

Positive Leadership & Strengths-based development

From functioning to **flourishing**

How to get the best out of yourself,
your team and the organization to
increase motivation, performance
and engagement.

CoAchieve

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“Anyone who manages to create the right environment for the greatest talents will automatically attract them” (Bock, 2015).

The most successful managers don't lead from a position of command and control, they bring out the best of their people, they know what their own and what their employee's strengths are. People thrive when their strengths are recognized, appreciated and utilized, when they are being coached and get ample opportunities to develop. It builds confidence, increases self-esteem and people take more ownership.

Executives have by far the greatest influence on productivity, commitment, and job satisfaction of the team. This is increasingly apparent from research, including research agency Gallup and long-term research at Google (Duhigg, 2016). An effective, strong leader is a good coach, gives confidence and is not managing at a micro level, has a genuine interest in and attention to the success and well-being of employees, is helpful in the development of employees, is result-oriented, has a clear vision and strategy, has crucial technical skills, listens well and shares information.

Organizational forms and leadership styles are increasingly distancing themselves from hierarchy, micromanagement, power and control. The directive style of management is outdated; other demands are placed on managers. **Nowadays we need leaders that are good at personal leadership and lead from authenticity and strength instead of power.** Leadership with 'head and heart'; In addition to hard skills and IQ, soft skills and emotional intelligence are becoming increasingly important.

THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND PERFORMANCE.

Leadership remains a critical success factor for organizations and as a manager/leader you have by far the greatest influence on the engagement, employability, performance and motivation of employees. There is an increasing need for self-realization, purpose, being connected, a work environment that enables people to use their talents and flourish, and a leadership style that fits in with that.

Motivated and well-functioning teams also strengthen your position as a manager/leader and the business results.

As an HR manager and leadership coach I have worked for many different companies and I know from experience what a big difference leadership can make, both positively and negatively.

Positive leaders focus on **connection and development**, they recognize and develop the potential, the strengths of people. They always strive to get the best out of themselves and others.

Positive leadership is aimed at strengthening what works and growing and flourishing: from functioning to flourishing. Recognizing, developing and optimally deploying talents provides positive energy and intrinsic motivation. It strengthens self-awareness and self-management and leads to better performance and commitment to the organization. By consciously deploying talents, talents are developed into strengths.

Employee-first Strategy

“People at the center, talent at the center and believe in your own capabilities, that is how you serve your customers better. ”

(Source: HRM for the future - Prof.dr. Rob H.W. Vinke)

"See your employees as your most important stakeholder because they will take good care of your customers and they will then take good care of the shareholders." (Source: Human Capital Trends 2017 Bersin by Deloitte).

It is time to break through traditional ways of leadership, motivation and development.

How can we ensure that people flourish more so that they perform better and with more pleasure?

“Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients.” (Richard Branson)

Many organizations say that people are the most important capital and that they put people at the center, but in practice we sometimes see too little of that.

Leadership is still mainly result- and task-oriented, while various studies show that more people-oriented and development-oriented leadership leads to more involvement, loyalty, enthusiasm and engagement. There must be a better balance, the one does not exclude the other, but reinforces each other.

Various leadership studies have shown that managers and employees do not have the same perception of the leadership style of the manager.

Employees find their manager often too directive and task-oriented with little attention to their development, while most managers say that they provide people-oriented leadership.

The transactional, directive style of leadership is outdated. Positive, transformational leadership works much better to increase motivation, job satisfaction and performance. This leadership style focuses on the **qualities and intrinsic motivation** of employees.

The positive outcomes of this type of leadership have been widely researched and -among other things- it has a positive impact on involvement and enthusiasm, well-being, trust, performance and motivation.

"The most important task of a manager is to make resources available to employees, such as social support, feedback and development opportunities." "In that case, work-related stressors are less present."

"Which sources the manager offers depends on his goals. If you make mistakes under a manager with a mastery approach (focused on development and improvement), you have less stress, because making mistakes is part of the job. But if your manager has set mainly competitive goals, a mistake causes a lot of stress." (Source: research from UVA University of Amsterdam "Manager influences the risk of burnout" – article published in [Intermediair](#)).

“You have to encourage people and look at their strengths. Not at the weaknesses. At least 80% of your communication as a manager must be positive.” (Covey, 2010)

Good leaders acknowledge the importance of soft skills, play an exemplary role and are able to inspire and stimulate others, thereby increasing involvement, performance and productivity. Poor leadership on the other hand can do a lot of damage. The directive, authoritarian style of management depletes energy and can cause negative feelings and stress for employees. Lack of autonomy and development opportunities, being monitored a lot and not being trusted, causes stress and can lead to low engagement, reduced performance or even to burnout. There is a correlation between stress and having little control, while stress and the risk of burnout decrease when people gain more confidence and autonomy.

“Positive leaders emphasize and build on employees’ strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses, and this emphasis creates an attraction to forming strong interpersonal ties. The orientation is toward enabling thriving and flourishing at least as much as addressing obstacles and impediments.

It is not the same as merely being nice, charismatic, trustworthy, or a servant leader. Rather, it incorporates these attributes and supplements them with a focus on strategies that provide strengths-based, positive energy to individuals and organizations” (Cameron, 2012).

FLOURISHING

Organizations are more successful when people can thrive. My favorite motto is 'from functioning to flourishing' and I help executives (directors, managers and entrepreneurs) develop positive leadership. I do that from a **strengths-based approach**, this approach is rooted in positive psychology.

Research into the effectiveness of interventions based on strengths shows that employee engagement can also increase significantly.

Managers who focus on someone's strengths experience better performance from their people, more motivation and positive energy. Which leads to more effort and the willingness to go the extra mile, the discretionary contribution.

Moreover, a strengths approach to development leads to "3D learning": learning that is profound and has a sustainable, lasting effect on behavior.



Effective, strong leadership

Positive leadership makes a positive difference.

“Being a positive leader is not the same as merely being nice, charismatic, trustworthy, or a servant leader. Rather, it incorporates these attributes and supplements them with a focus on strategies that provide strengths-based, positive energy to individuals and organizations.” – Prof. Kim Cameron

More than ever, managers must be role models and able to inspire, motivate and connect. Self-organizing teams, for example, also appear to have a great need for effective leadership and will benefit from a good teamleader.

Managers have a major influence on the productivity, engagement, and job satisfaction of the team, as is increasingly evident from research, including long-term research at Google. According to this research, an effective, strong manager has the following characteristics;

Providing a positive work climate, aimed at the development and well-being of employees and at the stimulation of personal leadership, demands a lot from managers.

- Is a good coach
- Empowers the team and does not micromanage
- Creates an inclusive team environment, showing concern for success and well-being
- Is productive and results-oriented
- Is a good communicator — listens and shares information
- Supports career development and discusses performance
- Has a clear vision and strategy for the team
- Has key technical skills to help advise the team
- Collaborates
- Is a strong decision-maker

Strong, positive leadership does not mean that you are "soft," and with just a little kindness and a pat on the back, you are far from there.

First and foremost, it is important to take note of evidence-based insights and techniques and then to effectively put them into practice. The best-known evidence-based insights and techniques are:

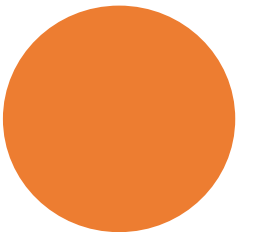
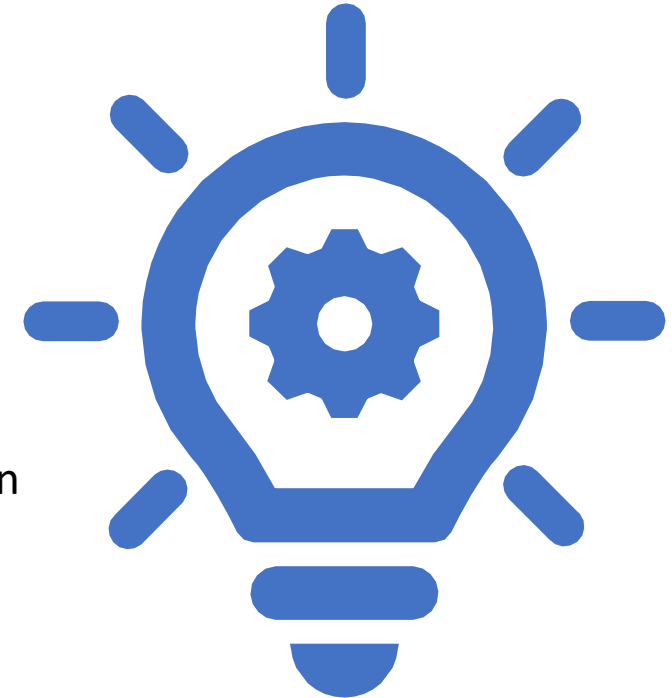
➤ **The strengths-based approach &**

➤ **Appreciative Inquiry**

We do not zoom in on what people are not good at and what needs to be improved, but rather we take the qualities and successes as a starting point, an appreciative approach to development. These approaches are rooted in positive psychology.

