

Embedding Strengths-Based Leadership into Leadership Development Programs

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Abstract

As leaders in business, education, health care, social work, agriculture, and many other fields direct their organizations within the context of constant and rapid change, their use of strengths-based leadership approaches can generate constructive organizational cultures and high levels of innovation, performance, and employee engagement. In contrast, continued use of the vastly more common deficit-based leadership tends to generate defensive organizational cultures and a focus on avoiding blame, maintaining the status quo, and minimizing risk, leading to low morale, low engagement, and mediocre performance. Strengths-based leadership approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry and Authentic Leadership provide leaders with practical ways to change beliefs and attitudes of themselves and others from a deficit paradigm to a strengths paradigm. Those who design and deliver leadership development programs have a moral imperative to help program participants build their strengths-based leadership knowledge and abilities, and can do so not only by teaching strengths-based leadership directly, but also by embedding strengths-based approaches into both program design and learning activities.

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Leadership and change have been linked inextricably in the literature from ancient to contemporary writings, whether leading change in a group, organization, community or society, or helping people maintain the status quo in a changing environment. Today, both scholarly and popular literature emphasize that the rapid pace of change creates the need for agile, flexible organizations. Increasing competitiveness, the push for innovation, and for continuous improvement of goods and service quality drive new

leadership decisions and actions (Gobble, Petrick, & Wright, 2012; Jamrog, Vickers, Overholt, & Morrison, 2008; Jaruzelski & Katzenbach, 2012).

Many research projects have demonstrated correlation between leadership and culture, and between culture and performance and innovation (Allard, 2010; Hartnell, 2012; Jaruzelski & Katzenbach, 2012; Katzenbach, Illona, & Kronley, 2012; Schein, 2010).

Increasingly, researchers have demonstrated the efficacy of strengths-based leadership approaches in building and growing constructive cultures that engender high-performance workforces (Aguinas, Gottfredson, & Joo, 2012; Asplund & Blacksmith, 2012; Cooperrider & Godwin, 2011; Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006; Katzenbach et al., 2012).

Strengths-based leadership has application in many leadership activities and roles, from change leadership and culture change through effective performance management and coaching, to improving employee engagement and fostering strong safety cultures. At the core of strengths-based leadership lies the constructionist philosophy that all people carry within them the need for and desire to generate positive change in themselves, their organizations, and their communities (Ngomane, 2011). Strengths-based leadership, like any leadership approach, is thus founded in relationships between leaders and followers (Carucci, 2006).

Beginning with an introduction to strengths-based leadership and a description of its roots in positive psychology and growth as a field, this chapter incorporates examples of the application of strengths-based leadership in various fields. Attention then turns briefly to two strengths-based leadership approaches (Appreciative Leadership and Authentic Leadership), an examination of the value of strengths-based leadership, and a discussion of the importance and value of including strengths-based leadership into leadership development programs. The chapter ends with some suggestions for various tools and strategies.

What Is Strengths-Based Leadership?

The deficit paradigm. To begin exploring what is strengths-based leadership, it is instructive to examine first what it is not by exploring its opposite: deficit-based leadership and the larger deficit-based paradigm. The deficit paradigm fosters a management philosophy that characterizes managers as problem solvers. Numerous job descriptions and job advertisements identify problem-solving abilities as a key job requirement. As a result, managers tend to focus on finding problems and fixing what is wrong or broken, often at the expense of understanding and leveraging what is right and working (Tombaugh, 2005).

As Cooperrider and McQuaid (2012), and Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, and Rader (2010) found, managers grounded in this deficit-based paradigm often perceive employees as problems to be fixed. This leads to performance discussions that focus on employees' weaknesses and failings (Aguinas et al., 2012; Tombaugh, 2005). In turn, this often creates a Pygmalion effect in which people find what they expect to find (Fiorentino, 2012). Fiorentino stated that asking someone to improve or to fix problems is the same as assigning a deficit-seeking task, resulting in a pervasive negativity to employees' actions. How pervasiveness is this approach? Cooperrider (2008) showed, based on a comprehensive survey, 80 percent of managers and employees around the world believe their strengths are not understood, not appreciated, and not valued.

