

When executives fail: The hampering effects of strengths and success

Excerpt of the article „Wenn Führungskräfte scheitern: Wie Stärken und Erfolge zum Hemmschuh werden können“ by Caroline Cerar

Orientation on strengths is a widely used concept in management. However, there is also a dark side of personal strengths, which can bring along negative effects in the leadership context. A very visionary, imaginative and excitable person can have a strongly motivating and mobilizing effect on the people in the organization. However, when under pressure, the same executive could react with emotional outbursts, if things do not go the way he or she wants. This can hamper his or her leadership success long term.

Capitalizing on strengths and learning from success makes sense. However, the same strength can render short term positive effects in leadership, however, hamper the executive's effectiveness long term. Executives can however counteract such effects early enough:

1. **Broadening self-awareness:** Get to know oneself better
2. **Strengthening the competence to change:** Learn how to change yourself
3. **Broadening the behavior set:** Flexible use of one's own strengths

Optimal leadership is not in the extreme, but in the use of a larger set of behaviors and their selective use according to the situation. This is why it is important to enrich one's own behavior set.

There are 3 tips for managers who would like to change one or the other element in their leadership behavior:

1. **Postponement of the immediate reaction:** Learn to postpone answers or reactions for a short period. In this way, it will be more likely that one will apply the new behavior instead of reactively falling into an old behavior pattern.
2. **Experimenting with the larger behavior set:** Learn to make situational use of a larger set of behaviors.
3. **Do not give up – Continue!**

MMag. Caroline Cerar

*Psychological Counselor and Coach for Executives &
Managing Director – Management Counterparts*