

**“Characterizing” the Workplace:  
Using Character Strengths to Create Sustained Success  
By Dr. Neal Mayerson**

*Introduction*

Organizations cannot succeed in a sustained manner with only 1 in 5 of its employees fully engaged and motivated and with 1 in 5 employees either dreading work or wishing they could just stay at home instead (Asplund, Lopez, Hodges, & Harter, 2007; VIA Institute, 2015). Business is a human enterprise in which multiple people come together to produce value for shareholders and customers. It starts with a commercial idea that is translated into reality by strategic planning and distribution of the various labor functions necessary for implementation to a workforce. How things are planned and how the labor is divided will determine to a large degree how sustainable the business venture will become, in addition to, the viability of the idea itself. Business plans that take into account the long term impact on necessary physical and human resources will be positioned to sustain success for longer than those operating under the assumption that today’s resources will always be there for them in an affordable way. And, organizational strategies that divide the labor *with an eye to optimizing employee satisfaction* will also be positioned to sustain success that relies on dedicated and coordinated efforts by employees over long periods of time. In other words, sustainable business strategies must not only consider impact on shareholders, consumers, the broader community, and the environment, but also consider its impact on its *employees – the actual workforce driving all of its activities*. The reality is: Business is a human enterprise.

### *The Challenge: Achieving Sustained Success*

In this competitive world it is challenging to achieve success, even on a short-term basis. As Kim and Mauborgne (2005) point out in their book, *Blue Ocean Strategy*, achieving success over long periods of time is a rarity. It requires not only optimized implementation but, additionally, periodic reinventions – what they call “value innovations.” These value innovations keep the brand fresh with consumers and escape downward spirals towards commoditization by establishing a new product with healthy margins not yet compressed by competition. With this as a requirement for sustained success it is no wonder that few companies can achieve this. It requires a delicate act of balancing one process focused on establishing and stabilizing an existing business (stability) while at the same time thinking forward to “what’s next” (change)? And, if the need for innovation is not quickly realized then it leaves too little time and money to bring new products to the market in a timely way, causing even successful companies to decline. Innovators are frequently seen as distractors by the business operators while the latter are often seen as obstructionists by the innovators. The smaller the company the more difficult it is to manage these competing processes. Achieving success is hard enough, but sustaining it is even more difficult.

Thankfully, new ideas have been emerging over the past decade to help advance the aspiration of sustainability by attending to employee strengths. Much attention has been focused on how businesses can look at their supply chains, their manufacturing processes, and their distribution channels so that resources needed at each stage do not become dangerously depleted and their costs prohibitively expensive. David Cooperrider (2008) has done much work with companies using his *appreciative inquiry* process of helping companies identify employee strengths and aspirations to discover more sustainable ways to conduct their business. The appreciative inquiry process highlights employee strengths of talent and character and how these strengths can be activated to achieve aspirations such as doing business in an environmentally-friendly way. Appreciative inquiry leverages human goodness for better organizational

outcomes. For example, as a result of applying this appreciative inquiry process, Fairmount Minerals made a commitment to “meet the needs of the present without compromising the future”, ensuring that their actions “consider the impact on each of the pillars of sustainability: people, planet, and prosperity” (Appreciative Inquiry Commons, 2007) Two years later, the company progressed from being referred to as “dune rappers” by environmental protestors to being recognized as the top corporate citizen in the U.S. and doubling earnings while improving sustainability. The “green” movement in business sustainability recognizes that if a business’ activities are good for its “bottom line” and good for the community and the environment, then consumers reward the company with loyalty over companies that solely do well for themselves. Doing business in this way appeals to the goodness motive that resides in all employees. Employees prefer to do good as they are working to do well. *Business sustainability is about producing good outcomes for the business while not diminishing quality of life for its employees or for others in the broader community.*

This same corollary becomes a propos to employees, who are the engines that drive business outcomes. *Human energy resources become more sustainable when work environments enable employees to experience engagement, meaning, and positive relationships in ways that don’t diminish the same in others.* Companies that provide employees with more of a sense of purpose far outperform the composite returns of the Standard and Poor’s 500 companies (Sisodia, Wolfe, & Sheth, 2007) and even the excelling companies featured in the bestselling book *From Good to Great* (Collins, 2001). The time has come to humanize our organizations more than ever before, and to bring the full force of knowledge from positive psychology to the task. Unpacking this notion is the focus of this article.

