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## Turning talent into performance

*Recently, the president and CEO of Churchill Leadership Group, Jayne Jenkins, spoke at Tampa Bay Innovation Center's TECH Talk program. Following is a summary of her presentation. Churchill Leadership Group works with executives and companies to help raise productivity and performance by maximizing leadership and team performance with a focus on strengths.*

Stanford, Carnegie and Harvard studies have indicated that up to 85 percent of business success comes as a result of people skills. It should be no surprise, then, that focusing on one's inner strengths is an important part of improving leadership skills, increasing productivity and obtaining great results in the workplace. In other words, the strength of one's business or career is dependent on the person's own strengths.

When asked whether they use their strengths every day at work, research participants who said "yes" indicated that 38 percent of them experienced higher productivity, 44 percent had higher customer satisfaction and 50 percent reported less employee turnover.

### *Finding and using personal strengths*

Strength is not just what a person is good at. That description is incomplete; rather strength is also those activities that make a person *feel* strong and create a natural competitive advantage or "edge." Sadly, today, very few people – as little as 17 percent – use their strengths every day, while 83 percent typically use their strengths at least once a week. People who use their strengths report feeling confident, powerful and enthusiastic, while those who do not use their strengths may feel drained, frustrated and bored.

Why is this? Following are a few misconceptions and the corresponding truths:

- *Myth 1: As we grow older, we change.* The truth is that our personalities don't change, although personality traits do become more pronounced. In other words, we become more and more of what we already were.

- *Myth 2: We grow most in the areas in which we are weakest.* The truth is that we grow the most in those areas in which we are already strong.
- *Myth 3: My team needs me to put my strengths aside and do what the team needs.*  
The truth is that we need to volunteer our strengths and use them often. Then the team is more powerful.

So how can each of us start using our strengths every day rather than once a week?

Think of the three “A’s” of awareness, action and accountability. One initial step is to make a personal strength chart. When participating in an activity, write down the feeling of doing this activity – does it make you feel strong or weak? Through this, it will become easier to begin to discover the strengths that lie within. Following is a simple format that has been helpful to many.

	Strong (when doing an activity that strengthens me)	Weak (when doing an activity that weakens me)
Activity		
How I felt		

The next step is to dig deeper and work with a strength expert who can identify strengths and more importantly bring them alive so that strengths can become actions focused on personal goals. The results are acceleration in performance and an increase in satisfaction level as more time is spent doing activities that play to specific strengths.

### *Developing your strength*

Once a person identifies his or her own personal strengths, it’s important to nourish and cultivate those, focusing on activities that will grow specific strengths. For example, if a strength is public speaking, taking additional training courses and workshops will increase the strength.

Further, the enjoyment of the tasks can actually increase energy and vitality. Feeling strong will make a person more passionate and the measurable growth is almost limitless.

### *Strengths in teams*

The ability for teams to work in sync and rely on each other is crucial in most circumstances. With an identification of personal strengths, each person can rely on the strengths of others on the team. This helps improve trust and communication and thus increases collaboration, allowing performance rates to increase -- all because strengths have been identified and maximized. Bottom line, people and teams excel where they are strong.

The ultimate lesson is that we have to find our strengths and allocate time doing more activities that play to our strengths if we wish to be at our most effective and productive.

And that's a lesson that works for all of us in both personal and business settings.

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*Jenkins has offered a free consultation session for our readers. Contact her at 813-956-3445 or visit online at [www.churchillleadershipgroup.com](http://www.churchillleadershipgroup.com).*