Center for
Management &
Organization
Effectiveness

Building
Self-Awareness

A Toolkit

Building Self-Awareness: A Toolkit

Definition of Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to accurately identify your strengths and opportunities for improvement and understand the implications those have on your personal and organization effectiveness. When you have strong self-awareness, you leverage your strengths and minimize or develop weaknesses in order to optimize your performance.

Key Elements

Being aware of how others perceive us and seeking feedback about how to improve our contribution to the business is an important part of personal growth and leadership success. Self-aware leaders have a clear knowledge of what their strengths and weaknesses are and are committed to developing their skills continuously. They take charge of personal growth and development because it helps in their current job and prepares them for future opportunities.

The key to self-awareness is proactively seeking out helpful feedback and keeping an open mind about how others think you can improve your effectiveness in the organization. But knowing what your strengths are and how you can and need to improve isn't enough. You have to put action behind this knowledge and make the choice to learn and grow in ways that will enhance your short- and long-term success in the business.

Development Needs Assessment

The Development Needs Assessment will help you uncover personal strengths and opportunities as well as things that might be preventing you from moving forward. Complete the assessment on the following pages by reviewing each statement and circling "Strength" or "Not a Strength."

Welcomes Feedback

	Observable Behavior	Rating	
1	Objectively assesses themselves.	Strength	Not a Strength
2	Seeks to understand how to be successful.	Strength	Not a Strength
3	Actively solicits feedback from others about strengths and improvement needs.	Strength	Not a Strength
4	Avoids getting defensive about feedback.	Strength	Not a Strength
5	Acts on feedback that is shared.	Strength	Not a Strength

Actively Develops Self

	Observable Behavior	Rating	
6	Allocates regular and consistent time to self-development activities.	Strength	Not a Strength
7	Puts in necessary effort to grow and change.	Strength	Not a Strength
8	Demonstrates a willingness to take self-awareness and development seriously.	Strength	Not a Strength
9	Confronts weaknesses rather than avoiding them.	Strength	Not a Strength
10	Develops goals and plans for strengthening weaknesses.	Strength	Not a Strength
11	Is fully accountable for shortcomings.	Strength	Not a Strength
12	Develops goals and plans for leveraging strengths.	Strength	Not a Strength

13	Doesn't overuse strengths.	Strength	Not a Strength
14	Uses a variety of experiences, tools, methods to work on opportunities for improvement.	Strength	Not a Strength
15	Identifies people who can support development efforts.	Strength	Not a Strength

Measures and Sustains Improvement		
Observable Behavior	**Rating**	
16	Works frequently to become more self-aware and make improvements.	Strength	Not a Strength
17	Identifies barriers or obstacles to development efforts.	Strength	Not a Strength
18	Sets reasonable expectations for themselves.	Strength	Not a Strength
19	Seeks on-going feedback about improvement efforts being made.	Strength	Not a Strength
20	Tracks progress towards development goals.	Strength	Not a Strength
21	Sustains improvement in areas developed.	Strength	Not a Strength

Select no more than two areas as strengths and two areas as opportunities for improvement to help strengthen this competency.

Personal SWOT Analysis

Use the points, questions and framework provided in the table below to get started on your personal SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats). Remember, strengths and weaknesses are internal and opportunities and threats are external. However, both internal and external forces can impact a person's ability to perform at peak levels.

Internal	**Strengths** Advantages you have that others don't or things you can do better than others	• What do you do really well? • What do others around you see as your strengths? • What do you have to offer? (i.e. skills, knowledge, abilities)
	Weaknesses Things you should improve on	• What do you need to be better? • What do others around you see as your opportunities for improvement? • What do you do, or not do, that get in the way of your effectiveness or success?
External	**Opportunities** Opportunities that are available to you to pursue	• What opportunities are available to you that will optimize your performance? • Where can you have a greater impact on the organization or other people?
	Threats Obstacles that could have implications on your effectiveness	• What obstacles or issues could have an impact on your ability to perform? • What changes are occurring around you that could impact your success?

Development Suggestions

The development plan of action you create will be a creative, new course of action. You may find that the self-awareness and feedback process reveals opportunities for improvement that fall within one of the other competency areas. If this occurs, be sure to couple development activities from this topic with activities and suggestions provided for other competencies identified. Focus development efforts in the areas that will have the greatest impact on motivation and provide immediate traction on improvement efforts and results.

> As you identify the ideal development assignments, make sure to match the plan to your abilities and the reality of your situation—including resources and time.

1. After completing the Development Needs Assessment and the SWOT analysis, write your thoughts and perspective in a learning journal or on the lines on the next page. Select one thing to work on from each area at the most. Avoid overwhelming yourself with so many things to focus on that you can't channel your best effort into making improvements in a key area and build on some initial success.

2. Specifically identify the positive and negative consequences of making improvements or leveraging strengths in the area you've selected to work on.

3. Read the book *Soar with your Strengths* by Donald O. Clifton and Paula Nelson (1995).

4. Read the book, *Develop your Leadership Skills* (Creating Success) by John Adair (2013).

5. Seek out feedback from a person you trust to help you discover how you are perceived by others. This person can provide valuable feedback in a meaningful way. Find a mentor who is successful in the particular area you are seeking to develop. Arrange a mentoring agreement with them. Establishing a mentoring relationship will help you see that it can be rewarding, engaging and interesting to develop your skill and knowledge.

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