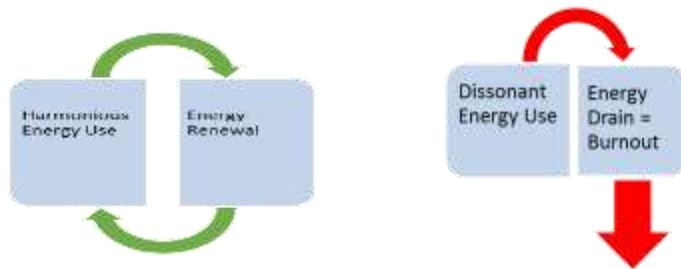
### *Beyond Engagement: Changing the Equation*

The conventional model of dividing and assigning the labor functions seems to assume the following. First, it has been assumed that an employee’s primary motive for working is to earn a living and that the

employer's main obligation is to pay employees for their work. According to this assumption, to the degree that an employer pays a person enough to support an acceptable quality of life then an employee is likely to be satisfied and willing to work hard. A second assumption is that employees are happy to receive direction from their employers and do what is asked of them in return for receiving their paycheck. This has led to a *command-and-control* approach to leadership in which top decision makers determine what needs to be done and then they assign the various tasks to people *based on how well they think employee's talents match with the role requirements*. Areas of mismatch between role requirements and employee skills then become targets for employee development efforts.

But, there is more to employee motivation than performing competently and getting paid for doing so. People are motivated not only to do what they *can do* well, but what they *care to do* well. People are motivated to do things that matter to them in terms of their values and in terms of self-expression. Personal relevance and higher purpose matter. Inadequate attention to *motivational problems* related to mismatching people with work assignments or with one another we now know is an oversight. The result of doing so is levels of disengagement at the workplace that leave critical human energy resources untapped. It has been estimated that about 25% of employees are actively engaged at work while 15%-20% are actively *disengaged* (Harter, Schmidt, Killham, & Asplund, 2006). The remaining 55%-60% of employees are moderately engaged – that is, they are ripe targets for efforts to improve their levels of engagement and motivation. ***Herein lies critically untapped human energy resources – renewable resources that are critical to sustained success.*** We need employees who are not just engaged and working hard, but also need people to be motivated and nourished by their hard work. Heightening levels of engagement by activating newly discovered sources of intrinsic motivation, namely character strengths, holds the hope of optimizing organizational performance in a sustainable way. When people are doing work that is in harmony with their personal identity and highest values they are tapping into their intrinsic motivation which is a personal and renewable source of energy. When they are doing things that do not

connect with who they are and what they care most about (dissonant energy use) then their energy depletes and they experience burnout. Employees want to experience alignment between their work and the very best parts of who they are – their character strengths.



A recent survey of U.S. workers (VIA Institute, 2015) shows that 64% of workers think their success at work depends on building on their strengths while only 36% think success will improve by remediating weaknesses. And, greater strengths awareness by employees is related to greater levels of reported energy and engagement with more than two-thirds of employees who report using their strengths at work each day also report higher levels of satisfaction and self-efficacy – the ability to make a difference. Nevertheless, only about half of workers report getting to use their top strengths each day and 27% report getting no recognition at all of their strengths from their bosses.

