

THEORY #5: Strengths-Based Leadership

Theory Overview:

Emphasizes assets over deficits; Invests in people's talents by cultivating knowledge and skills; Focuses on the uniqueness of people; Believes that the most effective leaders can rally a group of people for the same organizational cause.

Two key concepts include:

- 1.) Knowing one's strengths – developing talents into strengths; leaving room for professional growth.
- 2.) Maximizing teams – elevating organizational potential by ensuring that cohesive teams reflect strengths across 4 leadership domains. These domains include executing, influencing, relationship building, and strategic thinking.

Example:

Furthering the innate talent to “command” (ability to take charge and make decisions);
Furthering the talent for “empathy” (ability to readily perceive other's feelings)

Informational Graphic:



The Four Domains of Leadership Strength

Executing	Influencing	Relationship Building	Strategic Thinking
<i>Make things Happen</i>	<i>Help Reach Audience by Selling Ideas</i>	<i>Provide Glue that Holds Team Together</i>	<i>Absorb and Analyze Information to Focus on What Could Be</i>
Achiever	Activator	Adaptability	Analytical
Arranger	Command	Developer	Context
Belief	Communication	Connectedness	Futuristic
Consistency	Competition	Empathy	Ideation
Deliberative	Maximizer	Harmony	Input
Discipline	Self-Assurance	Includer	Intellection
Focus	Significance	Individualization	Learner
Responsibility	Woo	Positivity	Strategic
Restorative		Relator	

Key Concepts:

- **Strengths** – suggests that leadership is learnable; maximizes the organizational potential; develops innate talents; increases productivity and profitability; leads to higher levels of team member engagement, leadership efficacy, and positive group dynamics.
- **Weaknesses** – scales allegedly work for Whites and not people of color; fail to address social stratification and power; do not offer adequate evidence and sufficient integration of leadership studies literature; limited attention to context; assume that ‘strengths’ will be positively received and valued.

Key Terms:

- **Strength** - a good or beneficial quality of a person or thing
- **Clifton Strengths Finder (CSF)** – A tool developed by the Gallup organization to help individuals discover their strengths and improve organizational culture and performance.
- **Reliability** – the extent to which a scale demonstrates consistency and stability.
- **Innate Talent**- an inborn or natural talent
- **Assets Perspective** – seeing all students as capable of learning (opposite to deficit perspective which focuses on limitations)

Reading Reflection: What I appreciated most about strengths-based leadership is its ability to focus on innate talents rather than shortcomings. I think that it's very important for leaders to give followers room to grow and to believe that each person has their own individual set of strengths. I also think that it is important to remember that strengths will vary across different cultural groups and that we must remember not to hold implicit bias of strengths we personally find to be more or less valuable.