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Tension at Dawn

The struggle for survival is as old as life itself. The start of a new day or new year is no time to relax. When hunting, lionesses concentrate every muscle and highly-tuned sense as they glide through the grass covering their approach. The tension is palpable.

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enable them to build their own enthusiasm. Sales and marketing programs and materials should scream passion.

Step 7: Stay the course. Passion-based change is exhilarating. Most organizations find that once they clear the initial hurdles of fear and caution, change actually energizes them.

Rather than getting carried away by their successes, however, passion-driven organizations take measures to ensure that they do not lose sight of the passions that have made them great. They recognize that if their enthusiasm goes unchecked, it may lead them in directions that are counterproductive.

Leaders and associates must work diligently to preserve core passions. They must fight complacency, confront challenges, adapt to changes in the marketplace, learn from mistakes, and embrace opportunities. If they face both triumph and adversity with confidence and commitment, then they ensure that the passions that define them will survive.

Passion-driven organizations, and the people who form them, are raising the standard by which we judge goods, services, and employment. Passion simply makes things better. Is your organization enjoying the many benefits of being driven by passion? Have you identified the key forces behind your performance? Are your leaders and employees excited? Are your customers and clients enthusiastic? Do they actively seek out your organization? Does your organization have low employee turnover? Is your organization respected in its field? Are your products and services better than those of your competitors? Does your organization give employees freedom in making decisions? Do you reward employees who demonstrate passion? Do you value quality of experience?

If you feel that your organization is passion-devoid, you need to identify core passions and break down the barriers that keep passion out of the workplace. Identify and incorporate passions into your systems regularly. Use your passions to empower performance. Seek opportunities to develop passion into a competitive edge. **EE**

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ACTION: Assess your passion status.

Detecting Excess

Versatility is a prize virtue.



by Robert E. Kaplan & Robert B. Kaiser

WE HAVE DISCOVERED A SIMPLE TRUTH about leadership: Performance problems don't just consist of deficiencies; they also consist of excesses. Words like *weaknesses*, *shortcomings*, and *limitations* obscure the distinction between the two basic classes of faults: those where leaders exhibit too little delegation, operational discipline, visionary thinking, and tough-mindedness, and those where they exhibit too much of these functions.

We are all familiar with managers who are overly forceful or who empower to a fault or who go overboard on growing the business or who take accountability to an abusive extreme or who overdo follow-up or who are excessively concerned about people's feelings.

Although we all know that one way that leaders don't perform well is by going to counterproductive extremes, conventional measures of leadership do not reflect this reality directly. The rating scales used in 360 questionnaires do not include a provision for overdoing it. Yet the highest rating on a questionnaire item like "asserts self" might seem like a good thing when it could mask the tendency for assertiveness to verge over into abrasiveness. Scales of the ineffective-to-highly-effective variety introduce ambiguity. A low score on an item that reads "delegates" could mean either that the individual delegates too little or too much!

To remedy this problem we came up with a new rating scale, where the best score is in the middle and where degrees of deficiency are represented by minus scores running to the left and degrees of excess are represented by plus scores running to the right.

By detecting excess, a 360 tool not only picks up on single behaviors or dimensions of performance, it also picks up a pervasive problem in leaders—lopsidedness, the troubling pattern where the individual goes over board on one side while giving short shrift to the opposing side. Everywhere we find managers who lack balance in this sense. They are too task-oriented and not people-oriented enough, or conversely too people-oriented and not task-oriented enough. Or they are too focused on the short term and not enough on the long term; or the converse. Or too absorbed with



work and career and not invested enough in their personal life. Since lopsidedness consists of placing too much weight on one thing and too little weight on an opposing thing, the only way a 360 tool can identify lopsidedness is if the tool measures excess as well as deficiency. It must define leadership

requirements in terms of pairs of opposing leadership virtues such as task-oriented and people-oriented.

Equipped to detect excess and built around pairs of opposites, our 360 tool, the *Leadership Versatility Index (LVI)*, can capture lopsidedness

Beyond detecting excess, the LVI measures forceful leadership and enabling leadership, since we find that the more forceful that managers are, the less enabling they are, the less forceful they are, the less enabling they are.

The flip side of lopsidedness is versatility—the ability to draw freely from opposing approaches unencumbered by a bias in favor of one or a prejudice against the other. Versatile leaders continually adjust their behavior, deftly applying the right approach, to the right degree, for the circumstances at hand. They can pivot readily from forcing a tough issue to fostering harmony,

from holding a blue-sky session to digging into an immediate problem—just the kind of agility needed in this fast-paced, unpredictable, and complex world. Unfortunately, versatility is in short supply. We find that fewer than 20 percent get a grade of “A” on versatility.