The conventional command-and-control model described above for organizing people to implement a business idea has come into question more as these and other statistics have been reported and as marketplaces have become more global and competitive. Now, more than ever before, companies are challenged to improve and innovate – and find better ways of getting the most from their employees. And, employee expectations have evolved over time to where many people expect to get more than simply a paycheck from their employment experience. More people today want their work experience to be engaging and meaningful in addition to providing financial support (Net Impact, 2012). They want

their work to put their talents to their highest and best use, to work in a positive culture, and to be able to grow and learn. Today's challenge for every company is *to get the best performance they can from whatever talent they have on board at any moment in time*. New evidence on the connection between character strengths and engagement, productivity, well-being, and stress buffering has been illuminating new ways to achieve this optimization for employees (Cohen et al., 2014; Crabb, 2011; Dubreuil, Forest, & Courcy, 2013; Forest et al., 2012; Govindji and Linley, 2007; Harzer & Ruch, 2014; 2015; Littman-Ovadia & Lavy, in press; Littman-Ovadia & Steger, 2010; Peterson et al., 2010; Sosik, Gentry, & Chun, 2012; van Woerkom & Meyers, 2014).

### *“Win-Win” Personality Traits*

In 2004, Peterson and Seligman published *Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification*, a book hailed by Harvard professor Howard Gardner as “one of the most important initiatives in psychology of the past half century.” In this book the authors describe the results of a 3 year scholarly effort of unprecedented magnitude that integrated the insights of over 50 top social scientists as well as experts in positive youth development. The book puts a spotlight on personality traits that are universal among human beings and that, when expressed, ***enhance the individual without diminishing others***. These “win-win” personality traits are called *character strengths* and the authors meticulously identified 24 elemental traits that every individual possesses in varying degrees, supported by cross-cultural research and studies of industrialized and non-industrialized nations (Biswas-Diener, 2006; McGrath, 2014; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006). So, while one person's rank ordering of 24 character strengths may have creativity and perseverance at the top and prudence and appreciation of beauty/excellence at the bottom, another person will have appreciation of beauty/excellence and prudence at the top and creativity and perseverance at the bottom. Over 600 sextillion possible constellations of these 24 character strengths represent the virtually infinite faces of human character – ways each of us are good along multiple dimensions and in ways that are unique to ourselves! We are all differently good,

possessing many different ways to be wise, just, humane, temperate, transcendent, and courageous. The breakthrough of this work, initiated and stewarded by the non-profit *VIA Institute on Character* ([www.viacharacter.org](http://www.viacharacter.org)), is that it brings science to the table that has, until recently, mainly been attended by theologians and philosophers. And with the advent of this dedicated science of character has come new insights that are relevant to helping businesses sustain success over long periods of time. Character strengths are like a jewel with multiple facets that produce the psychological equivalent of light magnifying, refracting and interplaying through a prism to produce the sparkle we know as human goodness. It comes in many forms and can express itself in every human condition. Focus on character strengths tips humanity towards its better nature and the application of these particular strengths in the business setting can be an important addition to the task of humanizing our organizations.

One facet of these 24 character strengths is that they are universally valued as moral (McGrath, 2014; Park, Peterson, & Seligman, 2006; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). As such when a company expresses its character strengths via its employees and directors it is strengthening its moral fabric. Morality guides companies to better themselves and their stakeholders *without* diminishing others. It leads to balanced decision making that minimizes errors in judgment that can result in costly court battles, ruptured consumer trust, employee demoralization, and expensive remediation efforts. Research studies of moral character in the workplace find that employees with low moral character commit helpful behavior less often and harmful work behavior more often than those with high moral character; those with low moral character also display more lenient attitudes toward unethical behavior (Cohen et al., 2014). The boosting of moral character is one way in which humanizing the workplace via encouragement of character strengths contributes to business sustainability. Unfortunately, recent research indicates that moral character and virtue are in decline (Kesebir & Kesebir, 2012).