Positive leaders therefore look more at strengths than at what needs to be 'repaired', a focus on deficits and gaps.

"And they put a lot of emphasis on **integrity, self-awareness, authenticity and social intelligence**. Social intelligence is needed at the top and in the middle of the organization. Social intelligence is the awareness of your own and other people's motives and feelings ('you have a sense of what makes you and others tick') and you have the agility to adapt behavior to what the situation demands "(Peterson & Seligman, 2004).



Using strengths leads to
positive emotions, better
and innovative behavior

(Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2015)



Positive Psychology

Positive psychology focuses on aspects that make people flourish. Mainstream psychology is mainly focused on fixing something, with the focus on obstacles, on what is wrong. But by working from your strengths, from your talents you become more resilient and you perform better. Positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), psychology of work and health (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001), is focused on work-related well-being (enthusiasm, resilience, flow), people's strengths (for more involvement, better performance, well-being) and positive leadership (inspiring, connecting, coaching, focused on strength, development).

“Positive leadership refers to the implementation of multiple positive practices that help individuals and organizations achieve their highest potential, flourish at work, experience elevating energy and achieve levels of effectiveness difficult to attain otherwise.” – Professor Kim Cameron

Positive leadership is based on positive psychology. As a manager you want to get the best out of yourself and let others thrive, and you treat people as the unique person they are, with their personal aspirations, values and qualities.

The goal of positive psychology is "flourishing". According to Martin Seligman, the founder of Positive Psychology, flourishing or well-being consists of 5 elements (the PERMA Model): positive emotions, engagement, relations, meaning, accomplishment.



FLOURISHING

- **P**OSITIVE EMOTIONS
- **E**NGAGEMENT
- **R**ELATIONS
- **M**EANING
- **A**CCOMPLISHMENT

These are the five building blocks that enable flourishing.

According to Seligman we should add three other important elements for well-being. These are:

Physical health, Responsibility and Autonomy.

Leadership style

From the perspective of positive psychology more attention is paid to work-related well-being (enthusiasm, flow), strengths of people (for more involvement, positive energy, better performance) and positive leadership (inspiring, coaching, focused on connection, purpose and development).

The leadership style determines the organizational culture, and a positive approach can lead to better performance and a positive organizational culture. The rapidly changing world in which we live and work, requires leaders and managers who have a great deal of self-knowledge, are positive, solution-oriented and can motivate people and optimize potential.



Motivation is a fire from within. If someone else tries to light that fire under you, chances are it will burn very briefly.

-Stephen Covey

In his book ***Drive: The surprising truth about what motivates us***, Daniel Pink writes that intrinsic motivation is essential for your team's performance, well-being, creativity, innovation and commitment.

Today's leadership means that leaders must pay much more attention to the **intrinsic motivation** of employees.

Steering on extrinsic motivation dates back to the time of the industrial revolution. People routinely did simple work, doing the same tasks day after day. It took little thinking and the work itself was not satisfying.

For a long-time money was considered to be the best way to motivate an employee. Characteristic for motivation 2.0 is directive leadership, it is mainly transactional, based on the exchange principle and it assumes people don't like their job. The focus is on extrinsic motivators, management with a command and control style and rewarding "good behavior" and punishing "undesirable behavior"; the carrots and sticks method. This is not a good route to self-actualization.

Daniel Pink says motivation 3.0 is needed nowadays and according to him there are three important things that people need to thrive. These are: **autonomy, mastery and purpose**. "Autonomy leads to engagement whereas control leads to compliance. Engagement leads to mastery – the desire to get better and better at something that matters. Motivation 2.0 centered on profit maximization. Motivation 3.0 doesn't reject profits, but it places equal emphasis on purpose maximization."

Motivation3.0

seeks engagement and is intrinsic or autonomous motivation whereas motivation 2.0 is extrinsic or controlled motivation (pressure from expectations and demands outside the individual). It is about self-direction, development of our strengths, involvement with others and leading a meaningful and good life.



AUTONOMY



PURPOSE



MASTERY

“The desire to do something because you find it deeply satisfying and personally challenging inspires the highest levels of creativity, whether it is in the arts, sciences, or business.” – Teresa Amabile, Professor Harvard University

AUTONOMY

Autonomy means acting according to one's own choice, being allowed to take control as much as possible. Most professionals demand a great deal of freedom in their work and researchers have found a link between autonomy and overall well-being.



MASTERY

Mastery means wanting to get the most out of yourself, making the most of your potential. The desire to get better at something that matters. We never stop learning and never have full expertise in a particular area. Continuous development is central to mastery. Mastery is not about working on your weaknesses, but about your strengths, strengthening where your strengths lie.

PURPOSE

Purpose is usually about our relationships with others, a purpose in life, using our talents, doing good for others. People value a meaningful goal.

People also want to know what their added value is for the bigger picture. And how they can best use their energy and qualities for this. And employees must be able to identify themselves with an inspiring vision, with the values and goals of the organization. This also ensures a more supported vision, and it strengthens connection and involvement.

“Effort is one of the things that gives meaning to life. Effort means you care about something, that something is important to you and you are willing to work for it”. – Carol Dweck, professor at Stanford University

The perfect leader...

Positive leadership is aimed at development and creating an organizational culture in which employees can flourish. Positive leaders share their values, optimism, vision and goals with their people. This style of leadership leads to more confidence, commitment, autonomy, higher performance, less turnover, less negative stress in the workplace and higher customer satisfaction.

The perfect leader, the all-rounder does not exist. Effective leadership usually depends on the situation, the context and there is no specific formula for excellent leadership.

Research shows that the four leadership behaviors -**Sharing Vision, Sustaining Progress, Skillfully Execution and Sparking Engagement**- are important for effectiveness.

I notice that in practice, most managers have good intentions, but those intentions are not always sufficiently visible in their behavior. For example, they often give themselves high scores for three of these leadership behaviors. But there is usually a discrepancy between the self-evaluation and the 360-degree feedback. Stakeholders regularly give the manager in question a lower score, especially for Sharing Vision and for Sparking Engagement.

Change is the only constant.

Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity — VUCA — are the realities of today, and as noted futurist and author Bob Johansen says, “It won’t be getting easier. Leaders must accept this reality.” In his book, **Leaders Make the Future: Ten New Leadership Skills for an Uncertain World**, Johansen says that leaders increasingly will face challenges that have no solutions. Of course, they will have to make decisions anyway.

“Leaders will be buffeted, but they need not allow themselves to be overwhelmed, depressed or immobilized. Leaders must do more than just respond to the whirl of events, though respond they must. **They must be positive change agents** in the midst of chaos, creating the future. Some things can get better, even as other things get worse.” Johansen notes that the VUCA acronym can be turned around to a more positive framing of effective leadership:

- Volatility leads to **Vision**.
- Uncertainty yields to **Understanding**.
- Complexity yields to **Clarity**.
- Ambiguity yields to **Agility**.

Source: ([Center for Creative Leadership](#))

OF ALL FACTORS IN
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Research by Gallup shows that the differences in engagement can be explained for about 70% by the qualities of the leader.

Leaders who communicate clearly and frequently, focus on strengths, give confidence, and clearly indicate direction and involve their team members, have a more engaged team.

There is quite a difference between how most managers perceive and value their own qualities and leadership style and how the stakeholders view this.

Introspection is only one side of the story; it can be very enlightening to know how others see your strengths and behavior and to what extent they want to see more or less of it (with 360-degree feedback).

I work with **StrengthscopeLeader assessments** as the start of a leadership development program and it starts with discovering personal leadership strengths.

It measures 24 work-related strengths divided into 4 clusters: Emotional, Relational, Thinking and Execution. This results in 7 distinctive strengths. The report based on the assessment not only provides a representation of the self-assessment but also of the feedback providers.