Fiorentino (2012) emphasized the omnipresence of the deficit-based paradigm beyond organizations, and its saturation in Western societal thinking. Harry and Klingner (2007) described schoolchildren struggling to learn and therefore seen as broken, a theme on which Weiner (2006) also focused. Harris, Brazeau, Clarkson, Brownlee, and Rawana (2012) documented its presence in social work, while Ngomane (2011) wrote of its impact in agriculture. In the late 1990s, Martin Seligman, then president of the American Psychological Association (APA), discovered that almost all the articles published by the APA in the previous fifty years focused on negative psychology and people as broken and needing fixing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Similarly, a decade later, F. Luthans (2002) examined psychology literature and wrote that over

375,000 articles focused on negative emotions and concepts, while just 1,000 focused on the positives.

Cooperrider and Godwin (2011) documented the change in the organizational development field from its positive assumption roots to what they termed a massive industry based on problem-solving interventions and deficit-based change management—interventions to fix broken organizations. In a more lighthearted, but equally telling, vein, Fryer (2004) wrote of the belief of scholars, since Dante’s time, that “the tortures of hell yield more interesting book material than do the blisses of heaven” (p. 22). Even before Dante, mystic, abbess, composer, and author Hildegard von Bingen (1098–1179) earned the wrath of the Constantinian church for stating that the basis of Western spirituality lay in original blessing, not original sin (Hozeski, 1985). Even as late as 1984, Hozeski reported that an article in the *National Catholic Reporter* described von Bingen as a fruitcake!

Robinson (2001) described a worldview of theology that belittles humans as sinners needing redemption, and of perceptions of those who are different as warped and broken. Robinson examined the writings of philosophers such as Marx and Nietzsche and their explorations of the concept of goodness versus badness in Judeo-Christian thinking and drew tentative links to Nazi ideologies of superiority versus inferiority. This echoes Gorski (2010), who wrote of the tendency in education to equate difference with deficit, and of an ideology focused on fixing disenfranchised children rather than the sociopolitical and systemic circumstances (e.g., economic inequities and racism) that generate disenfranchisement. Gorski pointed to outcome inequalities such as standardized test scores that educators rationalize as addressing supposed deficiencies in students.

The impact of deficit-based leadership. The pervasiveness of deficit thinking and the deficit paradigm is clear. Such thinking permeates fields as diverse as education, business, health care, social work, agriculture, psychology, religion, philosophy, and leadership. When Cooperrider and McQuaid (2012) wrote of the majority of the world’s workforce feeling undervalued, they used the term 80:20 deficit bias, or deficit ratio.

They also noted that employees focus 80 percent of their energy on what is not working in an organization, versus just 20 percent on what is working well. When organizational leaders behave within the context of a deficit paradigm, those behaviors affect multiple aspects of organizational culture and practices. These include the following:

- Managers seen as and acting as problem solvers, losing sight of the need to foster innovation and leveraging opportunities.
- Managers focused on fixing inadequate employee performance rather than developing employees' skills.
- Managers and employees disliking performance discussions intensely, primarily because of the general focus on negatives (Heathfield, 2007).
- Managers finding and fixing what is wrong in the organization, resulting in improving things merely to the level of status quo (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2011).
- Overall, this culminates in the Pygmalion effect of managers and leaders expecting to find broken, underperforming employees and employees living up to those expectations (Fiorentino, 2012).

The deficit paradigm affects organizational culture, innovation, critical thinking, employee engagement, employee performance, and more. Words and terms often heard in a deficit-based organization include deficiency, deficit, broken, threats, problems, weakness, failure, low performance, and low morale (Fiorentino, 2012; Ngomane, 2011; Skerrett, 2010; Skrla & Scheurich, 2004; Tombaugh, 2005; Weiner, 2006). Employees, teachers, students, health-care patients, social work program participants, and leaders, surrounded by negativity, respond by creating negative cultures.

That response might be a passive defensive culture, featuring behaviors such as keeping heads down, avoiding making decisions, rejecting accountability, shifting blame, conforming to norms, sticking to often-ineffective rules and procedures, and

management by exception (fighting fires, taking notice of employees only when things go wrong but mostly ignoring them when all is well). It might be an aggressive defensive culture, with characteristic behaviors such as challenging to undermine, exhibiting perfectionistic behaviors, deliberately looking for flaws, perceptions of those who ask for help as weak and flawed, a reliance on quality at the basic, rather than system, level, a focus on short-term over long-term goals, and attempts to be seen as working hard regardless of results. Or it might be a combination of both (Human Synergistics International, 2011). There is a clear relationship between defensive cultures and the deficit paradigm.

