

In a class called Leadership Centre County, it was only a matter of time until we had a day that revolved around building leadership skills. It started out exactly as I thought it would, as we analyzed the results of a personality test that we took at the behest of Paul Hilt, our morning presenter. We learned more about some of the strengths that we possessed, and examined how our strengths came into play with past challenges we had gone through. It was illuminating to see how our strengths connected in ways we did not expect.

About a half hour into what was already an interesting session, all expectations I had for a typical “leadership” day evaporated as we were pointed to a quote by Peter Drucker hanging in the room: “Leadership is the ability to align strengths toward a goal or vision in such a way that weaknesses are irrelevant.”

I do not know why, at some points in life, a simple quote can impact us so much, but at that point, as I looked around at over 40 classmates who were committed to the future of our county, I realized that we each had all of the strengths we would ever need to make a difference wherever we chose, and the weaknesses truly didn’t matter. It is instead how each of us uses our strengths that defines us. That epiphany came to life in the next exercise.

Paul had us partner up and apply our strengths to a real life scenario we expected to go through in the near term. My partner had a situation that I realized my strengths would be ideal to solve. Her survey results indicated that she only had one of my strengths though! As she began to describe the steps she was going to take to overcome her challenge in the future, my epiphany of a few minutes ago showed me that she was going to be successful with this and in everything she set her mind to. She did not focus on strengths she did not have. She used the strengths she had and went with it!

This valuable life lesson taught me so much, because for so long I have always had the image of a typical leader: charismatic, bold, quick, decisive, and *no weaknesses*. The reality is that a good leader is no different than you or I: they all have different strengths and different weaknesses, but their leadership is distinctive because they use their strengths in such a way that their weaknesses become irrelevant.

Consider this bit of math before I move on: the survey we took only revealed 5 of the 34 strengths listed in the Strengths Finder 2.0 book. The odds of two class members having the exact same set of strengths is 1 in 34 *million*. How many of us have more than five? Nearly all of us do, and in varying measures! If we were to list just 6 of the 34 strengths listed in the book, the odds balloon to 1 in 968 *million*. Add a few more strengths, and it becomes mathematically impossible to assume that we have the exact same strengths as someone else.

The long and short of this math, if I did not make you stop reading, is that we all have different sets of strengths, and are quite unique in how we apply them. If you get dismayed because you do not think you have what it takes to be a leader, it is because you are focusing too much on your weaknesses, and not enough on what you can do with your strengths to make a difference. Don’t wait until you are “prepared” enough to make a difference. The truth is that you already are.

Submitted by Jason Penland, Quality Supervisor for Sutherland Global Logistics, and member of the Leadership Centre County Class of 2016. To learn more about Leadership Centre County, go to www.leadershipcentrecounty.org.