SOCIAL STYLE®

and

STRENGTHS BASED LEADERSHIP

OVERVIEW

The Strengths Based Model has been developed and refined over the years by the Gallup® organization. Gallup's early research led to the development of the StrengthsFinder® assessment. This self-assessment provides individuals with a profile of their top five strengths, from a list of 34 possible strength themes.

Gallup's recent research has focused on leadership. Through statistical analysis, they discovered that the 34 strength themes cluster into four leadership dimensions: Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking. This whitepaper summarizes the Strengths Based Model and how the SOCIAL STYLE Model contributes to its effectiveness.

SOCIAL STYLE Connections

SOCIAL STYLE is the world's most effective interpersonal skills model. The Connections Whitepaper Series looks at how SOCIAL STYLE complements and supports other popular workplace programs including Situational Leadership, Emotional Intelligence, Crucial Conversations and The Five Dysfunctions of a Team.

INTRODUCTION

"Play to your strengths" is a catchphrase we've all heard. We're told to focus on the things we're good at; but at the same time we're also told to stretch our abilities and move outside our comfort zones in order to develop new skills and progress in our careers. So which is better, to become experts in specific areas and not worry about our weaknesses, or to constantly challenge ourselves to develop abilities in areas where we don't have natural talents? If you ask Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, authors of Strengths Based Leadership, the answer is clearly the former. In their book they outline the benefits of leading in ways that make the most of one's natural strengths. They believe that leaders should make the most of their own strengths as well as the strengths of their individual followers. The key for leaders is to organize their teams to include individuals with different sets of strengths, which will lead to more effective performance. As they note, "Although individuals need not be well-rounded, teams should be" (p. 23).

The SOCIAL STYLE Model™ complements and enhances the effectiveness of the Strengths Based approach. In fact, the research presented in Rath and Conchie's book shows that all individual strengths can be categorized into four leadership domains that parallel the four SOCIAL STYLEs.

This whitepaper summarizes the Strengths Based Model and shows how the SOCIAL STYLE Model contributes to its effectiveness. In particular, we show how the outward behavioral aspects of the SOCIAL STYLE Model contribute significantly to the intrapersonal insights of the Strengths Model. The Strengths Model provides a description of individual's self-perceived strengths, while the SOCIAL STYLE Model describes people's behavior as seen by others, and advice for how to work effectively with others. Further, important information about behavioral weaknesses is described. Making the most of strengths is fine, but an awareness of limitations is invaluable for learning how to be more effective.

Related to this, just as one person's garbage is another person's gold, it's also true that one person's strengths can be another's stress. When overdone, strengths can quickly turn to shortcomings. Finally, the Versatility component of the SOCIAL STYLE Model offers advice to help leaders work more effectively with their followers, peers, and others. This is important across all facets of leadership, and is especially important in those areas where leaders cannot choose to work only within their comfort zones and are obliged to challenge their abilities.

SOCIAL STYLE & STRENGTHS BASED LEADERSHIP

In recent years, while continuing to learn more about strengths, Gallup scientists have also been examining decades of data on the topic of leadership. They studied more than one million work teams, conducted more than 20,000 in-depth interviews with leaders, and even interviewed more than 10,000 followers around the world to ask exactly why they followed the most important leader in their life.

In Strengths Based Leadership, #1 New York Times bestselling author Tom Rath and renowned leadership consultant Barry Conchie reveal the results of this research. Based on their discoveries, the book identifies three keys to being a more effective leader: knowing your strengths and investing in others' strengths, getting people with the right strengths on your team, and understanding and meeting the four basic needs of those who look to you for leadership.

Executing. Leaders who are dominant in the Executing dimension make things happen and get things done. These leaders work hard to turn ideas into reality.

