



ZENGER | FOLKMAN

# 5 INSIGHTS

ON HOW  
EXTRAORDINARY  
LEADERS ARE MADE

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# introduction

**“The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short, but in setting our aim too low and achieving our mark.”**

- Michaelangelo

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While the vast majority of leaders began their careers with the target of being a good accountant, engineer, marketer, or analyst, few set their sights on being an extraordinary leader.

In every study we have conducted where we measured any dimension of organizational effectiveness, there has been a strong correlation between that measure and their leaders' effectiveness.

# 1 effective leaders orchestrate their own development

Organizations cannot do it. Gurus do not make it happen. Individuals must do it for themselves.

There's a significant difference between “ordinary” and “extraordinary” leadership.

One study with over 100,000 leaders shows the relationship between leadership effectiveness and employee engagement.



## 1

There is a dramatic difference in the results produced by poor leaders vs. extraordinary leaders.

## 2

Poor leaders profoundly diminish the performance of groups they attempt to lead.

## 3

Leaders at the 90th percentile and above have a stunning impact on various measures of performance.

# 2 developing your strengths has the highest payoff

## What is a STRENGTH?

- Something you do well.
- It can be used in a wide variety of situations.
- Its effects last over time.
- It results from a natural ability or intensive practice and effort.
- A skill scored at the 90th percentile.

A focus on strengths leads to greater gains and is a pattern for growth that can be easily maintained over time. Plus, it's more fun.



The effect of strengths on overall leadership effectiveness.

0

STRENGTHS:  
34th percentile

1

STRENGTH:  
64th percentile

3

STRENGTHS:  
81st percentile

## Who should focus on STRENGTHS?

20%

of leaders have fatal flaws or behaviors that significantly detract from their performance.

80%

of leaders (who don't possess fatal flaws) should magnify their strengths to become extraordinary.

# 3 focus on building differentiating behaviors

QUESTION: Which leadership behaviors really make the biggest difference?

RESEARCH: All vital and differentiating leadership behaviors can be grouped into five clusters.



- |                                  |                           |                               |                            |                                |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Integrity and Honesty            | Learning Agility          | Makes Decisions               | Builds Relationships       | Develops Strategic Perspective |
| Technical/ Professional Acumen   | Drives for Results        | Takes Risks                   | Develops Others            | Champions Change               |
| Solves Problems/ Analyzes Issues | Establishes Stretch Goals | Communicates Powerfully       | Collaboration and Teamwork | Customer and External Focus    |
| Innovates                        | Takes Initiative          | Inspires and Motivates Others | Values Diversity           |                                |



These are the leadership behaviors on which most leaders should focus their development. Varying combinations of these behaviors are the **DNA of effective leadership.**

# 4 multiple pathways are the key to progress

How can you improve upon any skill? Cross-train.

Do what the athletes do...

The athlete who aspires to be great at football, doesn't just play football.

They engage in running, weight lifting, and even ballet to improve their footwork

These behaviors have been shown to be highly correlated, even though the link may not be totally obvious at first.



Every **STRENGTH** has statistically correlated behaviors that we call **STRENGTH BUILDERS**.



These “strength-building” behaviors provide a more extensive series of options for development.

cross-training

# 5

# extraordinary leadership requires new behavior

# feedback

## Highlight 1

Leaders must create new habits and mindsets. Observable change happens over time as new behaviors are adopted.

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## Highlight 2

Leadership is not gained in a one-day program but rather a process that lasts throughout a participant's career and can be incorporated into their lifestyle.

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## Highlight 3

New behaviors are built by ongoing development experiences, active development plans, buddy systems or support groups, coaching, mentorships, reminders, and follow-up 360s to measure progress.

### **QUICK TIP: Ask for Feedback**

Research from 100,000+ leaders shows that leaders who ask for feedback are perceived more positively than those who are simply good at giving feedback.

Feedback is the most instructive tool to help individuals understand others' perceptions of themselves.

# conclusion

Most organizations as a whole, along with the people in them, have untapped potential.

We chose the word “extraordinary” to describe the best leaders. Leaders who are driven to achieve exceptional results. They are not perfect. They have weaknesses. But they become “extraordinary” in the ways they utilize their own strengths and build up the strengths of others.

# 1

## [Visit our Website](#)

Learn more about our research and approach to developing extraordinary leaders.

# 2

## [Attend an Event](#)

Participate in *The Extraordinary Leader* Development Experience at one of our public events.

# 3

## [Schedule a Call](#)

We look forward to answering your questions and discussing how to bring *The Extraordinary Leader* into your organization.