

# NOW, DISCOVER

## THIS DIGEST

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### REMINDER

It is unclear who actually wrote this updated edition of the book, so I'll be referring to the author as Gallup, the organization built to honor and spread the work of Don Clifton, a man who made it his life's mission to write "the taxonomy of human strengths" and creating "a movement to help people spend less time fixing what's wrong with them and more time building on what's right with them".

### Building a strengths-based culture

#### THE FULL STORY

As previously stated, **only 36%** of employees feel that they get the **opportunity to do what they do best everyday**, on average.

But up to 58% now agree on this in the most strengths-based organizations. Things are going in the right direction!

Gallup gives up some guidance on **how to shift our company's culture and organizational principles** based on the two assumptions that this book is based on:

- Each person's talents are enduring and unique.
- Each person's greatest room for growth is in the area of their greatest strengths

To avoid lacking the right talent for the role: We should **spend time and money selecting the right people** in the first place.

For folks to not feel that they don't have room for their talents in their role: We need to **focus performance by legislating OUTCOMES**. The focus should be on measuring outcomes, not procedures or competencies.

To avoid someone lacking the skills and knowledge they need for their talent, or the feeling that their managers don't know what they're best at: Training time and money should be focused on **helping the individual to discover and hone their strengths**.

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To make sure that people don't feel obligated to go through a role that they do fit them to advance their careers: Let's make sure **not to take people out of their areas of talents**, by **redesigning ways to grow one's career**, without climbing a pre-designed corporate ladder.

**Those four points constitute a systematic process to maximize the value locked up in human capital.**

### THE PRACTICAL GUIDE

#### **The strengths-based talent attraction system.**

1. To **build the talent attraction system** around **instruments** designed to measure **TALENTS** (and, no, the CliftonStrengths assessment is not designed to do that). Those instruments should be **tailored** to each company and role. They must be psychometrically sound and rely on objective scoring. And subsequently they should allow you to investigate the links between measured talent and performance.
2. Instruments should be **calibrated** by studying the **current best performers** in each key role in the company. It can be done by administering the talent instrument to every employee currently in this role and then divide them in a study vs control group.
3. The **talent language** needs to be taught throughout the organization.

**"To reach their full capacity and potential, [employees] require a manager whom they trust, who expects the best from them and who takes the time to learn their idiosyncrasies. In short, they require a relationship."**

It also require for **managers to be involved in the hiring process**. It's harder to be invested in the future and success of someone that was forced on you.

And learning this language will also allow the **tailoring of employment advertisements** that challenge the applicant to claim the needed talents. It helps to attract fewer applicants of "higher quality" and therefore to ease and improve the recruitment process from start to finish.

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4. To **build a theme profile of the entire company!** It allows for the **alignment** between the organization's **human** resources strategy and the **business** strategy, on top of bringing awareness and intention on the company's **foundational values**.

*“An organization is a fluid community, with employees moving in and out of roles as they and the organization grow. For an organization to remain vital and strong, it should take each employee's talents into account when deciding the appropriate moves for them.”*

5. To actually study the **links between measured talents and subsequent performance!**

- To investigate how good recruiting efforts are,
- To identify those who are extremely productive at first but not for long,
- To check if the manager's talent level raises with each new employee,
- To identify early the future leaders,
- To make sure the training budget is invested according to talent,
- To understand when someone is bound to have positive reviews from their manager but not the customers.

On this last point, Gallup highlights that some themes, such as Harmony or Responsibility, predict high evaluations by managers and that others, such as Achiever, Positivity, Learner, Command and Restorative, predict praises from customers.

### **The strengths-based performance management system**

The goal of this management system is to **focus and develop the uncovered talents of someone into measurable performance**. It will allow the evaluation of the person's impact on the business, the customer and their coworkers.

Most organizations legislate the PROCESS of performance. It creates overscripting of employees and over reliance on process re-engineering. There's a fascination with managerial competencies and a focus on a list of desired behaviors or competencies. The measurement of true performance is an after thought and the focus is put on style training.

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However **in a strength-based culture, the focus is not be put on the steps of the journey, but on its end.**

The goal is to help **people find their own path to the prescribed end.** If you define the right outcome measures, you only need to study them to know if the manager's way is effective or needs tweaking.

*“The step-by-step camp will still measure some performance outcomes (particularly in the area of business results). And, likewise, the strengths-based camp will still define and teach some processes (every clothing designer must know how to cut cloth; every loan officer must learn how to qualify the bank's customers). Nonetheless, the distinction between the two camps is real. Step-by-step organizations are designed to battle the inherent individuality of each employee. Strengths-based organizations are designed to capitalize on it.”*

### Here are the steps to follow:

- To figure out the **right way to measure the desired performance:** that's the basis of it all.

*“All roles, no matter how dynamic, are designed to produce certain outcomes. You should be able to count, rate, or rank some, if not most, of these outcomes.”*

It will, however, be **more tricky for some aspects,** such as the measurement of the employee's impact on the customer.

Gallup offers **three research-based statements** to help us, which are to be rated by the considered **employee's customers,** using a 5-point scale:

- [Brand] always delivers on what they promise
- I feel proud to be a [Brand] customer
- [Brand] is the perfect company for people like me

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Regarding the **impact of someone on their coworkers** can also be tricky.