The strengths paradigm. In contrast to the deficit paradigm, the strengths paradigm focuses, as Ngomane (2011) indicated, on capitalizing on the inherent drive of people toward positive change. Leaders in strengths-based organizations focus on creating work environments that inspire, energize, and promote learning and openness to growth and positive change. Emphasis shifts to positive from negative, and a focus on what is working well and leveraging it (Tombaugh, 2005). In a deficit-focused organization, one hears words such as deficiencies, deficits, threats, broken, weaknesses, and problems. In a strengths-focused organization, words such as inspiring, building, opportunities, possibilities, engaging, optimism, thriving, and innovation become more common. Leaders focus on developing for performance over merely managing for performance (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; F. Luthans, Youssef, Sweetman, & Harms, 2012; Whitney et al., 2010; Youssef & Luthans, 2007).

Basic strengths approaches are as simple as people demonstrating supportive behaviors, using positive comments, and showing appreciation rather than expressing disapproval, being critical, and assigning blame (Tombaugh, 2005). More advanced strategies involve using tools and practices that foster strengths-based leadership, designing explicitly strengths-based organizations (Cooperrider, 2008), and moving to innovation-focused and positive organizational development over intervention-focused sanctions (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2011).

According to Cooperrider (2008), strengths-based organizations have leaders who focus on combining and amplifying strengths. Positive organizational development, as envisaged by (Cooperrider & Godwin, 2011), features (a) elevating and extending individual and organizational strengths, (b) broadening and building capacity, and (c) establishing the new while eclipsing the old. This builds on the broaden and build model developed by Fredrickson and Losada (2005) in their research into human flourishing. Many authors, working in various fields, have focused on the concept of amplifying strengths (Aguinas et al., 2012; Fryer, 2004; Harry & Klingner, 2007; Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009). Tombaugh (2005) demonstrated improved learning and task performance when people focus on learning from success over learning from failure. As Kriflik and Jones (2002) showed, strengths-based leaders unleash potential in people, facilitating goal achievement and fostering high performance.

It is important to note, however, that the strengths-based paradigm does not ignore the existence of weakness and challenges, even though some popular literature seems to indicate such. As Whitney et al. (2010) discussed, the emphasis is on first recognizing and acknowledging weaknesses and challenges, and then on reframing them as opportunities for growth and innovation. Imagine a baby, learning to walk, and consider how, when the baby falls down, the parents do not assume the child is broken or deficient. Instead, they pick the baby up, hug her, and encourage her to keep trying and learning. They cheer when the baby stands in wobbly balance for a few seconds, proudly send photos and video clips to grandparents, friends, and anyone else who will watch when those first steps happen. They act as though their baby is the first to ever achieve such performance and radiate pride. Just a few years later, in school, the child starts to learn to operate in a deficit-based world.

The impact of strengths-based leadership. Harris et al. (2012) described the difference clients displayed in a youth substance abuse program when program leaders took a strengths-based approach. The young people began to recognize and focus on their individual strengths and see themselves as worthwhile people with a positive future. Jenson, Petri, Day, and Truman (2011), Weiner (2006), and Wisner (2011)

demonstrated changes in student engagement and learning in positive education environments. Gottlieb, Gottlieb, and Shamian (2012) and Skerrett (2010) pointed to positive change in both nurses and patients following the use of strengths-based approaches to nursing.

In strengths-based organizations, people are focused on:

- leveraging strengths,
- pursuing opportunity,
- generating innovation,
- developing themselves and others,
- building hope and optimism,
- moving beyond the status quo to high performance, and
- enabling, empowering, and engaging.

This creates a different environment that generates a different culture than the defensive cultures earlier described. Far more likely is a constructive culture, featuring behaviors such as setting challenging, albeit realistic, goals and enthusiastic pursuit of those goals, fostering creativity, nurturing quality over quantity, engaging in supportive and constructive interactions with others, focusing on developing self and others, cooperating and collaborating, and empowering leadership (Human Synergetics International, 2011).

