
Two Really Bad Ways to Work on Your Leadership Weakness

Just as all leaders have areas of strength, all leaders also have areas of weakness. There is no such thing as an omni-competent leader. But what should a leader do with his or her weaknesses? Books have been written and speeches have been given encouraging leaders to focus on their strengths, to leverage what they are uniquely qualified to do. And while the counsel is wise, that we should focus on our strengths and operate in our gifting, the counsel is incomplete. Our weaknesses as leaders can crush us if we do either of these things with them:

1. Ignore them.

The struggle with the counsel to focus exclusively on your strengths is that your weaknesses can crush you if they are not managed. In his book, *The Leadership Code*, Dave Ulrich gives four key disciplines for all leaders (strategist, executor, talent manager, and developer) and argues that leaders must be at least average in all of them. You don't have to be excellent in all of them but if you are not at least average, your weakness becomes, according to Ulrich, a debilitating weakness. But some leaders make the mistake of ignoring their weaknesses.

- The “super administrative leader” can be tempted to shrug off his/her lack of relational skills. And while the administrative guru does not need to be the walking epitome of “how to win friends and influence people,” if the admin guru can't look people in the eyes and have a conversation, the leader's weakness will thwart his/her strength.
- The “visionary” can be tempted to shrug off execution. “Oh, those are just details; I am a high level thinker.” But if the visionary can't answer emails and get anything done on time, people won't listen to his/her vision indefinitely.

2. Lead in them.

It takes neglect for leaders to ignore their weaknesses and pride to lead in them. A leader who insists he/she can do everything is ignorant of the gifting in those around him/her. To lead in your weaknesses proves too high a view of yourself and too low a view of others around you. It is absolutely foolish to attempt to prove yourself as “the man” or “the top leader” by failing to admit your weaknesses and rely on others around you. Leaders who lead in their weaknesses dishonor the gifting of the men and women who surround them and limit their own effectiveness.

Both the leader who ignores weaknesses and the leader who leads in them will lose credibility. Lead in your strengths while managing your weaknesses.

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