

# When Strengths Run Amok

Rob Kaiser  
Bob Kaplan

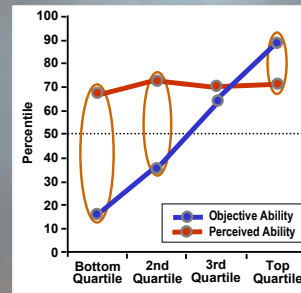
KAPLAN DeVRIES INC.

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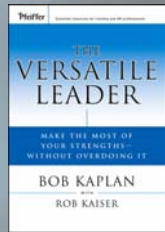
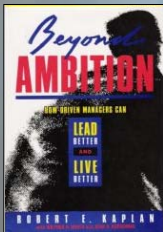
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## Competence & Awareness



Kruger & Dunning (1999). Unskilled and unaware of it.  
*Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*

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## Rating Agreement

### Over-raters

Weakest performers,  
most likely to derail

### Under-raters

Learners; highest  
performers and most  
likely to be promoted



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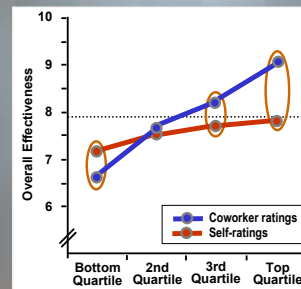
## Few managers know their strengths

"Most Americans do not know what their strengths are. When you ask them, they look at you with a blank stare."

- Peter Drucker

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## Talented & Unaware



"Rate this leader's overall effectiveness on a scale from 1 to 10, where 5 is adequate and 10 is outstanding."

N = 421 senior managers

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Hey, Rocky, watch me pull a rabbit out of my hat.

Again?! But that trick never works.

This time for sure. Nothing up my sleeves. Presto!

Hmmm... guess I don't know my own strength!

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### Overkill is Real

Percentage rated "too much" by coworkers

Forceful 38%	Enabling 12%
Strategic 4%	Operational 11%

**55%**  
rated "too much" on one or more dimension

N = 421 senior managers

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## Not knowing their strengths, they're liable to go overboard

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### Self-awareness

Percentage of self-raters who agree they do "too much"

Forceful <b>64%</b>	Enabling <b>40%</b>
Strategic <b>65%</b>	Operational <b>28%</b>

**47%**  
of over-doers don't realize they overdo it

N = 421 senior managers

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### Leadership Versatility Index 360

← Too little — The right amount — Too much →

0 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4

Much too little Barely too little Barely too much Much too much

<b>Forceful</b> <i>exercising power and authority to push for performance</i>	<b>Enabling</b> <i>creating conditions for other people to be influential and contribute</i>
<b>Strategic</b> <i>positioning the organization to be competitive in the future</i>	<b>Operational</b> <i>focusing the organization to get results in the near term</i>

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### John Sample

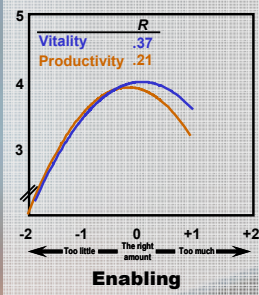
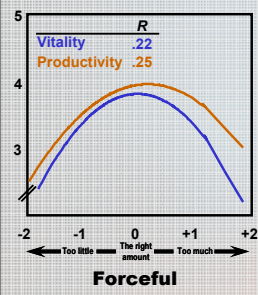
Top 5 Signature Strengths

← Too little — The right amount — Too much →

SELF-ASSURANCE	ACTIVATOR	ACHIEVER	FOCUS	COMMAND
		Forceful	Oper'l	

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## Cost of Overkill

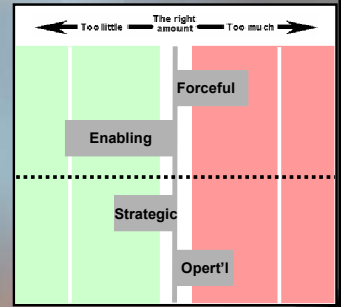


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## John Sample

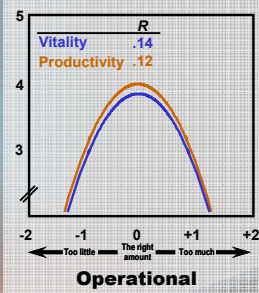
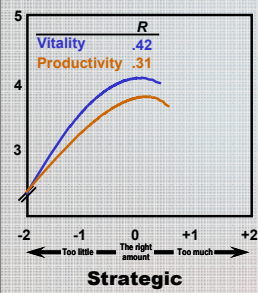
Top 5 Signature Strengths

**SELF-ASSURANCE  
ACTIVATOR  
ACHIEVER  
FOCUS  
COMMAND**



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## Cost of Overkill



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## Lopsided Leadership

Of the senior managers who do "too much"...

Forceful...	97% do "too little" Enabling
Enabling...	86% do "too little" Forceful
Strategic...	67% do "too little" Operational
Operational...	94% do "too little" Strategic

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**Overused strengths crowd out the other side**

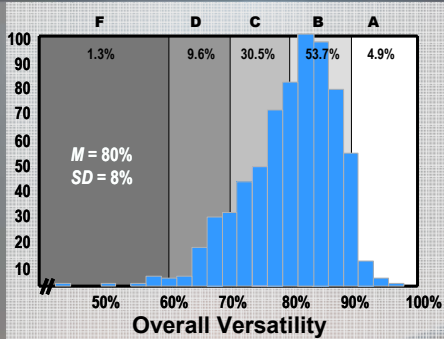


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## Versatility

*...a full range of motion; able to freely use opposing approaches, unrestricted by bias in favor of some and avoidance of others.*

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N = 669 senior managers

## What can be done about strengths run amok?

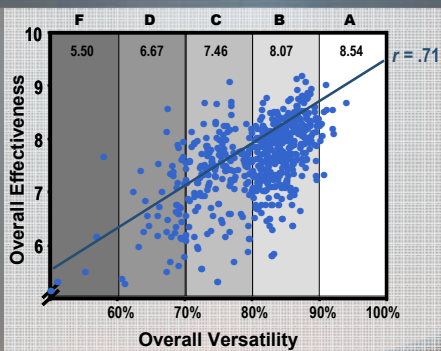
### Correlations with Versatility

	<i>r</i>
Team Productivity	.42
Team Vitality	.66
Perceived effectiveness	.71

### In Practice

What can coaches do?

What can the field do?



N = 669 senior managers

### What Coaches are Up Against

Two blindspots and a misconception



## What Coaches Can Do

### Two Remedies

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## What the Field Can Do

### Two Recommendations

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### Remedy #1

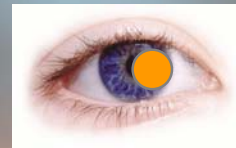
Administer positive feedback,  
plenty of it.



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### The Problem

A big blindspot in how  
managers are assessed  
and developed



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### Remedy #2

Use counterweights.



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### Recommendation #1

Make a place for  
strengths overused.



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## Recommendation #2

Put a focus  
on lopsidedness.



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