Versatility pays off. It is a key differentiator between the best in class and the rest of the pack. We find a strong correlation between versatility, as measured by the LVI, and effectiveness of managers. Versatile managers are consistently regarded as the most effective leaders in their organizations.

To identify versatility, or lopsidedness, the model of leadership on which the 360 questionnaire is based needs to be two-sided. There are two basic balances to be struck. First, strategic and operational leadership amounts to the *what* of leadership—the business issues managers focus on. This pair (or duality) is defined as:

- **Strategic Leadership.** Setting long-term direction, thinking broadly about the organization, seeking ways to grow and expand the business, aligning people with the vision and strategy.

- **Operational Leadership.** Focusing on short-term results, getting involved in the details, being grounded in the realities of executing, using disciplined processes to keep people on track.

The second duality is forceful and enabling leadership, which refers to the *how* of leadership—how do leaders apply their drive, talent, and intellect and that of other people?

- **Forceful leadership.** Taking charge, being direct, pushing people to perform, holding them accountable.

- **Enabling leadership.** Empowering, being open to input, involving people in decisions, being supportive.

Both distinctions—forceful-enabling and strategic-operational—are unique and integral to performance. Yet the competency models in use today do not define leadership in pair-wise fashion. Instead they consist of lists (often long) of skills and personal qualities. Our position is that for every truth about leadership, there is an equal and opposing truth, and leadership models are more useful for respecting that reality, as they reflect

the tensions and trade-offs that make management a tricky balancing act.

And it is vital to identify excess. Because excess is usually a strength taken to an extreme: taking charge turns into over-control, following up morphs into micromanaging, an intense drive for closure is experienced as insensitivity, being a stickler for details slides into maddening perfectionism.

This reverse alchemy, where talented people turn the gold of hard-won capability into dross, is important to keep top of mind at a time when so much is made of capitalizing on strengths. To throw a leader’s strengths into relief and stop there is to do half the job. What if the individual grossly overdoes one or more of his or her strong points? Excess is the extent to which individuals do too much of an otherwise good thing.

Our task as leaders, in addition to filling gaps in our repertoire, is to curb excess. It is to correct an unfortunate situation where our strengths, rather than

serving as a boon, are taken to be a bane because we take them too far. We need to strip away the excess so that our true strength shines through.

When staffing decisions are made to exploit a strength—a turnaround artist is assigned one troubled unit after another, or a gifted people manager

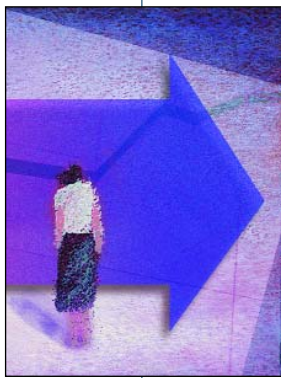
cleans up after someone who leaves morale problems—the individual becomes a one-trick pony. And that one trick is no longer enough.

It’s not easy to become equally adept at both sides of dualities. However, a sure-fire strategy for never developing the other side is to focus exclusively on what you’re good at. And this is precisely the kind of lopsidedness that accounts for much ineffectiveness.

So, should leaders work on their weaknesses or leverage their strengths? Our answer is, “yes,” since weaknesses are often strengths taken to an extreme. Leadership-assessment tools must not just identify strengths but also detect excessive use of those strengths. **EE**

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ACTION: Excise the excess in your leadership.



Coaching Leaders

Affect measurable change.



by Marshall Goldsmith

OUR BEHAVIORAL coaching process is designed to help successful leaders achieve positive, long-term, measurable change in behavior.

We first get an agreement with our clients and their managers on two key variables: 1) what are the key behaviors that will make the biggest positive change in increased leadership effectiveness? And 2) who are the key stakeholders who can determine (6 to 12 months later) if this change has occurred? We get paid only after our coaching clients have achieved a positive change in key leadership behaviors as determined by key stakeholders.

Many behavioral coaches are paid for the wrong reasons. Their income is a function of “How much do my clients like me?” and “How much time did I spend in coaching?” Both are poor metrics for achieving a positive, long-term change in behavior. A clients’ love of a coach never correlates with their change in behavior. And since my clients’ time is more valuable than mine, I spend as little of their time as necessary to achieve the desired results. The last thing they need is for me to waste their time!

Qualifying the Coaching Client

We have learned to *qualify* our coaching clients, meaning that we only work with clients whom we believe will benefit from our coaching process.

Have you ever tried to change the behavior of a successful adult that had no interest in changing? How much luck did you have? Probably none! I only work with executives who are willing to make a sincere effort to change and who believe that this change will help them become better leaders. We refuse to work with leaders who do not demonstrate this sincere commitment to personal development.

I would never choose to work with a