Discovering where your strengths lie, knowing your weaknesses and pitfalls ('performance risks'), working from a positive mindset, using your unique strong leadership qualities and using the diversity of strengths in your team, leads to many benefits for yourself and the organization.



Source: Strengthscope



In a work environment where the manager focuses on the strengths of employees and encourages them to use them in their work, 73% of employees indicate that they are motivated. In contrast, in an environment where the manager focuses on where the employee needs to improve ("repair of gap-focus leadership"), only 9% of employees indicate that they feel motivated. (Gallup)



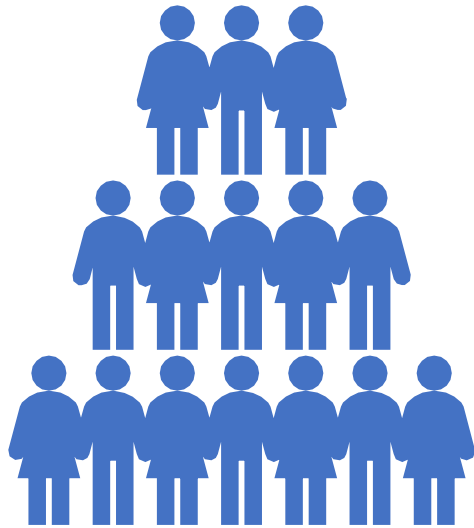
A one-sided focus on strengths is not sensible, which is why we also pay attention to "performance risks".



Performance risks can get in the way of achieving goals and delivering optimal performance. For example: limiting weaknesses, ineffective behavior, strengths in overdrive (exaggerated strengths), limiting assumptions / beliefs and other internal or external blockages.



Many managers have an incomplete picture of themselves, which is why the 360-degree feedback is of great importance. There are several assessments that can help you discover strengths. But that is not enough, feedback from stakeholders is important, and you must also be able to dose your strengths and use them effectively, productively within the right context at work for a sustainable result.



An effective leader is good at tapping into and encouraging the potential, talents and energy of others.

Strengths-based Leadership | Positive Leadership, implies a human-centered approach, a focus on developing the potential, the strengths of people and the stimulation of autonomy, mastery, purpose and connection.

This kind of leadership also fits in with the current paradigm shifts, we increasingly see that management models, management styles are no longer based on hierarchy, micromanagement, power and control.

“There is significant evidence for the link between strengths-based approaches and enhanced leadership effectiveness. And there are multiple benefits to strengths-based approaches beyond enhanced leadership, including engagement, positivity, well-being and goal attainment.” (Strengths-based Leadership Coaching in organizations. An evidence-based guide to positive leadership development, Doug MacKie)

Successful leaders and organizations stimulate employee motivation, development and performance. In doing so, they increasingly pay attention to the uniqueness of people and ensure a **coaching** culture in which people can flourish.

Encourage on-the-job coaching, give regular feedback and recognition, discuss career aspirations and development plans, recognize and celebrate progress and success.

“Coaching is unlocking people’s potential to maximize their own performance.”

— John Whitmore



Every Manager
Should Have a
Leadership Coach –
The one thing people
are never good at is
seeing themselves as
others see them. A
coach really, really
helps.

- former Google CEO
and chairman Eric
Schmidt

Coaching increases people's self-awareness, self-learning capability and self-management. Coaching is releasing someone's potential qualities and talents so that he or she performs as well as possible. It is the opposite of a "command & control" way of leadership.

To be able to coach others well, a high degree of self-knowledge is firstly important. What are your own beliefs, obstacles, pitfalls, assumptions, motivations, values, aspirations, strengths and weaknesses? What is your vision on leadership, why would others want to "follow" you as a leader, what kind of role model do you want to be? Do you experience your own leadership behavior as effective, positive, talent-oriented and connecting?

Coaching also means trust, respect, and sincere attention. Within the organizational context and employee-manager relationship, coaching may require a different interpretation, different nuances. You must be able to combine the leadership and coaching role well and finding the right balance is not so easy. As a manager you have different hats and sometimes you just must give very concrete advice, information and instructions. I regularly hear that managers continue to struggle with it in practice, even if they have followed training in coaching leadership.

Coaching does not only benefit you as a leader, but it often also exerts a positive ripple effect on your team and the organization. **Most managers themselves benefit greatly from coaching.** According to former Google CEO and chairman Eric Schmidt, "The one thing people are never good at is seeing themselves as others see them. A coach really, really helps." Coaches help professionals realize when and why they engage in behaviors, which helps stimulate long-term behavior change.

Soft skills are power skills. They are the skills that give you real 'power' at work.'

—Josh Bersin, Deloitte

Too often, the "hard skills" are considered the most important skills. But soft skills are far from "soft", they are crucial and lasting qualities for achieving hard results.

“The human touch or soft skills have become even more critical than technical skills in the wake of AI. When it comes to leadership development, soft skills take the centre stage and form the crux of any initiative. Adaptive thinking, Empathy, Sensitivity and Resilience are some of the key abilities needed in today's leaders.”

(source: Rethink Employee Experience, The Dale Carnegie Book on L&D Best Practices).





Investing in things that bring us more positive emotions is an investment in our future. Choosing Hope over Fear.

- Dr. Barbara Fredrickson

Especially during stressful situations, people can lose their "cool", you may have experienced some "hot-headed" people in your life. **Emotions are contagious, both negative and positive.** We naturally tend to focus mainly on the negative, the negativity bias. Negative emotions narrow our attention, we develop a "tunnel vision" and we enter a downward spiral. Dr. Barbara Fredrickson has been researching the effect of negative and positive emotions on our well-being for decades.

Fredrickson's work has shed light on how and why positive emotions are good for us. She has developed the broaden-and-build theory; whereas negative emotions (for example fear) cause narrowing, constricted behavior, positive emotions ensure that we broaden our horizons. When we experience positive emotions there is room for creativity, new ideas and behaviors. The focus is on opportunities and growth instead of limitations and stagnation. It increases learning capacity, agility, resilience, and capacity for change.

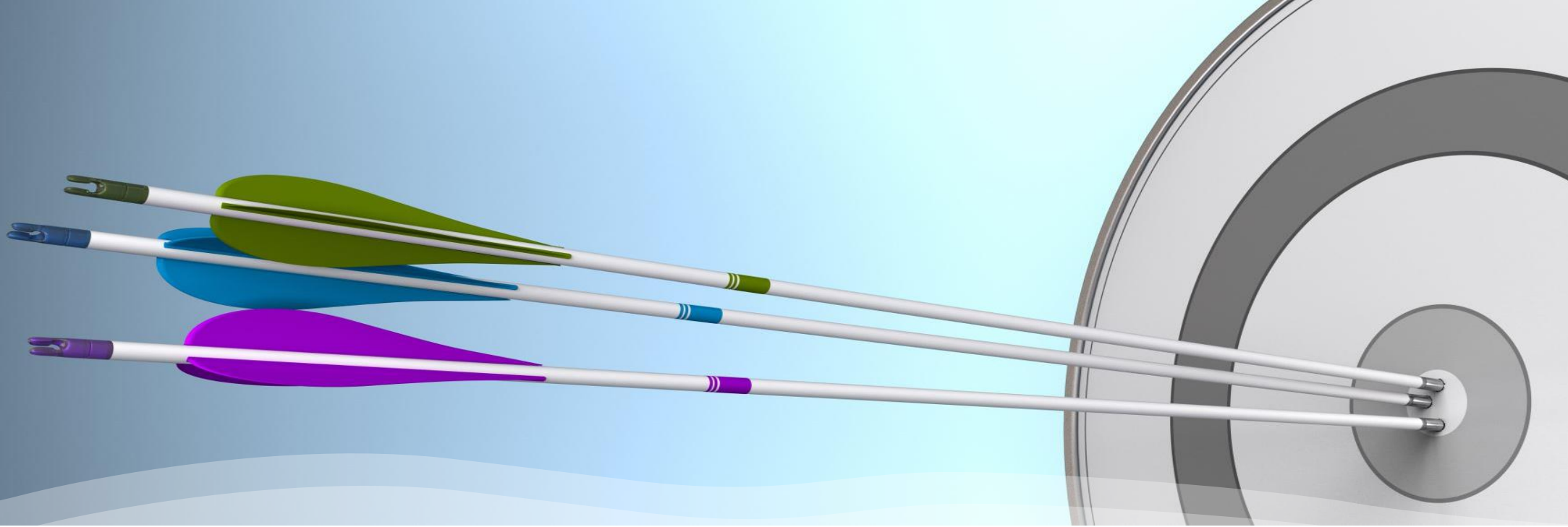


The "build effect" occurs when you make it a habit to consciously seek out those happy mood states. The condition is the 3: 1 ratio; you must experience at least three times as many positive as negative emotions.

