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What Makes a Great Leadership Team? **Individuals don't have to be well-rounded, but teams should be**

by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie

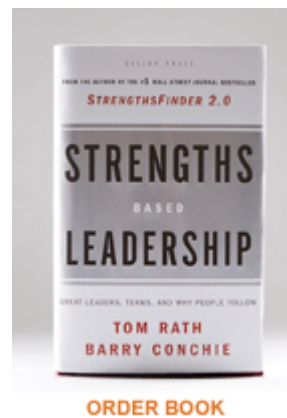
Adapted from *Strengths Based Leadership* (Gallup Press, January 2009)

Over the years, Gallup has studied thousands of executive teams. In most cases, our leadership consultants conduct an in-depth interview with a team's formal leader (usually the CEO) and also conduct interviews with each member of the leadership team. This enables us to compare the strengths of each person sitting around the table so that we can start thinking about each one's individual development and succession planning -- and perhaps most importantly, how the team looks as a whole.

As we worked with these leadership teams, we began to see that while each member had his or her own unique strengths, the most cohesive and successful teams possessed broader groupings of strengths. So we went back and initiated our most thorough review of this research to date. From this dataset, four distinct domains of leadership strength emerged: Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking.

While these categories appear to be general, especially when compared to the specific talent themes within the StrengthsFinder assessment, it struck us that these broader categories of strengths could be useful for thinking about how leaders can contribute to a team. A more detailed language may work best for individual development, but these broad domains offer a more practical lens for looking at the composition of a team.

We found that it serves a team well to have a representation of strengths in each of these four domains. Instead of one dominant leader who tries to do everything or individuals who all have similar strengths, contributions from all four domains



lead to a strong and cohesive team. *Although individuals need not be well-rounded, teams should be.*

This doesn't mean that each person on a team must have strengths exclusively in a single category. In most cases, each team member will possess some strength in multiple domains. A tool like Gallup's StrengthsFinder assessment can be useful in determining how all team members can maximize their contribution to the group's collective goals.

According to our latest research, the 34 StrengthsFinder themes naturally cluster into these four domains of leadership strength based on a statistical factor analysis and a clinical evaluation by Gallup's top scientists. As you think about how you can contribute to a team and who you need to surround yourself with, this may be a good starting point. (See graphic "The Four Domains of Leadership Strength" to see how the 34 StrengthsFinder themes sort into the four domains of leadership strength.)

The Four Domains of Leadership Strength			
Executing	Influencing	Relationship Building	Strategic Thinking
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	

Explaining the Four Domains

Leaders with dominant strength in the **Executing** domain know how to make things happen. When you need someone to implement a solution, these are the people who will work tirelessly to get it done. Leaders with a strength to execute have the ability to "catch" an idea and make it a reality.

For example, one leader may excel at establishing a quality process using themes such as Deliberative or Discipline, while the next leader will use her Achiever theme to work tirelessly toward a goal. Or a leader with strong Arranger may determine the optimal configuration of people needed to complete a task.

Leaders with a strength to execute have the ability to "catch" an idea and make it a reality.

Those who lead by **Influencing** help their team reach a much broader audience. People with strength in this domain are always selling the team's ideas inside and outside the organization. When you need someone to take charge, speak up, and make sure your group is heard, look to someone with the strength to influence.

For example, a leader with a lot of Command or Self-Assurance may use few words, but her confidence will continue to project authority and win followers. In contrast, a leader using Communication or Woo might get people involved by helping individuals feel comfortable and connected to the issue at hand.

Those who lead through **Relationship Building** are the essential glue that holds a team together. Without these strengths on a team, in many cases, the group is simply a composite of individuals. In contrast, leaders with exceptional Relationship Building strength have the unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts.

Within this domain, a leader with Positivity and Harmony may work hard to minimize distractions and to keep the team's collective energy high. On the other hand, a leader with Individualization might use a more targeted approach to getting people involved. Or a leader with strong Relator or Developer may be a great mentor and guide as he pushes others toward bigger and better achievements.

Leaders with great **Strategic Thinking** strengths are the ones who keep us all focused on what *could be*. They are constantly absorbing and analyzing information and helping the team make better decisions. People with strength in this domain continually stretch our thinking for the future.

Within this domain, a leader using Context or Strategic might explain how past events influenced present circumstances or navigate the best route for future possibilities. Someone with strong Ideation or Input may see countless opportunities for growth based on all of the information she reviews. Or a leader drawing from his Analytical theme might help the team drill into the details of cause and effect.

In recent years, we have studied leaders who built great schools, created major nonprofit organizations, led big businesses, and transformed entire nations. But we have yet to find two leaders who have the exact same sequence of strengths. While two leaders may have identical expectations, the way they reach their goals is always dependent on the unique arrangement of their strengths.

Gallup Global Practice Leader Tom Rath is the author of the bestsellers *How Full Is Your Bucket?* and *StrengthsFinder 2.0*. Rath's latest book is *Strengths Based Leadership*.

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Barry Conchie, Principal Leadership Consultant with Gallup, is the coauthor of *Strengths Based Leadership*.

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