

Par for the Course

After my last article, 'Chained (by Bad Habits)', a few readers contacted me. While their questions differed, they were essentially coming from the same angle:

- What if I don't like dealing with conflict and it's my style not to get involved in my team's conflicts, so they have the opportunity to grow? Bringing a calm and peaceful presence is one of my strengths' - It is great if your team members managed to sort out their conflicts, but the problem is, they grew their conflict resolution muscles but you didn't.
- 'Rolling up my sleeves and getting the work done is a lot faster than delegating and training someone else to do. Getting things done quickly in the midst of chaos is my hallmark.' - You will always be valued for this strength but your team suffers when the next chaos occurs but you are not around, perhaps on annual leave.
- 'Managing my team and my work are my strengths. Had my boss read your article he would say that being reluctant and haphazard in managing relationships within the organization is my bad habit, but I just want to play to my strengths'.

Again, I turn to my favorite basketball team to draw some parallels. Kevon Looney is the unsung hero for the Golden State Warriors. Playing as an undersized center amongst teammates who dominate the scoreboards, Looney does the so-called dirty work of grabbing rebounds and sacrificing his body to provide screens so that his teammates have better spacing and angles for better shots. The majority of the offensive plays are drawn up for Looney's teammates and Looney plays a supporting cast. Shooting and scoring are not his strengths nor priorities.

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启发式，画龙点睛的领导，职场教练

patrick.pacificpillars@gmail.com

In a recent tight game situation, the coach of the opposing team deployed a 'Hack-a-Looney' tactic during the final minutes of the game. The opponents intentionally fouled Looney whenever the ball was inbound, sending Looney to the free throw line. The calculations were simple - playing the percentage game; it is better to have Looney who is less accustomed to scoring shoot the free throws than risk having his higher percentages teammates have an opportunity to score. While Looney wasn't a bad free throw shooter, but his averages were definitely much lower and the Warriors lost the tight game.

Looney was forced into an area that isn't his strength. While it is unfortunate, there isn't much excuse because Looney is part of the team and every team is as strong as its weakest link.

A lot of individuals erroneously push Strengths Theory to an extreme where they zero in on their strengths narrowly. They fail to understand that we need to be "Par for the Course", which means, "To perform as what is expected or usual in a particular situation." In the book, 'Strengths Finder', golfer Tiger Woods was cited as an example where he doesn't spend too much time perfecting his sand bunker shots because this part of golf isn't his strength - hence he practices only enough to get his ball out of the sand bunker but not so much that he can get the ball out AND it reaches near to the pin. There are two key points here:

1. Tiger Woods doesn't spend too much time on what isn't his strength, and,
2. Tiger Woods does spend time practicing on his bunker shots so that he doesn't suffer in this faculty of his game!

The second key is what many people choose to ignore in their careers and lives.

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We should play to our strengths to the fullest extent possible, but we also must be proficient in those areas that are necessary for our careers and lives so that we perform to the level that is required.

Have you been ignoring any part of your career or personal life for too long that it will soon succumb to an 'Hack-a-Looney' tactic? Let's work together!

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