Positive emotions (such as gratitude, hope, serenity, interest, pride, entertainment, inspiration, admiration) promote our resilience and well-being in general. Trying to suppress or ignore negative emotions altogether is also not desirable, they can of course be useful and only positive thinking is not realistic.

To increase positivity, according to Fredrickson, we can do the following; let good experiences affect you more consciously and enjoy them, being friendly, being absorbed in what you do (flow), connecting with others, going outside / enjoying nature, opening your mind for example through mindfulness / meditation, doing what you are strong at.

Most people have a positivity ratio of 2 to 1. According to Fredrickson, increasing that ratio from 2 to 3-to-1 is a big step, comparing it in terms of difficulty to a behavioral change needed to lose weight or to stop smoking. Not easy, but achievable with some good will.



What do you want?

During the first coaching sessions my clients usually mainly talk about what they do not want, what the obstacles are, the problems, what annoys and frustrates them and so on. So, consciously, or not, they mainly focus on the negative.

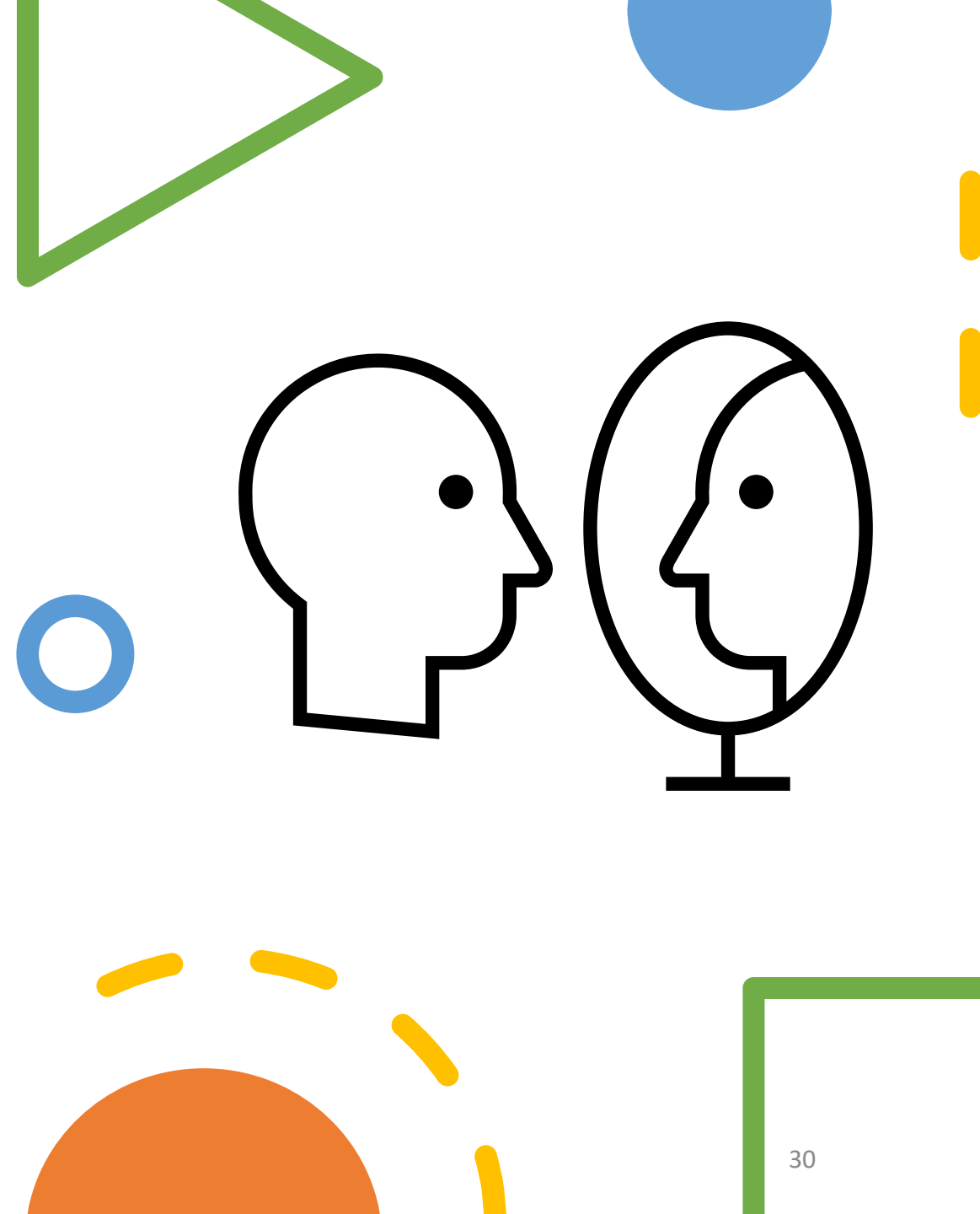
Learning through reflection on positive and successful experiences invites you to look at your own behavior in a more constructive way. What made you successful at work, what made you feel good, when did you enjoy taking responsibility, getting others involved, etc.? Focus more on what you do want instead of what not and on what your ideal future does look like, what are your aspirations, your motives and values, your strengths?

Problems and challenges are not ignored, but you can look at these through a "different lens". To stick with Fredrickson's theory; if you look from the negative, the problem side, it has a narrowing and oppressive effect, if you look from a more positive, appreciative perspective, it has a broadening and solution-oriented effect.

An essential quality of leadership is **self-awareness**. The strengths-based method helps you to gain much more self-insight and enables you to work from your own values and strengths. This also increases autonomy, mastery, connection and meaning. By working from your personal values and strengths you become more authentic and therefore more credible, which also gives you more confidence.

People with a strong sense of self are often more authentic and honest, they know the effect of their feelings on themselves, on others and on their own functioning. The decisions and actions of people with self-insight are in line with their strengths and values and therefore their work gives more energy and satisfaction.