The cautions of a strengths-based approach. Like all effective strategies, strengths-based leadership is neither perfect nor a panacea. For example, managers often overuse their strengths, as Kaiser and Overfield (2011) found, identifying a strong correlation between the presence of a strength and its overuse. A manager who is adept at making quick decisions, for example, may not take needed time to analyze situations or seek input from others. In contrast, collaborative decision making may be a strength for a particular leader, for example, but become a weakness if she tries to collaborate

and consult when the situation calls for immediate and decisive action. That is, overuse of strengths may lessen the use of opposing but complementary behaviors. Strengths-based leadership, or leading from strengths, requires a balanced approach and an understanding of when to use one's strengths and when to focus on less strong behaviors.

Positive Psychology: The Roots of the Strengths-Based Paradigm and Strengths-Based Leadership

Strengths-based leadership grew from the field of positive psychology. While Maslow (1954) appears to have been the first to use the term, Seligman brought it to prominence. President of the American Psychological Association in the early 1990s, Seligman began to study the change in focus of psychology over the previous fifty years, discovering that over 95 percent of research in that time had focused on the disease model (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi contended that psychology had, since World War II, become a science of healing, focused on pathology and repairing damage, with little attention on fulfilling human functioning and thriving communities. A decade later, F. Luthans (2002) reported that he had found over 375,000 psychology articles that focused on negative emotions and just 1,000 that focused on positive concepts.

Positive psychology involves studying the conditions in which people flourish and achieve optimal functioning as individuals and in groups and organizations (Gable & Haidt, 2005). As F. Luthans (2002) wrote, in positive psychology the emphasis moves from what is wrong with people to what is right. That is, to a focus on strengths and resilience, and developing wellness and prosperity, not merely curing pathology. Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) wrote of positive psychology as centering on subjective experiences such as contentment and satisfaction with the past, happiness and flow in the present, and optimism and hope about the future. They also emphasized that positive psychology addresses both individual and group levels, with the latter about community value, citizenship, work ethic, and responsibility. F. Luthans (2002)

also stressed the scientific base of positive psychology in research and sound theory compared to popular positive approaches.

Positive psychology also gave rise to positive organizational psychology and positive organizational behavior. Positive organizational psychology is the study of positive organizations and organizational dynamics that lead to development of human strengths (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). That is, the focus at the individual level is on factors such as employee flourishing and resilience, and at the organizational level on employee and organizational performance.

There are similarities between positive organizational psychology and positive organizational behavior. Bakker and Schufeli (2008) differentiated between the two, noting that the former has a positive organization perspective while the latter has a positive individual perspective. F. Luthans (2002) saw positive organizational behavior as more functional, emphasizing measurable and management performance impact.

A fourth field of study growing out of positive psychology is that of psychological capital. Again, with a heavy emphasis on individual well-being, psychological capital refers to fostering positive constructs of hope, resilience, optimism, efficacy, and happiness.

According to F. Luthans et al. (2012), strong levels of positivity in an individual's predispositions, memories, goals, and motivations amplify the impact of positive events on that individual and cushions the impact of negative events. In addition to studying psychological capital in workplace settings, Luthans has also explored its relationship to effective student behaviors and performance (B. C. Luthans, Luthans, & Jensen, 2012), as has Wisner (2008). Avey, Patera, and West (2006) demonstrated that strong levels of psychological capital reduced both voluntary and involuntary employee absenteeism.

Research in all these areas of positive psychology, positive organizational psychology, positive organizational behavior, and psychological capital has demonstrated the relationship between positive human functioning and employee performance (Legier, 2007; F. Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2006), student achievement (Boniwell & Ryan, 2012; Eisenman, Barnhill, & Riley, 2013; Jenson et al., 2011), and nursing effectiveness

and patient health (Skerrett, 2010; Tumerman & Carlson, 2012). Other researchers have shown similar relationships in the fields of agriculture (Ngomane, 2011), organizational development (Cooperrider & Sekerka, 2006), finance (Cilliers, 2011), social work (Harris et al., 2012), and health care (Boerner & Dutschke, 2008).

