



YOUR TEAM SUCCESS PODCAST

## The Strategic Value Of Reinforcing Your Team's Strengths

**Shannon Waller:** Do you take the time to reinforce your team's strengths or do you simply take them for granted? Stay tuned because in this episode, I talk about the incredible strategic value of highlighting your team's strengths. Hi, Shannon Waller here and welcome to Team Success. An issue has come to mind for me recently where two of my fabulous colleagues with whom I work were reflecting on one of them was really clear on their strengths and one of them was less so. And one of them was saying, oh, that's because you, Shannon, are always telling me what I'm really great at and what you really appreciate. And we were kind of recognizing that that conversation makes a difference. So that's what I wanna talk about today. So this conversation is especially for team leaders, because that's our job, to develop people and to help them grow. But also as a peer, as a colleague, it is incredibly powerful for teamwork to know and recognize and acknowledge other people's strengths. So that really is the context of what I want to talk about today.

Now, why is this important? Well, because the benefits are so extreme. Like, why wouldn't we? Now, I do think there are some mindsets that are really critical. I'll get to that in a moment to make you see that this is valuable. But I'm just going to point out some of the benefits that I see because I make a practice of it. It's a habit. It's not hard for me to do. It's kind of innate. My CliftonStrengths, one of them is Individualization. So I love to personalize information for people. And, you know, I'm motivated by enjoying life and being happy. And I like to see other people do that. So reinforcing their strengths, it's a really easy way to do it. Plus, it's strategic. Even if you don't have a single relationship strength in terms of CliftonStrengths, it's just smart. Because think about this for yourself. If someone has said, hey, it's amazing how your brain handles information. You have a way of organizing like nobody I've ever seen. One of my good friends and clients has a way of seeing an opportunity and multiplying it way broader and like, to scale, than anyone else I've ever met in all of my coming up to 33 years of Coach. Like, holy mackerel, this is a unique capability. It's not that he doesn't know it, but just hearing someone else reflect it back to him is very validating. And when your strengths are validated, you appreciate that, oh, not everyone else can do this.

We all tend to take our own capabilities, our natural capabilities for granted. And when you realize, oh, it is special, we do something different with it. People start to invest more skill, more education. They lean into it more. They start to differentiate between this and other activities. And Gallup actually has a fabulous way of talking about it. So I'm just going to read because I looked this up this morning. So Gallup says, talent is a natural way of thinking, feeling, or behaving. Investment is time spent practicing, developing your skills, and building your knowledge base. Strength is the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance in a specific task. So, in other words, you can have a raw talent, but it isn't until you invest the time in practicing, developing your skills, and building your knowledge base that it actually becomes a strength.



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Now, how much do you love the definition of, “to consistently provide near-perfect performance in a specific task”? Sign me up. I want that capability. I love it. And for me, this was strategic. I've talked about this before, but I was like, oh, Maximizer, number one, Strategic, number two, really? And then I looked up and went, oh yeah, I work with Strategic Coach. Hmm, I wonder how that happened. But I wasn't conscious of it. And once I did become conscious of it, I'm like, oh, strategies do actually come to mind. I love maximizer strategies. I like ones that benefit people. I have two relationship strengths. So a lot of things click together. And once I lean into it, it just took off. Now, I do not have other strengths and if I invested time and effort into those, they would not turn into strengths. Anything further down from like number 12 or below, not so much. So, the point is that when you're the mirror, when you reflect back to people what is really working for you that they're doing, they're like, oh, they can start to put more time, again, attention, they can apply more skill to it. They stop thinking that they need to be a generalist and realize, oh, I can really specialize in these particular things. And certainly with Strategic Coach's idea of Unique Ability, this is kind of an essential awareness. If you want to have uniqueness on your team with people with whom you work, you have to, in my opinion, reinforce and validate what's working. What are they doing really, really well?

Now, here's the other interesting thing. There's no way you can do this for someone else until you first do this for yourself. So if you are unwilling to see yourself as unique, if you're unwilling to invest, you know, A, have the self-awareness and B, lean into this, invest time, money, efforts, et cetera, to get really, really good and to let go of some of the other things. If you think you have to be all things to all people and do all things well, this conversation will be irrelevant. In fact, it will probably tick you off. Fair enough. Don't blame you. But if you realize that, oh, actually, I was not put on the planet to be all things to all people and to be able to do all things, but actually to do a few things exceedingly well, that create enormous value for other people in a way that other people don't find it easy. This is a paradox with Unique Ability. Here's the weird thing: It feels so easy. It comes naturally to you. The thought process is, oh, can everyone do this? And the answer is no, hard no. They cannot, they will not, they can't, they won't, whatever verb you want to use. That's not how it happens for them, right? They have other things that they're brilliant at. I don't know if it comes from the school system or parents or history or whatever, but we kind of want people to conform to, being our education system actually was designed to equip people to work well in factories. I use the word equip on purpose. You know, it wasn't to support uniqueness. It was not to support creativity. But guess what our world needs now in our networked, non-hierarchical, way of working, creativity is all important. The ability to create relationships, the ability to make connections, the ability to be unique and to be able to connect with other people who are unique in different ways is now how the world works. And we need to be tuned into this.



