



## The Advisory Alliance 60-Second Email™

### ***Stop Playing to Your Strengths.***

*March 18, 2014*



*Photo by Philip Kromer*

"It's much easier to play to your strengths than to compensate for your weaknesses."

"You'll go a whole lot further developing your strengths than developing your weaknesses."

"No one got promoted by improving a weakness; focus on your strengths."

And so it goes.

The business literature is filled with articles and blog postings touting the value in playing to one's strengths vs. developing or overcoming one's weaknesses.

It sounds very appealing, even heart-warming; I think we'd all love to spend the bulk of our day playing to our strengths, but I'm not sure it's the path to success.

Why? Because as we grow in our careers and professions, there are skills we'll need that we currently don't have. I'm quite confident that if I'm to be successful in the future, I'll need to develop skills I currently don't possess. I'm not just going to build on a strength or shore up a weakness. Instead, I'll need to develop whole new capabilities, whole new skills.

For example, to move up or across the organization, we'll ultimately need to perform work we currently don't do, and likely don't know how to do. This will require skills and knowledge we currently don't have. It's not our fault; we've had no need thus far for these skills or knowledge. But we will need them in order to be successful in that future role.



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It's not about developing a strength or overcoming a weakness; it's about developing new capabilities.

And as the context of our work changes, such as when our industry or company fundamentally changes, or when we go through a major reorganization, we certainly become aware of what we're good at and not so good at. And more importantly, we hopefully become aware of the new capabilities we must develop. Think about the changes we've been through since 2007. If not yourself, I'm sure you know those whose jobs/roles were turned upside down by the economic impact. To survive the turmoil, they didn't just need to build a strength or minimize a weakness; they had to almost reinvent their role and the work they did. They had to develop new capabilities.

Because conditions / economies / industries / companies / jobs change with such frequency, the capabilities that were once only preferred are becoming table stakes, along with the expectation that successful employees will either already possess them, or develop them very quickly.

Given that, what are the specific capabilities you should be developing now?

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What changes have you seen in the types of skills and capabilities leaders and managers are expected to possess?

Post your answers and comments on our [Ideas](#) page on our [website](#).

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As always, thanks for reading.

Best regards,

David Harper, Managing Principal





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