

VENTURING MAGAZINE

LeaderThoughts #17 by Michael Brown

September 2014

Know thyself: StrengthsFinder & Conclusion

As leaders, knowing ourselves is an important aspect of leadership that is too often overlooked. Do you have a good understand of what 'type' of person you are? Are you an extrovert or an introvert? Do you like working with people or with things? Are you more a thinker or a doer? Have you put any thought into the fact that the people you often like to work with or be around have similar traits to you, and that the people you don't like to work with have different traits? This is usually all lumped into the broad concept of "personality types" or "interaction styles", of which here are many models. While many people may get the chance to take a personality/interaction test at work or maybe school, not everyone gets the chance.

In the next in this series of articles we look at another assessment tool: StrengthsFinder



The StrengthsFinder Profile is a newer idea of assessing people, based on finding people's unique talents or strengths. Based on research by the Gallup organization, led by Donald Clifton, it was first introduced in "Now, Discover Your Strengths" (2001), which introduced the first version of the profile. More recently, a new version has been released, now called the Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0, and this was introduced in "StrengthsFinder 2.0" (2007) by Tom Rath. A slightly different version of the 2.0 profile is covered in "Strengths-Based Leadership" (2009) by Rath and Barry Conchie. The associated website is at www.strengthsfinder.com. Be aware that to fully use these works, you need to access the on-line assessment tool, and you get the code to do so in the books. So if you want access to the 2.0 version of the tool, you need to purchase a NEW copy of either "StrengthsFinder 2.0" or "Strengths-based Leadership" (you actually get different tests with each, so be aware). The prior books only give you access to the first version.

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	

There are 34 strengths covered. The strengths are things like Analytical, Communication, Empathy, Learner, Positivity, and Strategic. The assessment tests only tell you your top 5 strengths. The books, along with the report you get from taking the test, explain your

strengths and how you can best utilize them.

Why is all of this important?

Again, as leaders, we need to better understand ourselves and others. How do we like to interact? What motivates us? What demotivates us? How can we best work with others? Especially if we have a poor understanding of how we like to work and interact, much less how others work and interact. By learning more of these behavior & interaction styles, we have a better understanding.

The problem, as I see it, its many people who take on leadership position don't understand this. Especially if their company or organization does not make use of such programs. Too often what happens is that when some people are put in charge of a group, they feel it's their chance to pick the best people. Ok, that sounds great. But too often they focus on people they like to work with, not understanding that this is due to their interaction styles. And so, people who could contribute to the group or organization (because of their experience, knowledge, talents, and more) are passed over for others who may not have those attributes ONLY because their interaction style is more compatible with the leader's. This is a mistake. It's actually to avoid these sorts of things that there exist programs like what has been covered here.

If you are a leader, you need to learn to work with ALL people, regardless of their personality or interaction style. Your selection of members of your team should NOT be based on personality or interaction style, but their ability to get things done. Their skills, knowledge, talents, etc. Many groups talk about "diversity". How it's important that the organization be "diverse" and that all kinds of people are welcome in the group. Well, "diversity" should not just about religion or ethnic groups or national origin or gender or the like. It should ALSO be about personalities.

So if you are a DRIVER, you need to be open to working with (and including) people who are AMIABLE and ANALYTICAL and EXPRESSIVE, no matter how much they annoy you.