A second, and possibly more critical facet, is that character strengths have been discovered to function as *channels of human energy and passion* (Forest, et al., 2012). They are sources and conduits of intrinsic

motivation much like the root and vascular system of plants are sources and conduits of nutrients to plants. When people are expressing their core strengths of character – known as *signature strengths* for the role they play in defining individual identity – their intrinsic motivation runs high. Signature strengths are important pathways toward the five elements of human flourishing – positive emotions, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and achievement (Seligman, 2011). Research by Claudia Harzer and Willibald Ruch (2012) found that employees who report using 4 or more of their signature strengths on a regular basis at work not only experience more positive work experience but are significantly more likely to consider their work as “a calling” as opposed to viewing work as a job that earns them money or as a career that earns them status. People who think of their work as “a calling” tend to contribute more of their discretionary time voluntarily and be more resilient and perseverant when faced with challenges. Over the long-term they can be better performing employees with greater company loyalty. Further, Harzer and Ruch (2015) have shown the buffering effects that character strengths can have against work-related stress, the latter of which can be, at high levels, a substantial detriment to performance. The energy driving this passionate performance and buffering against unhealthy stress is renewable compared with energy depletion that occurs with doing things simply by the brute force of willpower and being worn down by chronically high levels of stress. *Sustained employee motivation is a key to business sustainability.*

We are now able to quickly assess each employee’s unique character strength profile using the VIA Survey (see <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/Character-Strengths/Personality-Assessment#nav>). Employees become more aware of their signature strengths and the signature strengths of their colleagues, subordinates, and managers which helps create stronger connections between co-workers and sets the stage for improvement job assignment for employees that is *based not only on their talents* but also on *where they will derive the greatest sense of fulfillment and passion*. Applying the lens of character strengths to business to achieve sustainability can be done at a number of levels.

## *Bringing Yourself to Your Work: Showing Up*

Famed filmmaker Woody Allen once remarked that 80% of success is showing up. One important way that employees can think about this is through the lens of their signature strengths of character. It can be effective for employees to focus on building strengths *awareness* (i.e., mindful strengths use) and to use that awareness to become more deliberate in bringing those strengths to work each day (Niemi, 2014). Awareness can be quickly established by taking the VIA Survey and having strengths discussions with co-workers.

Here is an example: The U.S. education system has a serious and costly problem with retention of teachers. It is reported that approximately half of all new teachers coming to the profession end up leaving the profession within their first 5 years! It is estimated that teacher attrition in the United States costs the system about \$2.2 billion *annually* ([Alliance for Excellent Education, 2014](#)). One teacher who was about to become one of these lost teachers told the following story. After 2 years of teaching 4th grade she was burned out and ready to quit. A colleague of hers asked her to take the VIA Survey which highlighted *appreciation of beauty* as her top character strength. The teacher and her colleague looked around her starkly decorated classroom and realized that the teacher had failed to bring her appreciation of beauty to work. As a result of this collaborative inquiry, she began bringing a variety of plants into her room, which, in addition to creating a physical change in the environment, became props that enlivened her teaching. As a result of identifying her character strengths and then thinking of how to bring that important part of herself to work, her burnout faded and she avoided becoming another casualty of the teaching profession. Character strengths offered a simple, inexpensive way to reduce attrition.

Another example of the benefit of strengths *awareness* and “showing up” comes from a compliance officer in a healthcare company. Through a company initiative around identifying and deploying character strengths she learned that her top strength was *love* – the capacity for close relationships and the

giving and receiving of warmth and genuineness with others (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). When asked how that strength came into play in her role as a compliance officer she explained that her deepest motivation for choosing that role was to protect the caregivers and the patients from making errors that could harm them. She realized that her work was all about *love*. And, as a result of dialogues around character strengths that occurred with the company's character strength initiative, commonplace resistance from coworkers faded into the background as they came to understand her requests and demands as acts of love. Showing up with her top signature strength of character optimized her performance.

