Positive Psychology: How to Build Your Signature Strengths

Dr Suzy Green
Founder, The Positivity Institute
Adjunct Lecturer, Coaching Psychology Unit, University of Sydney

www.thepositivityinstitute.com.au
suzy@thepositivityinstitute.com.au
So what is a Strength?

the things that I’m good at?
What is a Strength?

“A strength is a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance”

(Linley, 2008)
“Personal strengths are the characteristics of a person that allow them to perform well or at their personal best.”

(Wood et al, 2011)
Trait vs State?
Did you know?

• Everyone has strengths!

• But not everyone is clear about what they are or how to capitalise them!

• Critically for organisations, neither are their leaders!
Relevance to women?
Research tells us...

- Studies show that only about one-third of people can identify their own strengths (Hill, 2001); and...

- Only 17% of people say they use their strengths ‘most of the time’ each day (Buckingham, 2007).
In the sixties...

“To make strengths productive is the unique purpose of an organisation”
(Drucker, 1967)
In the noughties...

“I do not believe that you should devote overly much effort to correcting your weaknesses. Rather, I believe that the highest success in living and the deepest emotional satisfaction comes from building and using your signature strengths.”

Martin Seligman
By 2020....

For everyone in the world to be able to know what their strengths are...
Professor Alex Linley’s mission
The Business Case
The Business Case

• An organisation’s greatest assets are its people’s strengths;

• Organisations can realise a strong competitive advantage through the contribution of their people;

• Few people realise that the way to do this is through harnessing and developing the strengths of their employees;

• Simply put, strengths energise people and enable them to be at their best!
The scientific evidence...

- A Gallup Workplace Study suggests that employees who have the opportunity to focus on their strengths every day are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs (Gallup Press, 2007).

- The focus on strengths and psychological capacities improves employee performance and organizational competitive advantage (Luthans et al, 2002 & 2006).
More evidence...

- Studies at **Norwich Union** *(now Aviva)*, showed that focusing on strengths allowed people to be at their best and to better achieve their goals.

- For the organisation, implementing the strengths-based approach has seen turnover of staff figures halve.
And more evidence...

- A 2010 scientific study showed that people who reported **greater use of their strengths** developed **greater levels of well-being** over time.

- Specifically at both 3 & 6 month follow up, **greater strength use** was related to **greater self-esteem, vitality, positive affect and lowered perceived stress**!

- (Wood et al, 2010)
Strengths@Work

• Strengths **Knowledge** – Assess
• Strengths **Use** – Leverage & Develop
• Strengths **Spotting** – Relate
Realise2

60 Strengths according to the three dimensions of energy, performance and use:

www.cappeu.org
Realise 2
Action Plan?

1. Take a Strengths Assessment!
2. Link strengths explicitly to performance/development goals.
3. Start utilising a language of strengths.
4. Provide feedback when observing strengths in use.
Strengths Assessments

1. VIA Inventory – www.viacharacter.org
2. Realise2 – www.cappeu.org
3. StrengthsFinder –
   www.strengthsfinder.com
Strengths-Based Organisations ....

(Aviva, 2009)
Thank You!

Gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all the others.
- Cicero

e: suzy@thepositivitynstitute.com.au