

Application Guide

GREAT LEADERS PLAY TO THEIR STRENGTHS, PART 2



BOTTOM LINE:

Great leadership is about identifying where you create the most value, narrowing your focus around those strengths, and empowering other people to do the same.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- I. Great leaders know the difference between being responsible for something and needing to be involved in it.
 - A. **Authority over does not equal competency in.**
 - 1. Leaders often feel responsible for everything that happens within their team, department, or organization.
 - 2. That sense of responsibility can pull leaders into areas where they lack the expertise, experience, or intuition to add meaningful value.
 - B. When leaders assume responsibility necessitates involvement, they can get in their own way by:
 - 1. Interfering with people who know what they're doing.
 - 2. Spending time on things they're not proficient in, therefore taking time away from the areas where they add the most value.
 - C. The discipline to stay out of the way requires leveraging authority as little as possible.
 - 1. Great leaders often make fewer decisions because they trust capable people who are closer to the process to make them.
 - 2. One of the greatest gifts a leader can give their direct reports is to say, **"You decide. I trust you to make that decision."**
 - D. Great leaders **evaluate outcomes** instead of inserting themselves into processes.
- II. You cannot consistently play to your strengths if you don't know what they are.
 - A. None of us see ourselves completely as we are, and sometimes we enjoy doing something without actually being particularly good at it.
 - 1. When we're in positions of authority, people are hesitant to tell us that, so it's our job to become self-aware.
 - 2. **Self-awareness requires being willing to admit when someone else is better in a particular area.**
 - B. To identify your strengths, ask yourself the following questions:
 - 1. What do I do that feels almost effortless to me but seems like a daunting task to others?
 - 2. What facets of my job energize me?
 - 3. What do I wish I could spend more time doing?
 - 4. What responsibilities do I wish I could stop doing?
 - C. Leaders should also ask these questions of the people they lead because understanding what energizes someone can help reveal where they may contribute the most value.
- III. Replace yourself and you will always have a place.
 - A. Replacing yourself means intentionally identifying someone who has the potential to take on your responsibilities and **developing** them.
 - B. Leaders who fail to develop other leaders become a lid to the growth of the organization.

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C. Leadership development doesn't have to begin with a class, curriculum, or formal program. It can be simpler than that.

1. Give someone meaningful responsibility. Let them do the work.
2. Check back in. Evaluate what happened.
3. Let them do it again.

IV. Great leaders multiply their efforts by **multiplying leaders**.

A. Leaders will be dragged out of their lane if they fail to develop leaders and multiply themselves.

B. Every leader has the potential to multiply themselves if they're committed to the organization and secure enough not to worry that someone will be better than they are at their job.

V. Playing to your strengths creates a more **sustainable pace**.

A. Leaders who spend more of their time in their strongest areas will experience less stress and bring more energy and passion to their teams.

B. Leaders should work to create the same opportunity for the people they lead.

1. When everyone works from complementary strengths, organizations become well-rounded.

VI. There are strategic moments to step outside your strengths. This is called symbolic leadership.

A. **Symbolic leadership** happens when a leader intentionally steps outside their normal lane to support another person or team.

1. The purpose is not to take control of the work but to communicate, "What you are doing is important enough for me to help."
2. Used appropriately, stepping outside your lane can strengthen and encourage a team without undermining their ownership.

B. Symbolic leadership should be **temporary** and **strategic**.

1. Look for opportunities where you can do for one what you wish you could do for everyone.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

1. Ask someone on your team these two questions: "If you controlled my calendar, what would you schedule more time for me to do?" And "Where do I get in the way?"
2. Where are you currently confusing being responsible for something with needing to be involved in it?
3. What parts of your role feel almost effortless to you but seem difficult to others?
4. Is there a decision you could confidently hand back to someone on your team and say, "You decide"?
5. Who are you intentionally developing to take on more responsibility?
6. Is there a temporary, strategic way you could step outside your normal responsibilities to communicate, "What you're doing matters"?

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