
Team Members Strengths and Areas for Development

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READING ASSIGNMENT

Supervisors need to know their team members' strengths and weaknesses. *Strengths* are skills or tasks at which people excel. *Weaknesses* are skills or tasks people need to improve upon.

Knowing team members' weaknesses allows you to help them improve. It also helps you avoid asking them to complete tasks they can't do yet. Knowing team members' strengths allows you to use them where they can achieve the best results. It also allows you to improve on those strengths.



Knowing your team members' strengths can help your team reach its goals.

Learning Strengths and Weaknesses

As a supervisor, you can use assessment tools to learn an employee's strengths and weaknesses. These tools may assess a variety of areas:

- **An employee's technical skills.** Tools that assess technical skills let you see if a person can do certain tasks. For example, production supervisors must know if an employee can operate production equipment. Warehouse supervisors must know if a team member can use a forklift. Field maintenance supervisors must know if a worker can fix certain heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment. By assessing an employee's technical skills, you can properly assign workers and provide any needed training.
- **An employee's soft skills.** Tools that assess soft skills may look at how well workers communicate or how well they adapt to change. These skills are also critical for good performance. Employees who can't communicate well may create confusion. By contrast, workers with leadership skills may be great team leaders.
- **An employee's personality traits.** Tools that assess personality traits may look at how assertive or emotionally intelligent someone is. This information can help supervisors build teams that work together better.

Tools that assess an employee's strengths and weaknesses can be used by the human resources department or the hiring supervisor. They may also be used during the hiring process or after employees are hired to help them improve their performance.

A supervisor also needs to regularly observe employee performance. By watching employees at work, you can see where they excel and where they need to improve. For example, an employee who doesn't follow safety procedures may need more training. By contrast, an employee who beats productivity goals

may need to move to a new team or share a new technique. By looking at employees' safety, accuracy, quality, and productivity, you can find their strengths and weaknesses on the job.

Another technique to detect strengths and weaknesses involves comparing employee performance. If nine out of ten employees can meet a quality standard—but one can't—then the employee has a weakness you need to address. Conducting performance reviews also allows supervisors to assess strengths and weaknesses. Data in performance reviews can help you give employees opportunities to advance or develop missing skills.

EMPLOYEE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Learning an employee's strengths and weaknesses takes effort. Learn more about how finding employee strengths & weaknesses can help you make the best use of workers' strengths and improve their weaknesses.

Developing Employees

Part of your role as a supervisor is developing employees. When you develop employees, you help them build on their strengths and improve their weaknesses. This includes training and performance reviews. These tools allow you to interact with workers and know them better.



Work with your employees to develop their strengths and improve any weaknesses.

Training and development can happen in many ways. In on-the-job training (OTJ), employees work and learn at the same time. More formal methods of development include one-on-one interviews and 360-degree feedback. You should identify the methods that will best help you find your employees' strengths and challenge areas.

On the Job Training

The most common method for developing new employees is *on-the-job training (OJT)*. In OJT, an experienced worker mentors a new employee and explains processes and procedures. OJT has its advantages. It's a low-cost method and learning can easily be transferred to job tasks. When done well, OJT is the fastest and most effective means of learning in the workplace. Other frequently used methods are:

- Orientation training where new hires are introduced to the company's culture, standards, and goals.
- Classroom training that includes lectures, videos, and simulations of work conditions.
- Self-directed learning using books, manuals, or standard operating procedures (SOPs). These tools present the instruction in an organized and logical sequence. Employees often must answer quiz questions once they finish the material.

- Computer-based training, computer-assisted instruction, web-based training, and tele-training. These tools allow employees to work at their own pace. These tools individualize the instruction and provide opportunities to be interactive. Even complex information can be communicated well in these formats.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING VALUE

Though OJT can take time to set up, it is an effective way to train workers. Read [How On-the-Job Training Brings You Value](#) to find out how to use OJT to your best advantage.

Employee One-on-Ones

You can also use employee one-on-one meetings to develop employees. Many people think employee one-on-ones are the same as annual reviews. However, an employee one-on-one is simply a time when you talk with an employee face to face.

Employees shouldn't have to wait for their annual review to get feedback on their job performance. If anything, the annual review should be a quick rehash of conversations you've had with them during the year. In other words, there should be no surprises that come up from either person during an annual review.

It's always best to talk with an employee about an incident when it happens. This is true for both positive and negative events. For example, let's say you have an employee who has been struggling to meet production quotas on a new piece of machinery. When the person finally hits the quota, you want to congratulate right away to show your appreciation. Likewise, if the person fails to follow proper safety procedures, you want to correct the issue right away. Each employee will do many positive and negative things during the year, and you should talk with them about each one.

Any feedback you give an employee should always be constructive. This means the purpose of the feedback is to reinforce or correct behavior. Feedback should never be personal or manipulate a person's emotions.

Not all performance conversations need to be formal, documented, sit-down reviews. However, you should keep a journal of discussions you've had with workers. You can then use this journal to ensure their annual reviews are accurate and useful. The journal is also a good reference if there are questions or concerns about a review rating. However, this should be an unlikely issue if you're having the proper one-on-one conversations throughout the year.

360-Degree Feedback

Another employee development tool is *360-degree feedback*. In 360-degree feedback, an employee rates his or her own performance and is also rated by many others. Those giving the ratings may include supervisors, peers, and internal and external customers. The goal of 360-degree feedback is to give performance feedback from many perspectives.

EXAMPLE OF 360-DEGREE FEEDBACK

A finisher packager's feedback might come from the loader who loads the material onto the truck, the senior packager, and the supervisor. The feedback from each of these people will be different. The loader will give feedback based on how the packager's performance affects loading the truck. The senior packager will give feedback on the packager's techniques. The supervisor will give feedback on the amount of product the packager can finish in a set time. By getting all this feedback, a packager can develop and improve their skills and performance in several areas.

If 360-degree feedback is gathered at a company, a supervisor can also use this information during the annual review.