

Three Myths Limiting Your Development

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Leaders of organizations are typically busy people. They constantly look for ways to attract new customers, retain existing customers, and hire competent team members, engaging them in pursuing an organizational vision, improving productivity, and reducing waste and rework.

Most leaders have little time for building future leaders. And now there is increasing evidence that they could allocate those limited energies differently. Marcus Buckingham, in his latest book *Go Put Your Strengths to Work*, claims we develop future leaders using assumptions that science is proving wrong.

Based on his seventeen years of experience with the Gallup Organization, Buckingham suggests that your leadership development process may be flawed because it is based on some common myths. These ideas are so deeply ingrained in our society that you don't even realize they influence your thinking.

In last week's article, I covered three questions that can help you debunk any myth—and help you evaluate any paradigm that you might hold. If you missed the article, contact me and I'll provide a copy. However, I'll provide a summary here.

“How does this myth/belief/thought serve you?” Something in your perception must affirm your belief, or you'd believe something else.

“What would it cost you to stop believing in this myth/belief/thought?” A challenge to the status quo, this question often requires some extensive thinking and usually evokes interesting responses.

“How would it benefit you to believe the truth instead of this myth/belief/thought?” Marcus Buckingham believes he has some new truths for you—three of them. Further, he contends that they hold great benefits for your growth and the growth of the future leaders in your organization.

The first myth is: “As you grow, your personality changes.” You like to believe this because you have a desire that you and those around you can improve, even in personality, over time, right?

Yes, your values may change, your self-awareness may grow, and some of your skills may improve. However, the evidence indicates that the primary aspects of your personality remain the same throughout your life. The truth is: **“As you grow, you become more of who you already are.”**

The next myth is: “You will grow the most in your areas of greatest weakness.” You believe this because it's so easy to find opportunities for improvement. Your parents, teachers, bosses, direct reports, and many colleagues have been asking you to fix your limitations all your life.

The truth is, however, that you are far more inquisitive, creative, and energized in your areas of strength! The evidence shows: **“You will grow the most in your areas of greatest strengths.”**

The third myth is: “A good team member does whatever it takes to help the team.” You believe this because you think everyone should share equally in the team's work demands. You think both the fun activities and the not-so-fun activities should be shared. All for one and one for all, right?

The truth, however, is that most team members are not well-rounded; we're all strong in some areas and weak in others. Good teams are well-rounded, however, because the different strengths of each team member are used when most needed. The evidence says: **“A good team member deliberately volunteers his strengths to the team most of the time.”**

How can you use these new insights? We are all learning, and I'm doing everything I can to keep pace with Marcus Buckingham! If you have interest in exploring these ideas, please contact me!

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