Influencing. Leaders with strength in the Influencing dimension are able to take control, speak up, and make sure their team's opinions are heard. These leaders sell their team's ideas to a broader audience.
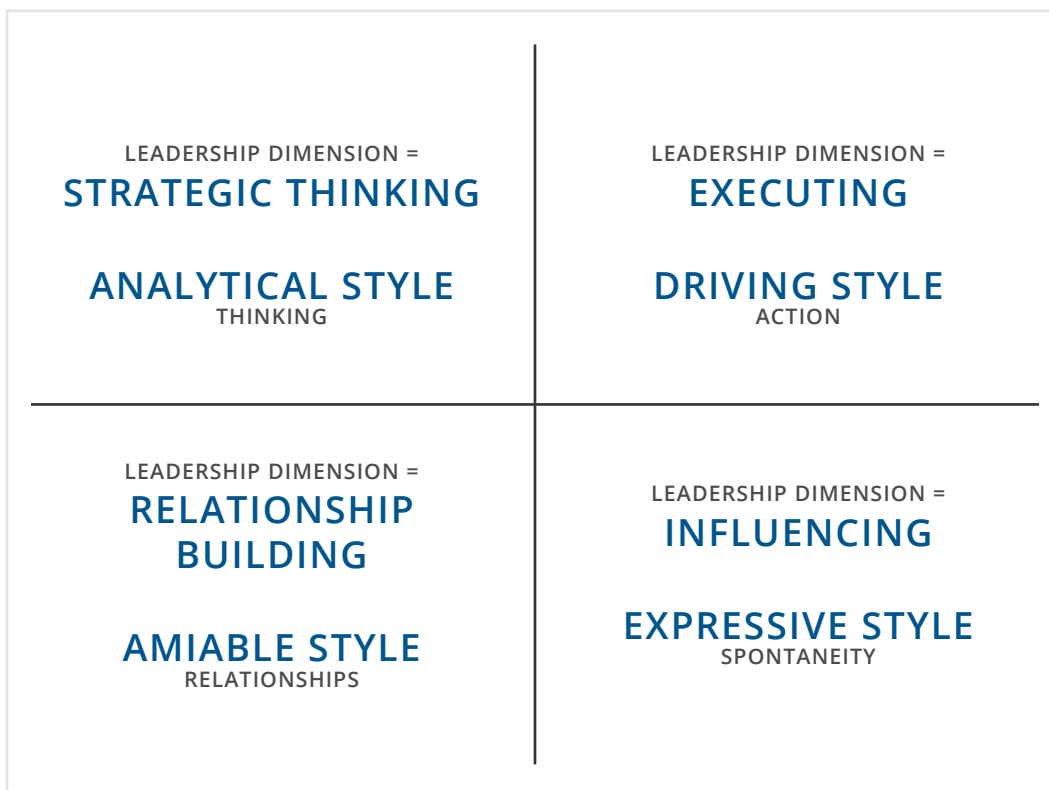
Relationship Building. Leaders whose strengths lie in the Relationship Building dimension are skilled at holding teams together. They are able to develop teams and organizations where individuals work together.

Strategic Thinking. Leaders with Strategic Thinking strengths are able to absorb and analyze information, thereby helping their teams make better decisions. They focus on what could be, and stretch others' thinking.

The 34 strength themes are organized within these four leadership dimensions, as shown in the following table.

EXECUTING	INFLUENCING	RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	STRATEGIC THINKING
Achiever	Activator	Adaptability	Analytical
Arranger	Command	Developer	Context
Belief	Communication	Connectedness	Futuristic
Consistency	Competition	Empathy	Ideation
Input	Maximizer	Harmony	Input
Discipline	Self-Assurance	Includer	Intellection
Focus	Significance	Individualization	Learner
Responsibility	Woo	Positivity	Strategic
Restorative		Relator	

TRACOM's SOCIAL STYLE Model has existed for nearly 50 years and is regularly updated. The Strengths Model's four leadership dimensions are strikingly similar to the four SOCIAL STYLEs. In fact, many of the phrases used to describe them are almost identical to some of the ways TRACOM describes the four Styles.

LEADERSHIP DIMENSION = **STRATEGIC THINKING** **ANALYTICAL STYLE** THINKING	LEADERSHIP DIMENSION = **EXECUTING** **DRIVING STYLE** ACTION
LEADERSHIP DIMENSION = **RELATIONSHIP BUILDING** **AMIABLE STYLE** RELATIONSHIPS	LEADERSHIP DIMENSION = **INFLUENCING** **EXPRESSIVE STYLE** SPONTANEITY

INTRAPERSONAL INSIGHT & OUTWARD BEHAVIOR

The Strengths Based Model is intrapersonal in nature, helping people understand and focus on their self-reported personal strengths. Because it focuses on personal skills and strengths, the Model can assist people in discovering occupations and roles that are most suited to their abilities and interests. It can also help leaders enhance their teams' work engagement by focusing their employees' efforts on things they're good at. For example, a leader who enables an employee with Relationship Building strengths to work in close contact with others would help this person to be more fulfilled at work. In addition, the Model can help leaders understand the importance of developing teams of people with diverse strengths in order to complement one another's abilities.

The SOCIAL STYLE Model is designed for interpersonal development, to help people understand and manage relationships based on their natural behavioral Styles. It describes people's Styles as perceived by oneself and others, including both strengths and weaknesses, and provides specific techniques for interacting more effectively with others. In addition, the Model measures Versatility, an indicator of interpersonal effectiveness. Research has shown that Versatility predicts leader performance and that interpersonal effectiveness is critical to effective leadership. Thus the Model can assist leaders to work more productively with their direct reports, peers, and bosses. It adds to insight about personal strengths by providing insight about others and how to work productively with them. Research has been done showing Versatility is closely related to the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EQ).

