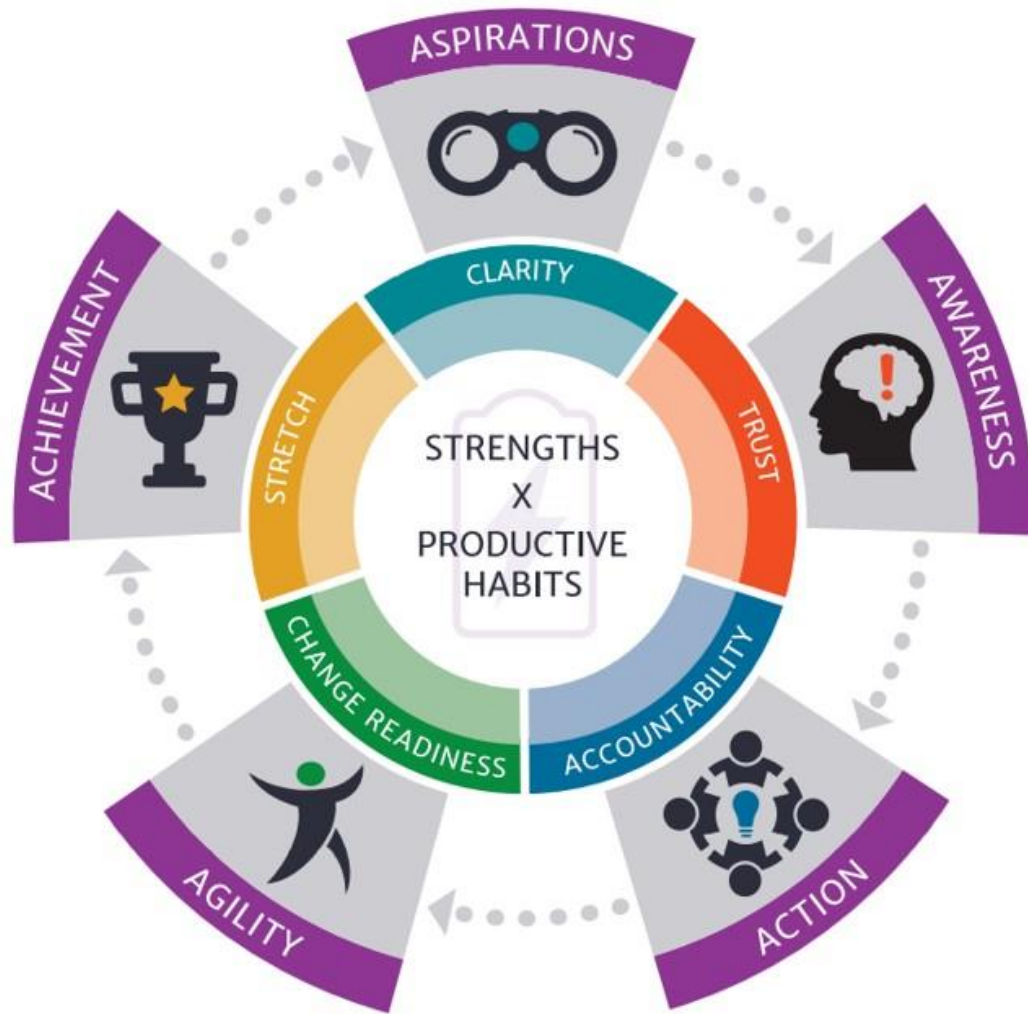
CoAchieve

The 5A´s leadership development model is a proven development structure from Aspirations to Achievement. During the program and our coaching sessions, we will explore where you are now, where you want to go, and what success will look like, not just for yourself, but for your team and te organization.

"Strengthscope® lets you know how to be successful by being you" Manager, Sainsburys

"Strengthscope® has provided me with the greatest insight compared with any other psychometric testing I have completed in my career" Manager, Siemens

Kitty Schaap MA, MSc

Leadership coaching &
strengths-based
leadership
development

CoAchieve

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" "Ik stond echt open voor dit traject. En dat is erg belangrijk. Je moet naar jezelf kijken en wat jouw rol is richting de mensen in de organisatie. Het is erg leuk om te doen en de tijd die je erin steekt gaf me veel positieve energie! "

" "Dit traject is enorm leerzaam geweest en de professionele aanpak en begeleiding van mijn coach (Kitty Schaap) is essentieel geweest om dit traject succesvol te kunnen volgen." "

" "Aanvulling door Kitty met persoonlijk advies voor lezen specifieke boeken die mij in mijn situatie meer kunnen vooruithelpen vind ik echt TOP" "

" "Kitty haar manier van begeleiden en geven van feedback/uitleg schepte een open en vertrouwd gevoel wat het makkelijk maakte om de analyse te bespreken. Wat ook zeer waardevol is geweest voor mij, is de feedback van diverse collega's, waardoor het duidelijk is geworden op welk niveau mijn krachten het meest zichtbaar zijn, of als concrete bijdrage worden ervaren." "

" "Heel erg fijn is om het materiaal te krijgen wat voor mij relevant is. Door de gesprekken kreeg ik achteraf goede informatie om door te nemen wat voor mij van toepassing was." "

" Kitty heeft een enorme expertise op dit vlak en gebruikt die ook tijdens het coaching traject." "

Krachtig Leiderschap

Authentiek, Effectief, Talentgericht leidinggeven

Je ontwikkelt een authentieke, effectieve leiderschapsstijl die past bij jou als persoon en bij wat je team en de organisatie van jou als leidinggevende verlangen in deze tijd. Je ontdekt waar je kracht ligt, wat je eventueel belemmert en wat je nodig hebt om effectief en met positieve energie te leiden. Je versterkt je leiderschap door je potentieel meer te benutten, effectief leiderschapsgedrag en een positieve mindset te ontwikkelen. Leidinggeven passend bij deze tijd. Weten wat jou echt uniek maakt en hoe je jouw authentieke leiderschapsstijl kunt integreren in je leiderschapsrol, zodat je een positieve leiderschapsimpact kunt hebben op je team en het bedrijf.

Versterk je leiderschap

Every Manager Should Have a Leadership Coach – 'The one thing people are never good at is seeing themselves as others see them. A coach really, really helps.' (former Google CEO and chairman Eric Schmidt)

Individual coaching is the best investment you can make in yourself!

Individuele Coaching voor leiders en managers

CoAchieve