

## **Student Leadership Program Knowledge Community Literature Review**

Rath, T., & Conchie, B. (2008). *Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams and why people follow*. NY: Gallup Press.

### **Synopsis**

This purpose of *Strengths Based Leadership* is to add to the literature on the Strengths movement, and specifically address how Strengths can be used to build on a person's leadership abilities. Rath and Conchie identify three keys to being an effective leader: knowing your strengths and investing in others' strengths, getting people with the right combination of strengths on your team, and understanding the basic needs of followers. With these three areas as a framework, Rath and Conchie use the 34 signature themes from the StrengthsFinder assessment to create four domains of leadership. These domains are Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking. Rath and Conchie use these four domains to show how the Strengths that fit into these domains can be used to be an effective leader. The authors explain that teams that are most effective have each of the four domains represented among its members. The executing domain is defined as the ability to get things done. The Influencing domain is the domain that allows people to get support for their ideas. The Relationship Building domain includes the skills to develop connections between and among group members. The Strategic Thinking domain is defined as those in the group who keep the group focused on the task at hand.

The authors propose that followers in groups have four basic needs: trust, compassion, stability, and hope. It is explained that when these needs are met, people are more likely to follow and be loyal to the leader.

As with other Gallup Press books on Strengths, the authors provide resources as to how each of the 34 StrengthsFinder themes can be used in a leadership role. In addition, the authors list ways in which leaders build leadership with people who have different themes than the leader personally has.

### **Usage**

This book would be best used to enhance Strengths development. To be really useful, it would help if groups have previously taken the StrengthsFinder assessment. The resources provided in the book can be used to help leaders better understand their strengths and better understand group dynamics. This book can also be used for leadership development purposes, especially in terms of understanding why people follow.

### **Level**

This book can be used on a variety of different levels. It would be a better fit for students who are more experienced in their leadership such as upperclassmen or

graduate students.. This book would also be quite helpful for leadership educators and student organization advisors.

### **Critique**

This book is a fairly quick read, and includes a decent amount of information about Strength based leadership. The authors write in a fairly concise style. While the authors do a decent job of explaining the concepts, it would be beneficial if more information and examples of how to use the information were provided. If the reader does not have a previous knowledge of Strengths, this book may not be the best resource. This book could be a better resource if it provided more insight into how this can be applied to develop leadership. The authors do a good job of describing content, but don't really get into the applicability of it.

### **Rating**

If you have interests in Strengths, this book would be a 4 out of 5. Overall however, this book gets a 3 out of 5.

Reviewed by: AJ Stamaski, Texas A&M University