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So please do this with your kids. You know, certainly do it with those with whom you work. And by the way, this goes all the way through the organization. So if you're a business owner, entrepreneur, great. Please, please, please do this with your leadership team. Do this with any team member that you run into. Look for their talents. Dan Sullivan's a great model for this. If you're a team leader, do this for your team, obviously, and other people in the company. Also do this with your entrepreneur. They also need the feedback. They also appreciate having that validated. Say, hey, I really appreciate it when you do this. It really makes a difference. You do this faster and looks like more easily than anyone else on the team does. Is this something you really enjoy doing too? Like it might be an excellent ability. So find out if it brings them joy. If it brings them joy, that's going to be a Unique Ability. That's the difference. Excellent ability is having superior skill but less passion. When you add passion, joy, never-ending energy, always seeing room to get better, always being fascinated and motivated, wanting to be a hero in this way to people, that, my friends, is Unique Ability. And the more we can reinforce this, the more we can have Unique Ability Teamwork, which is my mission in life, is that we all get to do that. So I'm hoping that the why is making sense to you.

But as I'm talking, it's very clear to me, kind of what I was referencing earlier, that there's a mindset that goes with this. You have to have the lens of Unique Ability. You have to have the lens of individuality and uniqueness and being willing and able to look for that in people. If your mindset is, oh, everyone should be the same, everyone should have the same core competencies. Now, I'm all for reading, writing, arithmetic, and retrieval. I'm all for that. But beyond that, start looking for people's specialties. Start looking for where they just automatically go. There's so many stories in our company of people who kind of did something on the fly and, for example, Hamish, okay? Hamish is our brilliant cartoonist, Hamish MacDonald, that is part of all the books, does some amazing fun graphic cartoons to convey messages at Strategic Coach. We have a great one on strengths, which is really fun. We have a great one on gratitude and appreciation, which is really fun. I mean, we get to see Hamish's kind of posters around the office, which is so great. How did that happen? Well, there's a conversation that Dan and Hamish had, and a few days later, Hamish sent Dan a cartoon recap of that conversation. Dan was like, what? Before that, Hamish had been a graphic artist in our company, independently he was a writer, but he was a graphic artist. And so it was really interesting. Dan's like, um, this is just something you just sent me. Can you do more of this? These illustrations, I'd like to have be part of the book, the book series that I'm starting. And that was almost 10 years ago now. This is now Hamish's full-time job. How cool is that? He's a full-time cartoonist. Whoever thought that was even a job description? But it is, it's Strategic Coach. And it happened because he offered, he volunteered.

How did I get to be Dan's main creative collaborator in terms of creating the content of the book? Because when the second book came out, they didn't have enough information. Our writer didn't have enough information. I'm like, well, I can interview Dan, would that help? And she goes, yes. Well, that was book two and now we're on book 39. So there you go. And that



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has become a large part of my calendar, I can tell you. And I'm known for interviewing, which is kind of fun too. So it's those things that people do so naturally that can actually evolve into being their careers. But not if we don't reinforce it, not if we don't recognize it, not if we think that people all should be the same. So again, it goes back to mindset. Are you willing to see your own uniqueness and then you know, support other people's or not. So that's the thing to check before this conversation becomes relevant.

Now, how do you take action? Number one, recognize that we're all a mirror for one another. When you reflect back what's working, so much of management leadership is about course corrections and how to fix people and how to get people up to adequate levels of whatever or how to deal with team member problems or issues. That has a place, but that's not what I'm talking about. First of all, you're going to have a lot fewer problems if people are, you know, what they're providing to your company is their strengths. Those people are self-managing. They don't need a lot of course corrections. Just saying they need direction, but they don't need correction. Ooh, that's good. I'm going to use that again. So this is about, you know, give someone who's really, really good at what they do, say, hey, here's the end result, and then go let them do it. If that's their Unique Ability, if that's the strength that you have reinforced, then absolutely they will do a phenomenal job.

Then there's also some great tools at Strategic Coach that we use. One of them is The Impact Filter, available at [strategiccoach.com](http://strategiccoach.com), download that, brilliant communication tool, great way to hand off the baton, to let people know what success looks like. This is a key success factor. Gallup has also done studies on this, so make sure you do that. In the newest book that we're finishing, book 39, called Casting, Not Hiring, you'll be able to learn and download the tool called the 4x4. This is how people can focus on their performance of being alert, curious, responsive, and resourceful. The results that you're looking for in terms of being faster, easier, cheaper, and bigger, and results, how they can specifically be a hero to you this quarter with four projects, and probably the most important section, which I also find the most hysterical, is what drives me crazy. This is the third rail of the subway. This is, do not go here, do not step on this, bad things will happen. You could be fabulous in all the other areas, but if you do these four things, we will not enjoy working together anymore. And you probably won't be working together anymore, so stay tuned for that.