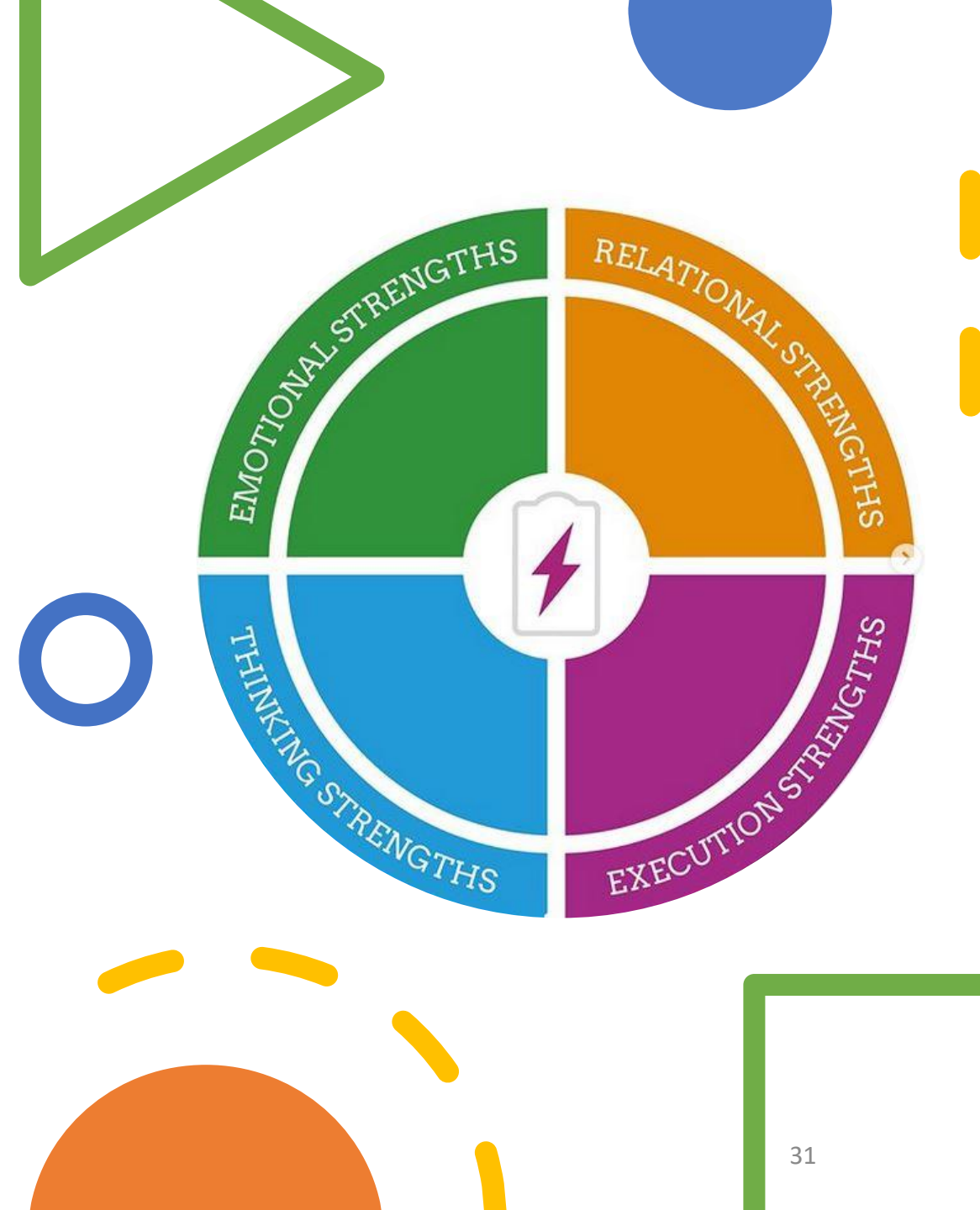
Self-knowledge and self-awareness increases the ability to properly assess our own emotions when they arise or are "triggered", enabling us to deal with certain situations in a more effective way. Emotional intelligence is about self-knowledge (including knowing which direction you want to take in your life, what your norms and values are), about empathy (recognizing and being able to direct your own emotions, recognizing other people's emotions and dealing with them), impulse control (self-control and being able to set long-term goals over short-term gratification).



Strengthscope™ assesses 24 strengths, which are divided into four clusters: **Emotional, Relational, Thinking and Execution**.

The first of these two clusters, emotional and relational, are more "people-centered" strengths. The second, Thinking and Execution are more "task-oriented" strengths. Individuals who have "people-centered" strengths in the emotional and relational clusters in Strengthscope™ also exhibit higher levels of emotional intelligence. In terms of intrapersonal intelligence (eg, self-motivation, self-confidence, self-control) and interpersonal intelligence (empathy, compassion, developing others, building relationships).

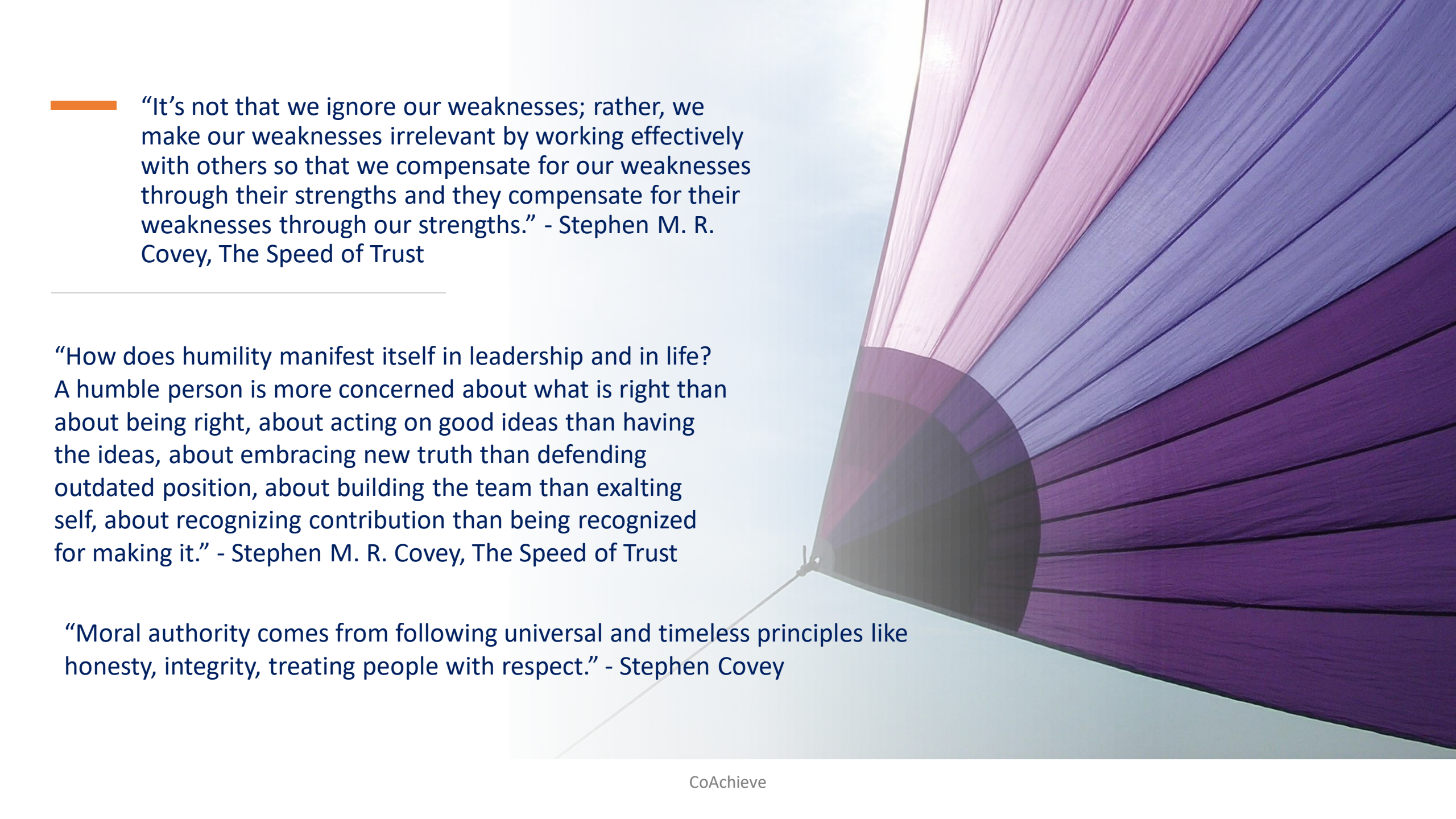
As the process of completing and receiving feedback on Strengthscope™ increases the individuals' self-awareness, they gain a deeper understanding of what energizes and motivates them. This can lead them to develop a greater degree of emotional intelligence regarding their own emotional responses and those of others.





By better appreciating your own strengths and those of others you become better at investigating (by asking good questions and listening) what it is that **energizes and motivates** others. Research shows that the most cohesive and successful teams have a diverse and complementary range of strengths. Team effectiveness is not just about the quality of its component parts; it's also about how effectively these parts – particularly team members' strengths – are combined and optimized to deliver excellent results.

Strengths can also become a performance risk, this happens when they go in 'overdrive', that is exaggerated strengths that do not lead to the intended results - for example, someone overusing her persuasiveness - that leads to her not listening to ideas of others. For many people, stress, or a certain situation / interaction triggers one or more strengths to go in overdrive. If you can recognize when, where and why some of your strengths go into overdrive, you are in a much better position to control this and become more flexible in deploying it, in the right amount, at the right time and with the right people.



“It’s not that we ignore our weaknesses; rather, we make our weaknesses irrelevant by working effectively with others so that we compensate for our weaknesses through their strengths and they compensate for their weaknesses through our strengths.” - Stephen M. R. Covey, The Speed of Trust

“How does humility manifest itself in leadership and in life? A humble person is more concerned about what is right than about being right, about acting on good ideas than having the ideas, about embracing new truth than defending outdated position, about building the team than exalting self, about recognizing contribution than being recognized for making it.” - Stephen M. R. Covey, The Speed of Trust

“Moral authority comes from following universal and timeless principles like honesty, integrity, treating people with respect.” - Stephen Covey

Leadership is communicating to another person their worth and potential so clearly they are inspired to see it in themselves.”

— Stephen R. Covey.