SELF AND OTHERS

The Strengths Based Model provides leaders with excellent feedback on their strengths and tips for increasing effectiveness within each of the 34 themes. The SOCIAL STYLE Model augments the Strengths approach by providing an easy-to-understand paradigm with specific and actionable information. In addition to information about oneself, insight is provided about other behavioral Styles. This helps leaders to better understand their followers, not to mention work more effectively with them and help them be more effective team members. Further, this information about others helps every member of the team recognize one another's strengths and work preferences in a straightforward format.

The SOCIAL STYLE Model is based on the perceptions of co-workers, which provides an accurate reflection of behavioral Style. Self-perception is often biased and can be inaccurate. A person's beliefs about his own strengths might not correspond with reality or with his co-worker's perceptions. When feedback is based solely on self-perception there is a risk that leaders may focus on developing the wrong set of skills. For example, a person might believe he is strong in the Strategic Thinking theme, when in fact he is relatively unskilled in this domain and should be focusing his efforts elsewhere. The SOCIAL STYLE Model bolsters information about strengths by providing the input of others, helping leaders focus on behavior that is important to their followers.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Related to the differences between self-perception and other-perception, leaders' internal beliefs about their strengths are not always clearly translated into outward behavior. This is commonly found in the relationship between self-assessments of personality and other assessments of behavioral Style. A self-described introverted leader can feel uncomfortable speaking to large groups, and will not feel that this is one of her strengths. However, her job requires her to speak in public. Despite her feelings about her abilities in this area, she might speak very well in public settings, though she finds it fatiguing and stressful. The Style Model provides an important picture of this outward behavior, regardless of how a leader feels about her own strengths and preferences. In this case, this leader's Versatility Profile would indicate that others view her as a talented presenter and speaker, even though she does not feel this is a personal strength. This helps her understand her behavior as others see her, regardless of how she feels about herself, thus allowing her to focus her development efforts on areas that matter most.

An additional pitfall for leaders who focus too much on developing their existing strengths is that they might overdo it. Too much of a good thing can become a bad thing, especially for followers. For instance, a leader whose strengths lie in the Executing dimension might rely on these strengths to such a degree that it becomes counterproductive. His relentless drive for results might lead his followers to exhaustion and frustration. In these cases the followers may openly retaliate or withhold their best efforts, resulting in a backlash response that hijacks the leader's Driving Style. Instead of getting things done, the leader loses the support and effort of his followers. For leaders, it is imperative to understand the affects that behavioral Style has on followers. One of the central lessons of SOCIAL STYLE is "control yourself," meaning control your own Style-bound behaviors that can cause stress for others.

VERSATILITY AND EFFECTIVENESS

One of the most important ways that Style can enhance the lessons of the Strengths Based approach is through the application of Versatility. Versatility is a measure of interpersonal effectiveness, and provides insight and recommendations for how to increase productivity with others, including followers, bosses, and peers. No matter what a leader's personal strengths, one of her most important abilities will be her skill at communicating and working effectively with others. A plethora of research shows that interpersonal skills become increasingly important as individuals progress into leadership roles. Versatility provides feedback on these all-important interpersonal abilities.

As an example, most people would assume that leaders who are skilled in the Relationship Building dimension are naturally adept at interpersonal interactions. After all, they are focused on building and maintaining good relationships with others. However, even these socially skilled individuals can have limits to their abilities. For instance, they may not stand up for their points of view, instead capitulating to the opinions of others. This can limit their effectiveness and can also impact their followers who rely on them to be the champions of their causes. The strategies provided through the Versatility Model can help these leaders be more assertive and risk-taking when appropriate, thus increasing their effectiveness.

BENEFITS & SUMMARY:

The Strengths Based Leadership Model is very useful for helping people understand their primary strengths and for developing strategies to make the most of those attributes. In conjunction with the SOCIAL STYLE Model, it can be a useful tool for helping leaders understand the strengths of their team members, and for forming teams of people with a diversity of strengths and Styles. It is also a very valuable mechanism for helping individuals focus on the things they do best. Not only will this make them happier and more engaged in their work, but it will also benefit the organization.

In fact, as individuals progress through stages of leadership they are required to develop new skills, and interpersonal skills are especially important. The SOCIAL STYLE Model adds particular value to the Strengths approach through its focus on outward behavior, the perceptions of others, and strategies for managing weaknesses by utilizing Versatility.

ABOUT

TRACOM®GROUP

THE SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE COMPANY®

[WHY we do]

We believe that improving peoples' understanding of themselves and others makes the world a better place.

[WHAT we do]

We synthesize our discoveries into actionable learning and resources that improve an individual's performance in all parts of their lives. We call this Social Intelligence.

[HOW we do it]

Through research and experience we uncover the hidden barriers to individuals achieving their maximum potential and identify how to help overcome them.

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