

## **Complementary Strengths and a Shared Mission**

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“Most people see themselves as more well-rounded than they really are, above average where they are weak, and close to average where they are incredible.”

That’s a quote from *The Power of 2: How to Make the Most of Your Partnerships at Work and in Life*. My article last week highlighted this book by Rodd Wagner and Gale Muller.

Their research determined that there are eight characteristic elements of individuals who successfully work collaboratively. Based on a couple of conversations this past week, I’ve decided to share some detail on each attribute that contributes to successful interdependent contributions.

This week, and in the following three weeks, I’ll highlight:

- complementary strengths and a shared mission
- fairness and trust
- unselfishness and communicating
- acceptance and forgiveness

Is the opening sentence of this article relevant to you? Do you think of yourself as well-rounded when it comes to the many skills required of a capable leader? Would other people characterize your skills in some areas as much weaker than you think you are? And do you excel at certain tasks, yet think of your work as unexceptional?

I’m astounded at how leaders tend to discount their strengths. They often believe that everyone is good at whatever skills they have. What they handle with ease, however, is difficult for others. I encourage leaders to leverage those strengths, looking for opportunities to capitalize in ways they’ve never considered before.

From the book: “Your strengths are stronger and your weaknesses weaker than you realize. You need help. And you are precisely the help someone else needs.”

In the Gallup organization’s research, the following statements are those associated with complementary strengths. When answered positively, they predict collaborative behavior (and when answered negatively, they foreshadow failure):

- We complement each other’s strengths.
- We need each other to get the job done.
- He or she does some things much better than I, and I do some things much better than he or she does.

Of course, people don’t work together unless they share a common objective. Explicitly defined or merely assumed, successful partners align in their desires to achieve a desired outcome. Their motives in wanting to achieve that mission may be quite different. Yet both individuals, in the best partnerships, understand why their counterparts find the objective meaningful.

Three statements from the Gallup research emerged as providing evidence of strong (or potentially failing) collaborations:

- We share a common goal.
- We have a common purpose for what we do.
- We believe in the same mission in life.

Without a shared mission, partnerships inevitably break into two individual pursuits. Limited resources (time, money, personal energy, etc.) force difficult decisions and identify clearly if the participants have conflicting priorities.

Collaboration is more than friendship, proximity, or mutual appreciation. Collaboration requires complementary strengths and a shared mission. And as we’ll see next week, strong partnerships also require mutual trust and a sense of fairness.