The effectiveness and leadership style of most managers is not bad, but not optimal either.

Several studies have shown that the employee finds her/his boss too little people-oriented and still far too directive and that he/she offers too little room for development and little attention and appreciation for their talents.

Moreover, it appears that managers and employees do not have the same perception of the leadership style of the manager.

30% of employees think their manager is directive and no employee is satisfied with this style.

84% of the managers think his / her leadership style is people-oriented.


Only 56% of employees agrees.

(Source: The National Leadership Survey - 2016)

77% of the leaders think very positively about their own leadership qualities and see themselves as an inspiring and motivating leader.

88% of employees think very differently about this. They lack attention, feel unheard, appreciated and uninvolved.

(Source: "How Leaders Think" Harvard Business Review - 2018)



The strengths-based approach leads to (much) higher motivation and to (much) better results than the traditional approach.

(Source: Ben Tiggelaar: Why we need positive leadership).

The transactional style, a directive style of management no longer suffices in most cases. Talent-oriented, positive leadership works much better to increase motivation, self-management and performance. This leadership style focuses on the strengths and intrinsic needs of employees and on providing the right support to make people excel.

A manager who is actively engaged in personal development and self-reflection can also be an inspiring role model for others. A good manager recognizes, among other things, that he or she can always continue to learn and is a role model for others. He/she is willing to invest heavily in the further development of personal qualities and in developing and refining a powerful and positive leadership style.

Positive or strengths-based leadership focuses on work-related well-being, people's strengths, resilience and development.

A leader's job is not to do the work for others, it's to help others figure out how to **do** it themselves, to get things done, and to succeed beyond what they thought possible.

— Simon Sinek

Good managers are not only task-oriented but also people-oriented and they have an eye for the uniqueness of people and the strengths of their team members. They help employees to further develop these and make them productive. Developing potential provides more energy and leads to better performance, intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction.

Poor leadership can cause people to lose their energy, experience their work environment as (emotionally) unsafe and it gives them more stress, which can eventually culminate in a burnout.

In general, it appears that managers (often without knowing it) create a demotivating work atmosphere. This leads to disengagement, while employee engagement is critical to organizational success.

Employee engagement implies that employees deliver high performance and are committed and emotionally connected to the work and the organization. Employees have a positive attitude towards the mission, vision and strategy of the organization. It is mainly about attitude, behavior and results.

The core elements are; emotional engagement, dedication, drive, focus, flow, energy, connection, high performance, going the extra mile.

Engagement is not the same as happiness or satisfaction. Engaged employees are also satisfied, but satisfied or happy employees are not automatically also engaged.

Employee Engagement

Employee satisfaction surveys do not measure employee engagement. Measuring satisfaction does not really provide valuable information. "Satisfaction is a form of pleasure, but also of inactivity. Employee satisfaction measures a passive form of pleasure. You prefer not to see that in organizations." (Prof. Dr. W. van Rhenen).

Engaged employees raise the bar and are willing to make an extra effort to achieve their goals. They are ambassadors for the organization and ensure a positive and productive relationship with customers.

Engagement requires focused intentions and concrete actions such as components of the employee experience on the part of the employee and the organization.

Engagement & "the progress principle"

Teresa Amabile (professor of Harvard Business School) is a social psychologist and researches the influence of the immediate work environment on creativity, productivity and motivation. And she is (together with Steven Kramer) the author of the international bestseller **"The progress principle: using small wins to ignite joy, engagement, and creativity at work"**. According to her, there is a "disengagement crisis". What motivates people is progress and to have an eye for what you have already achieved.

Paying more conscious attention to progress produces more motivation, energy and involvement.





Based on research within many different organizations, she searched for answers to questions such as what gives energy in the work and what motivates people to give the best of themselves. That research - based on many "diary notes of employees - showed that making progress on a meaningful task motivates everyone, she calls this" The Progress Principle. "

Making progress in your work, no matter how small, ensures a good "Inner Work Life". Everyday events at work can negatively or positively influence the 'Inner Work Lives' of employees, progress in meaningful work for the employee ensures the most optimal 'Inner Work Lives'.

During this survey, the managers were asked to name 5 things that motivate people (for example, reward and recognition) and to classify them according to their importance. The outcome was that only 5% of executives ranked "making progress" at the top of the rankings.

Managers do not pay enough attention to the importance of consciously paying attention to making progress, while **making progress appeared to be one of the most motivating factors in the work**, according to the research results.

It is important to communicate more about and focus more on progress achieved. Incidentally, it also appeared that negative experiences such as setbacks, failures and obstacles can have up to 3 times as strong a demotivating effect. That is why it is important to remove obstructing and negative influences as much as possible. Managers play an important role in this, they can identify and remove obstacles and thus ensure that employees can make unimpeded progress.

The importance of celebrating success is still too much ignored by many managers.

Let's Celebrate!

Small wins - seemingly minor progress events - can yield significant inner work life benefits. We need to celebrate small victories. In doing so, we recognize the progress we've made. Keep a diary of daily successes. Make sure you celebrate success. It's key to maintaining long-term motivation "(Teresa Amabile).

By celebrating our success, we strengthen the motivation needed to focus on the next achievement (s). For the book by Lucinda Douglas (Smart & Savvy Leadership: Every woman has to play her own game) I wrote the following about this;

It is also important to celebrate your success. For many years, I never really celebrated my achievements. I always felt that I should accomplish more and do better, often downplaying my strengths and achievements. In my coaching practice, I have come across many perfectionist leaders who also didn't celebrate success. But when they started celebrating, they and their teams flourished and their self-confidence, positive energy, and motivation paved the way to the next success. ...



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



Leadership development needs more attention and must be high on the agenda, partly due to the changing organizational forms and expectations of stakeholders within the business community.

Leadership development programs are often designed to tackle weaknesses and improving certain competencies where one's aptitude is lacking. A lot of time and energy is spent 'fixing' these weaknesses and most managers are not even aware of their strengths. Peter Drucker, the father of management thinking and author of "Managing Oneself," said, "It takes far more energy and work to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence."

"Are you building on strengths, or are you trying to compensate for your weaknesses? If you focus your energy on compensating for weaknesses, you end up with a large set of strong weaknesses. Make sure that you continue to develop your strengths and dare to trust them," says professor and leadership coach Bas Kodden (MMC, 2018).



“Leadership development is evolving, what stops the positive and strengths-based approaches to leadership development being just another fad in the leadership development business? Positive leadership is integrated with the existing leadership development literature. It seeks to extend existing well validated and reliable models rather than propose an entirely new and exclusive approach. Positive leadership theories are increasingly integrating moral and ethical concerns. Positive leadership development including strengths-based approaches is part of a broader trend that advocates a more inclusive and developmental approach to leadership talent. *In addition to developing leaders and leadership, strengths-based approaches also help develop engagement and psychological capital in their followers* (van Woerkom and Meyers, 2014) Positive leadership development offers a welcome counterbalance to the traditional deficit focus in leadership development.” Source: Strengths-based Leadership Coaching in organizations. An evidence-based guide to positive leadership development, Doug MacKie

You can develop leadership, but the focus is usually on acquiring competencies and technical skills, and that is not enough. According to research, organizations worldwide invest around € 37 billion in leadership training, so a lot of money, but it does not yield much.



“YOU DON’T WIN A MATCH BY FOCUSING ON WEAKNESSES”

Developing weaknesses is often experienced as annoying, demotivating and energy-consuming, while developing strengths strengthens, motivates, and gives more energy and self-confidence.

Mark Lammers who, together with the Dutch women's hockey team, won the world title as a coach: “You win with your strong points. A game has never been won on the weaknesses of any of the players on my team. Why should you focus on this? Focus on the strengths, everyone has talents. It's better to make the sixes in your team an eight than a player who scores a four to a six.”

In performance appraisals too, the focus is still too often on what needs to be improved. While people are more engaged and motivated when their manager focuses on their strengths. A large-scale study by the Corporate Leadership Council has shown that a focus on strengths during performance conversations has a significant positive influence on performance (even up to 37% increase), while a focus on weaknesses or areas for improvement resulted in a decrease in performance (by 27%)!

Everyone has potential.

Too much potential within organizations remains dormant, effective leaders tap into and enable the full potential of employees. They put their team members in situations that will leverage their strengths.

It is your job as a leader to help your team members discover and stimulate how they can take their potential to the next level both individually and together.