### *Strengths Alignment: Job Sculpting Based on Character Strength Profiles*

People like to do things that they can do well. It imparts a sense of competence that feels good. But, not only do people like to do what they *can* do well, they also like to do what they *care* to do well. This is what we refer to as *character strengths alignment*. Strengths of talent translate into competencies, while strengths of character translate into motivation. *Character strengths are the fuel and the rudder that give talents energy and direction*. A person with high computational talent has to decide how he or she cares to deploy that talent – e.g., bookkeeping for a trucking company, a museum, or a children's hospital. A person's character strength profile will guide them in a direction in which they are more likely to find alignment. Doing what one cares to do engenders a sense of fulfillment. Matching task assignments to people based on their top talents *and* character strengths puts them in a “power zone” – a position where their level of *motivation and ability* are high. Failure to take character strengths into account runs the risk of experiencing a syndrome of “success without satisfaction.” This occurs when someone succeeds based solely on the sheer force of their talents and willpower despite never caring much for the work itself. I am reminded of a middle-aged man who worked for a large consumer products company, applying his management talents to the production of toilet paper. He experienced considerable success within the company but felt like his talents weren't being put to their highest purpose – to something that resonated

with him as a person. After making a career change to a children's hospital he felt like his work finally connected with what he cared about – moving him into his power zone and an experience of fulfillment *and* competence.

Recent research (Ruch , 2015) has shown the relationship between a person's character strength profile and the kind of work they find most engaging and satisfying. He looked at seven categories of work:

- Creating ideas
- Gathering information
- Analyzing information for decision-making
- Implementing programs of work
- Influencing others internal to the organization (e.g., key decision-makers) or external to the organization (e.g., investors, consumers) as to the merits of the work
- Managing relationships of co-workers
- Energizing work to carry it through times of challenge

Ruch found, for example, that people high in *creativity* and *perspective* tended to be engaged by creating ideas while people high on *zest*, *hope*, and *bravery* matched best with the role of influencing others.

Knowledge of each employee's unique profile of the 24 character strengths can now be used to predict which of these roles they may find most energizing and fulfilling. Combined with knowledge of skill-sets and talents, job assignments can be made to put each employee to their highest and best use by considering their strengths of character. Some employees will find it much more engaging to create ideas, while others will become most engaged implementing programs of work. Character strength data can be used to optimize the degree to which the various work functions are being performed by people who are highly engaged and passionate about doing their part. Sustainable positive outcomes can be expected

when all of the various job assignments are well-matched with employees who are intrinsically motivated to do the work.

### *Strengths Appreciation: Enhancing Working Relationships*

As revealed in research by the Human Performance Institute (2008), workplaces perform best when there is dynamic interaction and communication across and between *all* employees. Additional research in a meta-analysis that reviewed 35 years of social dilemmas research found that the strongest and most reliable predictor of cooperative behavior was task-related communication (Sally, 1995). And, a 2012 survey indicated that 88% of workers want to work in a setting that has a “positive culture” (Net Impact, 2012). A character strength perspective can help in this regard. By looking at an aggregate character strength profile of work teams, a number of perspectives are revealed. First, a team’s *character culture* can be profiled in terms of any character strengths that are common across individuals. So, if creativity is a top character strength for a majority of team members, then this group will tend to gravitate towards creating new ideas. That is where they will draw their energy. They will have a “culture of creativity.”

In addition to getting an idea of group culture, a team snapshot of character strengths reveals which team members possess top strengths *uniquely within their group*. If one employee is the only person on the team who is high on perspective, then everyone knows to look to that person when the team needs someone to articulate a big picture perspective after considering lots of ideas and information. This view of leadership in terms of micro moments instead of role definitions can help ensure participation by all. When everyone in the group understands each person’s unique character strengths then they can be more likely to encourage one another at the right time. In addition to team members encouraging one another to bring forth their core character, each individual should be aware of their own signature strengths they are uniquely high in and be ready and willing to step up and allow those strengths to shine when the situation

calls for it. This approach underlines the concept that teamwork is a dance in which people give and take micro moments of leadership according to their relevant strengths.

