

# Play to Your Strengths

Adapted from the book *Next Generation Leader* by Andy Stanley.

It is natural for new leaders to try to prove themselves by doing everything themselves. It is natural because, as a leader, you want to set the pace. You also want to demonstrate that nothing is beneath you. But what may initially be natural and necessary will ultimately limit your effectiveness.

1. The less you do, the more you accomplish.
2. The less you do, the more you enable others to accomplish.

## It boils down to this: Only do what *only* you can do.

This might seem unrealistic from where you are today. You might even be laughing out loud right now. But, write it down and work toward it.

- Of the two or three things that define success for you, which of those are in line with your giftedness?
- Of the tasks you have been assigned to do, which of them are you specifically gifted to do?

That is where you must focus your energies. You must play to your strengths.

There are five primary obstacles that keep a leader from adopting this way of thinking.

### The quest for balance

Being a well-rounded leader looks good on paper and sounds compelling, but in reality, it is an unworthy endeavor. Read the biographies of the achievers in any arena of life. You will find that these were not “well-rounded” leaders. They were men and women of focus. Don’t strive to be a well-rounded leader. Instead, discover your zone and stay there. Delegate everything else.

### Failure to distinguish between authority and competence

Every leader has authority over arenas in which she has little or no competence. When we exert our authority in an area where we lack competence, we can derail projects and demotivate those who have the skills we lack.

### Inability to distinguish between competencies and non-competencies

Successful leaders tend to assume that their core competencies are broader than they actually are. Worse, the more successful an individual is, the less likely it is anyone will bring this fact to her attention. Consequently, a leader considered an expert in one area is often treated as an expert in others as well. Many leaders believe to admit weakness diminishes their effectiveness. FACT: When you acknowledge your weaknesses to the rest of your team, it is never new information.

## **Guilt**

Some leaders feel guilty delegating their weaknesses. Perhaps you assume everyone hates to do the things you hate to do. In reality, thoughtful delegation will allow someone else in your organization to shine. Your weakness is someone's opportunity.

## **Unwillingness to develop other leaders.**

Sometimes it really is easier and less time-consuming to do things yourself than to train someone else. But leadership is not always about getting things done "right." Leadership is about getting things done through other people. Great leaders work through other leaders, who work through other leaders, etc. When a leader can't find someone to hand things off to, it is time for him to look in the mirror. We must never forget that the people who follow us are exactly where we have led them.