And then just really realize that whatever your particular CliftonStrengths mix is, even if you have no relationship strengths in your top 20, that you can still be strategic. You can still, and not in a manipulative way at all, but just recognize that validating people's strengths, identifying is, you're really telling someone how they're creating value for you. You want your clientele to do that for you. You need to know what you're doing for them that's creating value. Why wouldn't we do that for the people back stage? That's how they can create more value for you. This is how habits get created. Positive reinforcement is a thing. Lots of psychological studies about the value of positive reinforcement. So please take advantage. And then people will do



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this even more, which is great. And then another tool is The Communication Builder, and that's a download available from [yourteamsuccess.com](http://yourteamsuccess.com). Great tool to realize how the give and take, you know, whether or not you're a morning person or an afternoon person, best way to give and receive information. What do you need when you're stressed? What have you learned as you compare notes? So this really simple exercise takes about five minutes to fill out on your own. Another five minutes to compare them. Oh my gosh, can eliminate months of pain or years of frustration because you'll understand some things of where you're similar and where you're different. So that very simple exercise can help.

The other thing is just to actually care about the other people. I know this sounds really obvious and maybe trite, but if you look at people as things and cogs in a wheel, again, this conversation will be of no interest to you. But if you look at them as an investment and as a resource that when you pour into them, it can expand and it can elevate and it can add, then you're like, yes, this is a very wise thing to do. So I think there's a huge business reason to do this. But if you're not looking at it that way, if you only see team members as costs, again, this will not land.

Last thing I really want to say about this is another benefit, I guess, and that is that it allows the people that you are giving this type of reflection to, to operate a lot faster with a lot more confidence, which means you are better supported, my friend. This means you will get the results you're looking for. So Katrina and I talk about this all the time. She's my brilliant support partner. And what she was saying today about this topic is that she goes, I can operate so clearly, you know, I don't even tell her what I do. I'm like, we talk about what's the end result that I'm looking for. So it's collaborative. And then I don't tell her how to do it ever. First of all, I don't know how. So that would be really stupid. You know, my talents and strengths are so different slash complementary to hers, that she just knows there's so much trust there. I know she will do a brilliant job. We fine-tuned it. We went through lots of things at the beginning. That was over two and a half years ago now. But we just kind of fine-tuned it. She needed more direction at the beginning. We kind of smoothed out any wrinkles. So we worked on our teamwork. But now it is so fast, so efficient. I'll send her a one-line chat and then boom, it's in the calendar, things are scheduled. I don't know.

There's a whole podcast process. After I do my two little baby steps, which is putting interesting ideas into an Asana board or Trello board, depending on which podcast I'm doing it for, and then filling out my podcast formula sheet and showing up to when I'm supposed to do it, the rest of it gets handled by our fabulous team. I don't know most of those steps. I know some of them. I don't know the timing of them. I know nothing of that, and I don't need to. That's the really great thing. So I get to focus on doing what I love to do and what I'm best at in creating really powerful content, and then the team makes sure it gets delivered in a consistent, high-quality, professional way. I love every second of that. Just recorded a fun podcast with Dan, which is on Inside Strategic Coach, which he said one of the crucial criteria



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for having a Self-Managing Company is the willingness to be completely ignorant, which is really funny and sounds very controversial, but it's knowing that you don't need to know. But that's the high level of trust that happens when you have Unique Ability Teamwork. And that happens by reinforcing what people's strengths are and let people know how they are creating value. What do you really appreciate? What we appreciate goes up in value. So this just makes so much sense.

So, if this is not a message that you've been thinking about lately, I hope it's kind of opened up a few new brain cells for you. If you have a different mindset, I hope it's kind of intrigued you that there might be a new, better, different way. And if this is how you're already operating, thank you. I think you are doing good in the world. I think you're doing good for yourself. I think you're doing good for your team members and your colleagues and your entrepreneur. And I also think that it's actually speeding up business. You are making things happen. You're allowing things to happen without getting in the way. So that speed, that velocity means things are more productive and then more profitable. So I think you're doing, forget good, you're doing great in the world if this is already your mantra. All right, so final message, I just wanted you to be really clear that there's massive value in highlighting your team's strengths from top to bottom. So I hope this conversation has inspired you. I hope it intrigues you. If you have any questions or comments, please let me know at [questions@strategiccoach.com](mailto:questions@strategiccoach.com). And as always, here's to your team's success.