Appreciation is connected with greater relationship commitment and helps couples maintain intimacy bonds (Gordon et al., 2012), and strengths endorsement and deployment in couples boosts life satisfaction in both partners (Lavy, Littman-Ovadia, & Bareli, 2014). Bringing appreciation and strengths together, Kashdan (2014) found that the recognition and appreciation of others' character strengths solidifies the bond in relationships, bonds that are so critical for trust and collaboration to occur. Specifically, he discovered that couples who did a better job recognizing and appreciating character strengths in one another were more likely to be satisfied and committed in their relationships. And researchers Shelly Gable and Harold Reis have shown that "active constructive responding" – responding in particularly positive and encouraging ways to others who share good news with us – is a characteristic of stronger relationships (Gable, et al., 2004; Reis et al., 2010). Anxiety and subterfuge breed in environments in which people think others are looking at them mainly with a critical mind to discover weaknesses and errors. Alternatively, employees tend to relax and more fully express their talents and work cooperatively when the culture is one of looking for strengths – a culture that shifts from vigilance for "what's wrong" to "what's strong" and when the culture nurtures the kind of trust that enables cross-communications that are so critical to success (Covey, 2006). As noted by Stephen Covey, author of *The Speed of Trust*, "Trust is equal parts character and competence."

### *The Future of Character Strengths at Work*

#### Board construction

It is common for companies to form board of directors based on professional skills, financial investment, and ability to network to valued resources. Imagine if character strengths were also considered. Might a board balanced in the strengths of the mind and the strengths of the heart be better positioned to make

balanced strategic decisions? Might the VIA Classification framework, especially the six core virtues, assist in creating a balanced configuration of leadership? For example, one or two members might be high in courage, i.e., risk taking, while one or two others might be high in temperance strengths such as prudence, humility, and self-regulation – i.e., risk management. Would it help to have people strong in strengths of justice and humanity along with people whose strengths lie in wisdom and knowledge? These are questions for future exploration.

#### Targeted marketing for sustainability

The explosion of the availability of personal information has led to advances in targeted marketing. Companies can, with some precision, profile consumers based on demographics, purchase history, and areas of interest derived from the kinds of information they search for online. They then can match consumer profiles with consumer behavior and thereby create efficient ways to target marketing. Imagine being able to add personal information about a person's character strength profile to their consumer profile. Matching consumer products and services with character strength profiles may lead to more positive consumer experiences and ones that contribute to well-being, thereby strengthening brand alliance. The time is coming when people will be able to select movies, books, educational experiences, vacations, and so on based on how they nurture, support, and grow the most treasured parts of themselves – their strengths of character. When such a day arrives, companies will find sustainable success in consumer loyalty built on the company focusing on contributing to the consumer's well-being instead of manipulating the consumer to contribute to the company's well-being.

#### Building cultures of strength

It is possible to create cultures of strength by infusing character strengths into organizational culture by finding places to insert them into the existing flow of activities.

- Every company conducts employee reviews of some sort, either formally or informally. It is now easy for every manager to use the VIA Survey to obtain reliable and valid information on each employee's character strengths and to have conversations with employees about *deliberately* enhancing the degree to which they use their signature strengths in their work and the degree they recognize character strengths in their co-workers. Adding even a brief conversation on character strengths to the existing employee review process can produce meaningful and long lasting results. Adding a short in-service training on character strengths can also begin the process of creating *awareness* – the first step in a change process.
- As described earlier, managers can now use information on employees' character strengths in constructing high performing work teams and understanding better what teams may need from outside their ranks to supplement for strengths the team might be lacking. For example, a team that does not have anyone who matches well with the role involving information gathering might need to bring an outside contractor to produce a white paper on a certain topic. Employees and managers can learn to emphasize character strengths alignment in which employees strategically connect their character strengths with work tasks to optimize performance.
- Daily communications offer an opportunity in a very natural way to comment “in the moment” when the expression of a character strength by a co-worker is observed. A commitment to such communications can go a long way in establishing a culture of character strengths.

- Further, it is also possible to infuse strengths into routine meetings. For example, some companies make a point of beginning each meeting by reviewing something positive that has occurred and describing how it was related to an expression of character strengths. This approach underlines the importance of making character strengths appreciation a priority within the work culture.