If leaders in businesses, schools, hospitals, and other organizations focused rigorously on seeking and developing the best in both individuals and organizations, and on what Cooperrider and Godwin (2011) described as opportunity-rich systems, they are more likely to generate high levels of engagement, performance, and achievement. What approaches, then, can leaders take? Two leadership models rooted in positive psychology are Appreciative Leadership and Authentic Leadership.

Appreciative Inquiry and Appreciative Leadership

Appreciative inquiry takes a collaborative, participative, and system-wide approach to seeking, identifying, and enhancing the positive, or life-giving forces that are present when human performance is optimal (Elleven, 2007). It involves using a process of inquiry and dialog to generate positive change in organizations. That is, people ask questions and envision a desired future together, building constructive relationships that leverage the potential inherent in individuals, organizations, or situations (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012; Walker & Carr-Stewart, 2004).

The core process of appreciative inquiry features four phases, often referenced as the four Ds. First, discovering what works well in the organization, and second, dreaming, or envisioning, what could be, what could work well in the future. The third and fourth phases turn vision into application, with the third phase focusing on design, on planning and developing the desired future, while the fourth phase is the destiny, or the implementation of the design needed to achieve the vision.

Relationships are at the heart of appreciative inquiry as they are of appreciative leadership, a leadership approach founded on the principles of appreciative inquiry. Whitney et.al. (2010) defined appreciative leadership as: “The relational capacity to mobilize creative potential and turn it into positive power—to set in motion positive

ripples of confidence, energy, enthusiasm, and performance—to make a positive difference in the world” (p. 3). Mantel and Ludema (2004) noted the role of conversations in those relationships, writing of language as the tool for developing appreciative leadership in organizations as they described generating sustainable positive change in an organization using both appreciative inquiry and appreciative leadership.

Mantel and Ludema (2004) have built on the appreciative concept, writing about appreciative organizational design. They described four stages of creating a rich organizational vision through collaborative processes, coupled with developing appreciative leadership skills. Mantel and Ludema focused on creating an inclusive organizational structure and leading across boundaries within that structure to create shared meaning, a common purpose, and common principles, and on continual inquiry. That is, they embedded the concepts of appreciative inquiry and leadership into the ongoing cycles of organizational operations, creating synergy between strategy creation, learning, and results generation.

Authentic Leadership

Equally rooted in positive psychology, authentic leadership builds particularly on the concepts of psychological capital. Authentic leaders exhibit confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience, and are transparent, ethical, and future-oriented. Authentic leaders place great emphasis on developing others as leaders, and use their own values, beliefs, and behaviors to model good leadership (F. Luthans & Avolio, 2003). In the field of education, Begley (2001) saw authentic leadership as a metaphor; specifically, a symbol of “professionally effective, ethically sound, and consciously reflective practices in educational administration. This is leadership that is knowledge based, values informed, and skillfully executed” (p. 353).

Authentic leaders, then, are consistent, lead with purpose and values, and have integrity. They build strong relationships based on their values, and are aware of their own and others’ strengths (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). They

promote positive and ethical cultures, foster self-awareness and moral perspectives, and encourage balanced approaches to processing information, as well as developing relational transparency (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Authentic leadership is thus more about how a leader thinks and behaves than about a process or framework for action.

Principles of Strengths-Based Leadership

It should be clear, then, that strengths-based leadership is neither a model nor a framework, but rather an overall concept of leadership based on recognizing and leveraging the strengths of self and others. There are many ways to exhibit strengths-based leadership, and it can appear in many guises, in multiple and varied fields. There have, however, been efforts to express strengths-based leadership in a more practical way. For example, Gottlieb et al. (2012) identified eight strengths-based leadership principles:

- working with the whole,
- recognizing the uniqueness of each individual,
- creating healthy workplace environments—to develop rather than manage employees,
- helping people create meaning,
- valuing self-determination,
- recognizing integration of person and environment,
- promoting learning, and
- building effective, collaborative partnerships, negotiated goals, shared power, and mutual respect.

Incorporating strengths-based leadership into leadership development programs. Fryer (2004) wrote that a positive workplace may be the basis for organizational success, noting that organizations in which leaders amplify positive

characteristics such as resilience, optimism, humility, and compassion tend to generate better organizational performance. Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) suggested that increasing the leadership skills of a principal by one standard deviation (50th to 84th percentile) could increase student achievement by up to 22 percentile points. As discussed above, other researchers have shown the positive impact of strengths-based leadership in fields as diverse as health care, social work, and agriculture.

