

Application Guide

GREAT LEADERS PLAY TO THEIR STRENGTHS, PART 1



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. The less you do, the more you accomplish.

- A. Leaders typically have the same assumption: the more responsibility we have, the more we're supposed to be doing.
- B. The reality: Great leaders actually **narrow their scope of work** to focus on the one or two areas they are truly exceptional at relative to their other abilities.
 - 1. It doesn't mean less work or less hours; it means less "things" and more focus.
 - 2. Delegate the things you are not as good at.
 - a) There are others who can contribute at a higher level to these areas.
 - b) You will then be free to hone what you are already good at.
- C. When leaders insist on staying involved in things they're merely good—not great—at, they can unintentionally become a lid on the organization.

II. Reject the myth of the well-rounded leader.

- A. Great leaders are not good at everything. They don't spend time trying to make their weaknesses strengths because they know that **fully exploited strengths will always add more value than marginally improved weaknesses.**
- B. Great leaders opt for **well-rounded organizations** over well-rounded leadership.
 - 1. Lean heavily into your strengths, and surround yourself with people who compensate for your weaknesses.
 - 2. This requires both humility and self-awareness.
- C. When people are positioned to contribute primarily from their strengths, both the individual and organization thrive.

III. Great leaders understand that feedback can reveal character issues and skill level issues, and they know how to distinguish between them.

- A. **Character issues:** something the person is responsible for addressing and if they don't they may not be right for the team.
- B. **Skill level issues:** evidence that the person is potentially in the wrong role within the team.

IV. Only do what only you can do.

- A. Dedicate the majority of your most productive time to the areas where you add the most value to the organization.
- B. This requires thinking about both responsibilities and schedule.
 - 1. Your calendar reveals whether you're actually devoting your most productive time to your strengths.
 - 2. Your priorities, strength, and time should all be in sync.

V. In order to do what only you can do, you have to be willing to let go.

- A. When your calendar becomes full of things to do, it **eliminates margin.**

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B. Without margin, leaders move from “leadership mode” to “management mode.”

1. **Leadership is proactive.** It requires enough margin to ask:

- a) What should we be thinking about?
- b) What needs to be done next?
- c) How do we do what needs to be done next?
- d) What isn’t on anyone’s calendar yet?
- e) Who needs to be pulled in to where we are heading?

2. **Management is reactive.** It causes us to simply focus on:

- a) What needs to get done?
- b) What’s currently a problem that needs to be fixed?
- c) What’s already demanding my attention?

3. Management can lead to feeling busy, bored, and passionless.

VI. **John Maxwell’s Law of Respect:** Leaders are attracted to leaders they perceive to be better, more capable leaders than themselves.

A. High-capacity leaders want to work with leaders they perceive to be highly capable themselves.

B. Maximizing personal leadership potential is essential to maximizing the quality of leaders on your team.

C. The moment a leader steps away from their core competencies, their day-to-day effectiveness diminishes.

D. When leaders continually insert themselves into areas outside their strengths, they can:

- 1. Create unnecessary friction.
- 2. Slow down capable people.
- 3. Reduce organizational effectiveness.
- 4. Make talented people less interested in staying.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION OR TEAM DISCUSSION

- 1. What responsibilities are you currently holding on to that someone else could do better, and what makes them difficult to let go of?
- 2. Where do you believe you add the most unique value to your team or organization? Does your calendar reflect that?
- 3. Where might someone on your team simply be in the wrong “seat” rather than underperforming?
- 4. What tends to pull you from “leadership mode” into “management mode”?
- 5. How might operating outside your strengths unintentionally limit or frustrate the high-capacity people around you?

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