The key to creating a culture of strength is to recognize that establishing new habits (building upon strengths) requires deliberate action, repeated over time, and that it helps to attach these new routines to already existing ones. And, according to research of Barbara Frederickson (2001), efforts to build in character strengths explicitly can be expected to become contagious and to create what she refers to as “an upward spiral of positivity.” Further, it is important to acknowledge that changes feel awkward at first, but that with repetition over time they become second nature. Getting through these early stages of clumsiness requires explicit acknowledgement of the discomfort of change, deliberate commitment and support to work through the awkwardness, and explicit understanding by employees as to how the end result will be better for them as individuals and the organization as a whole.

#### Elevating the role of human resource departments

Human resource departments tend to be undervalued and underutilized. As pointed out by Louis Efron (2014), “It is not uncommon for business leaders to describe their H.R. departments as reactive, uncreative, and lacking business understanding” (np). And it is not uncommon for H.R. employees to feel marginalized and under-resourced. As described herein, businesses are human enterprises that are driven by human energy and passion, and as such, top priority should be given to optimizing human resources. Now is the time to reconceptualize and elevate the role of the human resource function in organizations. They need to join the C-suite.

## *Summary*

New knowledge about human motivation creates opportunities for companies to optimize the degree to which employees are engaged and passionate about their work. Character strengths are aspects of human personality that are sources of intrinsic motivation and are win-win traits – i.e., ones that allow individuals to thrive while not diminishing the opportunity for others to do the same. Character strengths can be measured reliably and the resulting knowledge can be used to make stronger connections for employees with the work they are doing and with the people with whom they are working. These stronger connections can be expected to tap into human energy reserves that are critical to sustainable success and can be expected to set in motion an upward spiraling of positivity. Further, creating cultures of character effectively establishes a moral compass for companies – a compass that can be used to establish strong customer loyalty and direct itself toward sustainable practices.

## *References*

Alliance for Excellent Education (2014). Teacher attrition costs United States up to \$2.2 billion annually. <http://all4ed.org/press/teacher-attrition-costs-united-states-up-to-2-2-billion-annually-says-new-alliance-report/>

Appreciative Inquiry Commons (2007). Project pack: Fairmount Santrol.  
<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/practice/ppFairmountMinerals.cfm>

Asplund, J., Lopez, S. J., Hodges, T., & Harter, J. (2007). The Clifton StrengthsFinder 2.0 technical report: Development and validation.  
<http://strengths.gallup.com/private/Resources/CSFTechnicalReport031005.pdf>

Biswas-Diener, R. (2006). From the equator to the North Pole: A study of character strengths. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7, 293–310.

Cohen, T. R., Panter, A. T., Turan, N., Morse, L., & Kim, Y. (2014). Moral character in the workplace. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 107(5), 943-963.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037245>

Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. New York: Harpercollins.

Cooperrider, D. (2008, November). The 3-circles of the strengths revolution. *AI Practitioner*, 8-11.

Covey, S. M. R. (2006). *The speed of trust*. New York: Free Press.

Crabb, S. (2011). The use of coaching principles to foster employee engagement. *The Coaching Psychologist*, 7(1), 27-34.

Dubreuil, P., Forest, J., & Courcy, F. (2013). From strengths use to work performance: The role of harmonious passion, subjective vitality and concentration. *Journal of Positive Psychology*.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2014.898318>

Efron, L. (2014, August 18). What organizations need now from human resources. *Forbes*.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/louisefron/2014/08/18/what-organizations-need-now-from-human-resources/>

Forest, J., Mageau, G. V. A., Crevier-Braud, L., Bergeron, L., Dubreuil, P., & Lavigne, G. V. L. (2012). Harmonious passion as an explanation of the relation between signature strengths' use and well-being at work: Test of an intervention program. *Human Relations*, 65(9), 1233-1252.

Fredrickson, B. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist*, 56, 218–226.

Gable, S. L., Reis, H. T., Impett, E. A., & Asher, E. R. (2004). What do you do when things go right? The intrapersonal and interpersonal benefits of sharing positive events. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87(2), 228–245.