So regarding the **manager-employee relationships**, Gallup recommends using **twelve statements** to measure the outcomes of a **productive culture** instead, and to hold employees (including managers) to those standards.

Those statements worded exactly this way predicted employee turnover , productivity, profitability and customer engagement!

Here they are:

- I know what is expected of me at work.
- I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
- At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
- In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
- My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
- There is someone at work who encourages my development.
- At work, my opinions seem to count.
- The mission or purpose of my organization makes me feel my job is important.
- My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
- I have a best friend at work.
- In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
- This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

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Once again those statements do not force the managers to all manage the same way, and the organization **legislates the desired end**, not the journey.

And regarding **employee-employee relationships**, below are **four questions** Gallup recommends based on their research. This is a survey they recommend to administer twice a year for employees to evaluate the person they work closely with.

Does this person perform their work:

- In a timely manner?
  - In an accurate fashion?
  - In a positive, helpful manner?
  - In a way that makes you feel your opinions count?
- The second step relies on **establishing clear expectations for every employee**. It is crucial that every employee **knows what success looks like** in the company, in order to **appropriately focus their time and energy on the right priorities**. Clear expectations **reinforce the values** of the organization for each employee. And **intrinsic motivation** strongly impacts the performance. It has been shown to be superior to extrinsic motivation.
  - Finally, the third step relies on **ensuring that managers begin to view themselves as coaches**.

In most organizations, managers are trained to play checkers instead.

**A strength discussion should be held every time a new manager-employee relationship begins.**

- What are the employee's strongest talents?
- How do their talent relate to their performance? What is their work style?
- What skills can the employee learn and how to develop their strengths?
- How does the employee like to be managed?

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*"If you want to keep talented employees, show them not just that you care about them, not just that will help them grow, but more important, that you KNOW them –that in the truest sense of the word, you are taking actions to recognize them."*

*"You will want more from them precisely because you know where their greatest potential for excellence lies. And they will know that you know."*

Gallup reminds us that **managers** are by far the **most influential partners on an employee's journey**, and that the best way to channel an employee's performance is through frequent and productive meetings with an engaging manager, who can help them develop their strengths and grow their career.

Only 20% of people feel that they are being managed in a way that motivates them to do outstanding work. Folks need constructive and ongoing dialogue about performance expectation and their development needs. They need **authentic** relationships.

Here are three questions managers can be trained to ground their interactions in:

- What will the employee's main focus be for the next week?
- What new discoveries (or items of learning) are they planning?
- What new partnerships (or relationships) are they hoping to build?

### **The strengths-based career development system**

*"You cannot capitalize on people's strengths if you keep promoting them into roles that don't fit their strengths"*

Gallup explains that organizations keep on promoting people, because of one great insight and one great error:

- One great insight: the **intuitive understanding of the motivating impact of human beings' craving for prestige**.



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Here are two powerful quotes from Gallup about this:

*"(...) deep in the human psyche, everyone needs to be viewed as an individual worthy of respect and that this need is so powerful, they will risk life and limb to fulfill it".*

*"In all interactions, from playground squabbles to humanity's noblest battles against oppression, people recognize the moral authority of the voice that says, "Treat me with the respect I deserve as a human being". This insight explains why they know intuitively that prejudice is wrong, that the natural human condition is liberty and that the best way to honor someone is to give them more prestige."*

This craving must not be ignored or repressed. This craving must be **channeled**.

- One great error: **Thinking that all human beings crave the SAME kind of prestige**, i.e. the prestige that comes with power.

*"Up until 40 years ago, this wouldn't have been an error. In highly authoritarian societies where each person's freedom of decision, of judgment and of discretion is at the whim of the person above them, the only prestige worth having is the prestige that comes with power over others."*

This is not the case any more, and especially not within organizations where employees know more about their particular fields than their managers.

*"In a knowledge economy, (...) anyone who is excelling in their role, whether individual contributor, supervisor, manager or leader, deserves prestige."*

Most organizations unfortunately do not offer many kinds of prestige apart from having power over someone else... and there is therefore only path toward it. Promoting up. The strength based organization must avoid this flaw.



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**So here are two basic steps to follow:**

- To build more ladders: identifying three rungs or levels for each role, and defining specific performance criteria allowing someone to go from good to great. And being great in that role must ensure the employees respect in the organization.
- To **give people incentive to climb**. This involves **changing the title structure**, and of course **the pay structure**.

**Interestingly, studies have shown that prestige can improve our health, so the more prestige we build into anyone's job, the healthier they will be.**

A strength-based culture allows for an organization to be more productive, to have higher levels of customer engagement and to play to each person's strength.

It increases employee retention and an invaluable other benefit: it increases the employees' health and safety.

*"We can spotlight each person's strengths. We can provide managers who are intrigued by these strengths.*

*We can build organizations that ask employees to play to their strengths and that honor them when they do.*

*We can show every employee the best of themselves and ask them to keep reaching for more.*

*We can help them live strong lives."*

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## THIS BOOK

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### SAVE THE DATE

**MEET US THIS WEEK ON ZOOM**

**EITHER ON**

**TUESDAY JULY 25th at 7 pm**

**OR**

**FRIDAY JULY 28th at 12 pm**

*We'll discuss the main themes of the book,  
and reflect how to build on our assessment results!!*

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