As a leader, you can unleash the potential in others every day. You must inspire the people around you to perform optimally and to achieve the results you want to achieve with them.

You must be able to connect, inspire, influence, strengthen and facilitate others and provide a safe environment that gives your team the opportunity to put their ideas and talents into action. Give them plenty of opportunities to unlock their potential and encourage self-leadership. Create space for personal growth where people are inspired, challenged, and encouraged.

Respect, recognize and leverage individual strengths, experience, skills and achievements and encourage your team members to use their unique strengths for themselves and to help, strengthen and empower others.

“I define a leader as anyone who takes responsibility for finding the potential in people and processes, and who has the courage to develop that potential.”

- Brené Brown

Managers who focus on someone's strengths experience better performance from their people, more motivation and positive energy, commitment, and a willingness to go the extra mile for the company. This is especially true for good or excellent performers, employees who perform poorly should also be held accountable for this.

Deloitte has set up the new Performance Management system based on the strengths-based approach. Large-scale research within the organization has shown that the best performing teams consist of people who can use their strengths every day (... that the defining characteristic of the very best teams at Deloitte is that they are strengths oriented).

It goes without saying for most managers to make good use of the talents of employees, but in practice it turns out to be difficult. Discovering, developing, and harnessing the power of people is not that easy. But to increase productivity, performance, employability, motivation, engagement and well-being of employees and to retain talent, it is crucial that managers recognize and utilize the talent of employees. Not recognizing potential and talent or leaving it unused has a negative impact on productivity, motivation and performance. Moreover, your high performing and driven employees will leave the organization.

"Leaders with high self-awareness typically know their limitations and strengths and exhibit a sense of humor about themselves. They exhibit a gracefulness in learning when they need to improve, and welcome constructive criticism and feedback. Based on his confident self-assessment, a leader knows when to ask for help and what to focus on to develop new leadership strengths."

- Daniel Goleman

"You can't manage others if you don't manage yourself first."

- Peter Drucker

Good leadership starts with strong personal leadership. It is important that you are aware of your own values, assumptions, pitfalls, strengths and weaknesses, your vision and expectations. By working on your own growth and development you will also encourage others to do the same. As a leader you are an important role model, which is why awareness of your leadership style and the effect of your behavior on employees is of great importance. Only when you know yourself well, with all your talents and performance risks, can you also better recognize and use the strengths of your employees. Self-knowledge is essential, firstly you need to know and cultivate your own strengths.

Leaders often find it remarkably difficult to state their strengths themselves. And discovering your strengths is not enough, you also need to know how to use and dose them. Research on derailed leaders indicates that these leaders exaggerated their strengths (**strengths in overdrive**) and were not corrected in this. Self-assurance can, for example, turn into megalomaniacal behavior and courage can turn into reckless behavior with all the negative consequences that can be expected.



Context is also important, sometimes a certain leadership style does not suit the organization (culture) for example. Clients that participated in my leadership programs sometimes found out that they were losing a lot of energy at work because the balance between their own aspirations, personal values and strengths and the demands and the culture of the organization were out of balance.





Energy givers and Energy takers

Development solely aimed at improving competencies that need to be improved, from a deficiency approach, seldom works motivating and inspiring. Strengths are more personal, offer the most room for positive and sustainable growth and can be of great significance for innovation, knowledge, intrinsic motivation and creativity. Moreover, you prevent burnouts if you let people do what they are good at, using strengths gives positive energy.

Never before has there been so much attention for themes around happiness, job satisfaction, well-being, and engagement. But at the same time, the numbers for burnouts, disengagement, and depression are shocking. Work-related stress and burnouts are occupational disease number 1 in the Netherlands. “For many organizations, the employees are the heart of the business. Yet too often, the well-being of those employees is thought to be in terms of illness, health and unhealthy lifestyle.

Dr. W. van Rhenen, Chief Medical Officer of ArboNed at the UVA has conducted research into what can prevent burnout and what makes employees enthusiastic. The starting point of the study was the energy of the employee, with a value that varies from the minimum (burnout) to the optimum (enthusiasm). The aim of the study was to show what the effect is of on the one hand the stressful elements in the work, such as work pressure (stressors) and on the other hand the elements that promote job satisfaction (motivators).



Energy sources at work are for instance social support from colleagues, autonomy, development opportunities, doing work that suits you and gives you pleasure, and receiving feedback.

Most people intuitively know that working from our personal strengths is good for us; both in our personal life and at work. We are most drawn to what we are good at, what gives us satisfaction, positive energy, and what we just enjoy doing. But at work we regularly end up in roles that do not really suit us and that do not get the best out of ourselves because we don't get the opportunity to use and develop our unique qualities. As a result, we become dissatisfied with our work and motivation, performance, and enthusiasm decrease. Often these negative feelings also seep through into our personal lives and for some people it can mean that they are heading towards a burnout.

In addition to burnouts, more and more 'bore-outs' are also occurring in the business world, for example because people work below their level, are insufficiently challenged, their qualities are not deployed, and there is little or no opportunity for development. A bore-out makes people tired, insecure, and unhappy and performance and engagement will decrease.

People who are given the opportunity to optimize their talents are happier, more resilient, healthier and more productive. Various studies have shown that a positive approach to people in organizations reduces work-related stress and burnout complaints.

My clients keep a kind of diary for a while in which they keep track of which activities and which interactions are energizing and where and when they lose energy. This can really be an eye opener. The tip is of course, do more that gives you positive energy and less of what drains you, charging the battery is important!

RESILIENCE

It is essential that we increase our resilience so that we can properly deal with uncertainties, confusion, changes, and other pressures, and find strategies that help us manage unhealthy stress.

Increasing your resilience is important but not an easy task. Yet we are all capable of doing this, even if you are not naturally greatly confident or resilient. By continuing to think positively and focusing on strengths, you learn to deal with stressful situations or changes. If you want to increase resilience, it is important to consider current coping strategies and stressors and discover what needs to be changed, what you need help with, and especially what your natural strengths are and what you are already doing well. Developing and using your strengths increases resilience and grit. “Grit is the tendency to sustain interest in and effort toward very long-term goals” (Duckworth et al., 2007). It is about perseverance, passion and having a positive, growth mindset.






TRUST

The “soft side” of leadership is important. Many managers are guided by the issues of the day. And often end up in a vicious circle of working too hard, wanting to do and control everything themselves. They do not take enough time for reflection, self-development and the development of employees. Wanting to do everything on your own and paying little attention to the people around you will not send a signal of confidence to your team. Moreover, it will only make them more passive, less creative and enterprising.

A lack of trust leads to demotivation and distrust among employees, making them less committed and less performing. It consumes energy and is ineffective, you are simply highly dependent on the qualities, motivation, trust, commitment, and performance of your employees. By not giving trust you usually do not receive trust. **Mutual trust is crucial for strong teams and strong organizations.**



A positive organizational culture requires an emotionally safe climate in which employees feel seen and heard and where they are allowed and able to develop their strengths. People also want to feel connected to the organization they work for. It still happens too often that the vision, mission, values and goals of the organization are not clear. By really involving employees - instead of rolling out programs "top-down", they start to feel more genuinely co-responsible for the business results.

Trust is the foundation of any relationship, be it personal or business. The directive, authoritarian style of leadership lacks the basis of trust. Lack of autonomy and development opportunities, being controlled a lot and not being trusted, is stressful and can lead to low commitment, reduced performance or even burnout. There is a correlation between stress and lack of control, while stress and the risk of burnout decrease when people gain confidence and autonomy.

Gaining confidence is giving confidence. From organizational research and leadership research, trust emerges as the keyword for leadership. It is important to create a culture of safety for employees. Without trust you have no open, honest communication and no commitment.

One of the preconditions for a team to function well is that the team members experience a high degree of safety.



"ABCD of Trust"

"Trust" does not mean the same for everyone, but according to Ken Blanchard (author of many books on leadership) the elements that determine trust are in any case:



Ability (competence: show ability)

Believability (credibility: acting with integrity)

Connectedness (involvement: caring about others)



Dependability (reliability: showing that others can rely on you)



When people work from their own talents and strength, they experience more satisfaction, less work pressure and they will perform better. Employees who are aware of their strengths and are encouraged to develop them score high on personal well-being and feel more engaged.

If the work is not in line with personal strengths, it can lead to unrest, dissatisfaction and loss of energy. To realize ambitions and increase performance, you must discover, develop and deploy these strengths as productively as possible. It is also important to limit performance risks.