Govindji, R. & Linley, P.A. (2007). Strengths use, selfconcordance and well-being: Implications for strengths coaching and coaching psychologists. *International Coaching Psychology Review*, 2(2), 143–153.

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., Killham, E. A., & Asplund, J. W. (2006). Q12 meta-analysis. Gallup Consulting. [http://strengths.gallup.com/private/Resources/Q12Meta-Analysis\\_Flyer\\_GEN\\_08%2008\\_BP.pdf](http://strengths.gallup.com/private/Resources/Q12Meta-Analysis_Flyer_GEN_08%2008_BP.pdf)

Harzer, C., & Ruch, W. (2012). When the job is a calling: The role of applying one's signature strengths at work. *Journal of Positive Psychology*.

Harzer, C., & Ruch, W. (2014). The role of character strengths for task performance, job dedication, interpersonal facilitation, and organizational support. *Human Performance*, 27, 183-205.

Harzer, C., & Ruch, W. (2015). The relationships of character strengths with coping, work-related stress, and job satisfaction. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 6, 165. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00165

Human Performane Institute (2008). Measurable results that matter. <https://www.hpoinstitute.com/results/we-measure-results>

Kashdan, T. B. (2014). Personal communication.

Kesebir, P., & Kesebir, S. (2012). The cultural salience of moral character and virtue declined in twentieth century America. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 7*, 471-480.

Lavy, S., Littman-Ovadia, H., & Bareli, Y. (published online 16 September 2014). My better half: Strengths endorsement and deployment in married couples. *Journal of Family Issues*. DOI: 10.1177/0192513X14550365

Littman-Ovadia, H., & Lavy, S. (in press). Going the extra mile: Perseverance as key character strength at work. *Journal of Career Assessment*.

Littman-Ovadia, H., & Steger, M. (2010). Character strengths and well-being among volunteers and employees: Toward an integrative model. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 5*(6), 419-430.

McGrath, R. E. (2014). Character strengths in 75 nations: An update. *Journal of Positive Psychology*. DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2014.888580

Net Impact (2012). Talent report: What workers want in 2012.

<https://netimpact.org/sites/default/files/documents/what-workers-want-2012-summary.pdf>

Niemiec, R. M. (2014). *Mindfulness and character strengths: A practical guide to flourishing*. Cambridge, MA: Hogrefe.

Park, N., Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2006). Character strengths in fifty-four nations and the fifty US states. *The Journal of Positive Psychology, 1*(3), 118-129.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification*. New York: Oxford University Press, and Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Peterson, C., Stephens, J. P., Park, N., Lee, F., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2010). Strengths of character and work. Oxford handbook of positive psychology and work. In Linley, P. A., Harrington, S., & Garcea, N. (Eds.). *Oxford handbook of positive psychology and work* (pp. 221-231). New York: Oxford University Press.

Reis, H. T., Smith, S. M., Carmichael, C. L., Caprariello, P. A., Tsai, F.-F., Rodrigues, A., & Maniaci, M. R. (2010). Are you happy for me? How sharing positive events with others provides personal and interpersonal benefits. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99 (2), 311–329.

Ruch, W. (2015). Personal communication.

Sally, D. (1995). Conversation and cooperation in social dilemmas: A meta-analysis. *Rationality and Society*, 7, 58-92.

Seligman, M. E. P. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York: Free Press.

Sisodia, R., Wolfe, D., & Sheth, J. (2007). *Firms of endearment: How world-class companies profit from passion and purpose*. Philadelphia, PA: Wharton School Publishing.

Sosik, J. J., Gentry, W. A., & Chun, J. A. (2012). The value of virtue in the upper echelons: A multisource examination of executive character strengths and performance. *Leadership Quarterly*, 23, 367-382.

van Woerkom, M., & Meyers, M. C. (2014). My strengths count! Effects of a strengths-based psychological climate on positive affect and job performance. *Human Resource Management*, 1-23. DOI:10.1002/hrm.21623

VIA Institute (2015). VIA strengths at work. <http://www.viacharacter.org/www/via-mmstrengthswork>