Business leaders often talk of strategic imperatives. A strategic imperative of any leadership development program today must be on developing leaders adept at leading change, not just managing it, change, fostering workforce success, building constructive and empowering cultures, and engaging employees in innovative approaches to meeting client needs. These leaders must be able to lead across boundaries and hierarchies, build effective relationships, and enable others to become high performers with a strong customer focus. As the discussion shows, deficit-based leadership cannot create the organizational cultures and environments needed, requiring leadership programs to build strengths-based leadership capabilities.

Extrapolating the thought of Fryer (2004) about positive workplaces to program environments, a leadership development program rooted in positive constructs is more likely to engage participants in their learning and empower them to become the strengths-based leaders needed in their organizations today and in the future.

One place to start when considering how to embed strengths-based leadership into programs lies in the principles described by Gottlieb et al. (2012). Many programs do, indeed, work with the whole while recognizing the uniqueness of each individual, yet there are still programs that take a narrower approach with little opportunity for participants to explore leadership within the context of their own lives and experiences and to recognize the integral nature of person and environment. Programs that help participants to create their own meaning about leadership (their own and that of others) and foster self-determination of leadership goals and dreams promote learning about self and leadership. Incorporating ample opportunity for building effective and collaborative partnerships within program assignments provides practice in negotiating

goals, sharing power, and building mutual respect. That is, the fundamental design of a leadership development program should reflect strengths-based approaches.

At a programming level, programs could include courses on strengths-based leadership and building awareness of various strengths-based leadership approaches. This could include a foundation course that fosters exploration of positive psychology, positive organizational psychology, positive organizational behavior, and positive organizational development. As program participants discover the power inherent in strengths-based approaches, they can learn about its multidimensional application possibilities. These range from linking strengths-based leadership to sustainability, to citizenship (in terms of community development), and to student achievement in educational leadership.

At a practical level, many programs include exercises in which participants identify strengths, weaknesses, and challenges in a particular leadership area and then create a plan for development, but fail to create the overt link of leveraging strengths to address those challenges. How can leaders leverage strengths in others and reframe challenges as opportunities without understanding how to build on their own strengths? Helping people recognize and understand their strengths constitutes a fundamental aspect of strengths-based leadership. An additional element could be to include self-assessment strengths-based profiles into the program, giving participants the opportunity for deep reflection as well as exposing them to practical tools they can subsequently use in their workplaces.

Further, courses often include assignments in which students assess leadership capabilities in their home organizations and identify opportunities for growth. Many such exercises have an inherent focus on negativity—what is not working and what needs to be fixed. Including an element in which students assess the direct relationship between leadership strengths and organizational success could generate a different mindset, one that focuses on positivity ratios instead of negativity ratios (Cooperrider & McQuaid, 2012) and provide a basis for then assessing strengths-based leadership capabilities in the organizations.

Courses on strategic planning could introduce the strengths-based SOAR framework as a strategic tool to compare and contrast to SWOT. SOAR, founded in appreciative inquiry, stands for Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results, enabling participants to look beyond the limited analysis level promoted by SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). This could lead to participants developing strengths-based strategic models for their organizations. Similarly, introducing strengths-based approaches into courses on project management, coaching, organizational design, and change leadership could enable students to compare such approaches with more traditional deficit-based approaches and understand the power inherent in strengths-based leadership.

Appreciative inquiry, in particular, used at a personal level at the beginning of a program, would help students to explore their own goals and dreams for the program while introducing them to the appreciative concept and the appreciative inquiry framework. Later in the program, students could then use appreciative inquiry in relation to their thesis work, and translate that learning to the leadership of their organizations.

Conclusion

The deficit paradigm and deficit-based leadership no longer supports and generates organizational success in a world that demands high performance from all employees. Today's employees are engaged actively in continual improvement, learning, and innovation, and have a constant focus on positive change, and the strengths paradigm and strengths-based leadership provide a solid foundation for such success. Leadership development programs must, therefore, focus on building strengths-based leadership skills as well as reflect strengths-based approaches and positive change in their design and delivery.

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