Knowing, developing, and optimally deploying strengths gives positive energy, intrinsic motivation, strengthens self-direction and leads to high performance. By consciously deploying talents, talents are developed into strengths. And research shows that the more attention there is within organizations for diversity and the unique talents of employees, the more positive the effect is on the motivation and employability of employees.

Do you recognize and develop the strengths of your team members? Do you have an eye for the complementary strengths in your team and do you also use them?





Strengths are unique and sustainable, and it can provide insight into why someone is (intrinsically) motivated and is willing to make an extra effort for the organization. It is not the same as competences; this involves knowledge and skills, usually in the context of the organizational objectives. Based on my competencies, I can be very suitable for a certain position, but that does not imply that I am the best fit for the job, this only occurs if my strengths are also recognized and fully utilized within the organization.

For example, a three-year study in the U.S. healthcare system on the effectiveness of strengths-based interventions found that employee engagement and performance increased significantly in nine hospitals using strengths-based personnel management and energizers, compared to a control group of strengths. 151 hospitals (Black, 2001). Also, according to Gallup research, people who use their strengths at work are more successful and more engaged in their work. Employees in organizations with a Strengths-based focus are more engaged and employee engagement is highly correlated with key performance indicators.



Research also shows that when employees feel that their strengths are valued by their employer and that they are given the opportunity to develop and use them, they experience more **positive emotions**. In addition, they are more innovative and more helpful.

Professionals usually have the hard skills, the technical skills, but excelling in, for example, an IT or financial position, does not necessarily mean that you are also a good manager. This also requires people management skills, "soft skills" such as empathy and, for example, the willingness and ability to help others develop.

You build a positive organizational culture by working towards goals based on shared values and vision, based on trust and commitment. The culture of an organization is strongly determined by the norms and core values, the history, "story-telling" and the manners between employees.

Transparency; the culture of a company is now more visible than ever, partly through social media (Glassdoor, Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn etc.). So, you want employees to become the ambassadors of your organization. People who are proud of their organization and see their leaders as supportive and inspiring take on more responsibility than their actual job description "prescribes". These types of employees are excellent ambassadors for your organization (Organizational Citizen Behavior). They strengthen the reputation of the company and are more inclined to recommend the organization to external parties.

Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results

In my (coaching) conversations with managers, the well-known SWOT analysis often comes up. The conventional model for strategic planning -Strengths & Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats- is still used in many organizations. The disadvantage is that SWOT often emphasizes the negative, limitations and weaknesses with little focus on possibilities and strengths.

In contrast to the classic SWOT analysis, the SOAR analysis is based on the strengths approach and AI (appreciative inquiry | the appreciative approach, an approach for positive organizational change), focuses more on positive elements and is strongly result-oriented.

SOAR offers a renewed approach to strategic planning focused on positive change with a focus on strength, amplifying what works. Focus on the **Strengths**, the potential, the qualities, skills in your team or organization and the **Opportunities** in your environment. Focus more on what do you want instead of what you don't want, where do you want to go, what are your **Aspirations**: formulate a positive goal, ambition, vision, dream aimed at the desired **Results**.

This results in more positive energy and commitment. SWOT appears to be a balanced analysis, but research shows that its application in practice leads to deficiency thinking, the attention is mainly focused on the negative, the limitations and weaknesses (e.g. Braveman et al., 2011). SOAR is not necessarily a better approach but it can be a good alternative.





The weaknesses and threats from the SWOT analysis are not ignored but are looked at through a "different lens". Our work environment is changing rapidly and the way we learn, work and collaborate has changed drastically. People and organizations must be able to adapt effortlessly to those changes if they want to make the most of opportunities that arise.



By working towards the desired future from aspirations (which results do we want to achieve, what does success look like?), this model has a more positive, forward-looking and action-oriented approach and offers more opportunities for creation and innovation.



Positive psychology and the strengths approach are on the rise, the SOAR approach as part of organizational development ties in nicely with this.



SOAR stands for Strengths - Opportunities - Aspirations - Results. It fits very well with the Strengthscope development model: Aspirations - Awareness - Action - Agility – Achievement



The SWOT model is more top down, while SOAR especially works well if you involve all stakeholders, so it also stimulates employee engagement.



Active participation of employees is of crucial importance for the success of initiated changes and people will show less resistance and will be more willing to accept changes when they are intrinsically motivated and if there is a shared positive vision of the future towards which they can work.



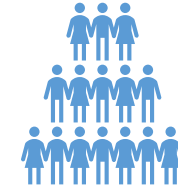
Strive to be the best version of yourself. Your happiness in life depends on being true to yourself. No two people are the same. Your strengths, experiences and success are completely unique to you, as is your purpose in this world. When your satisfaction in life is obtained by comparing yourself to others, you give up your power over your own happiness. Focus your energy on what is important to you, count your blessings, what are you grateful for?



Make (more) connection with your values. Your values are your compass, your deepest desires how you want to behave as a person. They define what matters most to you and give you a code of conduct and intrinsic motivation to pursue your goals. Knowing your values is one thing, living them is another. If you are not true to your values in your actions, it means that you are not connected to your true goals and not aligned with what you stand for.



(Self) leadership starts with finding the strength in yourself. Stay close to yourself, you do not have to play a role. It has been proven that you are more effective, happier and more successful if you do things that really fit your qualities, values and motivations.



How effective you are in your managerial role also depends on your own aspirations, your strengths and values, on the cooperation with your team, other stakeholders and the organizational culture. If there is not a good fit, then it becomes difficult to be the best version of yourself.

Positive Leadership. Thriving Workplaces.

“Positive leaders emphasize and build on employees’ strengths rather than focus on their weaknesses, and this emphasis creates an attraction to forming strong interpersonal ties. The orientation is toward enabling thriving and flourishing at least as much as addressing obstacles and impediments. It is not the same as merely being nice, charismatic, trustworthy, or a servant leader. Rather, it incorporates these attributes and supplements them with a focus on strategies that provide strengths based, positive energy to individuals and organizations”

(Kim Cameron, 2012).



"Leadership is the ability to establish standards and manage a creative climate where people are self-motivated toward the mastery of long-term constructive goals, in a participatory environment of mutual respect, compatible with personal values." — Mike Vance

"A leader has the vision and conviction that a dream can be achieved. He inspires the power and energy to get it done." — Ralph Lauren

"The companies that survive longest are the one's that work out what they uniquely can give to the world—not just growth or money but their excellence, their respect for others, or their ability to make people happy. Some call those things a soul." — Charles Handy

Kitty Schaap MA, MSc

I hope you enjoyed reading my E-book!

I have gained broad HRM and coaching experience in international fast-paced environments and I am very committed to helping people achieve their potential and accelerate their performance through coaching and training. I hold a Master's degree in Cultural Sciences and MSc in Management with specialization Strategic Human Resource Management and I am a certified Strengths coach (Strengthscope).

Do you want to get more out of yourself, your team and the organization, increase engagement, strengthen your leadership and get more energy and satisfaction from your work? Please contact me to discuss the possibilities. I work independently as well as with partners, for positive leadership development my partner is [Plexus leadership](#).



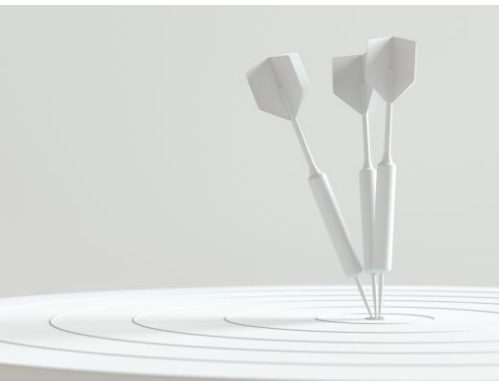
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The background is a light blue gradient. On the left, several white paper airplanes are shown in flight, each leaving a trail of small white dots. On the right, a single red paper airplane is shown in flight, also leaving a trail of small white dots. A white rectangular box is positioned in the lower half of the slide, containing text. An orange vertical bar is on the far left edge of the white box.

THE JOB OF A LEADER IS TO BUILD A COMPLEMENTARY
TEAM, WHERE EVERY STRENGTH IS MADE EFFECTIVE
AND EACH WEAKNESS IS MADE IRRELEVANT.

- Stephen Covey.