Identify which of your strengths you might be overusing

Why do it?

Capitalize on your strengths, right? It's common leadership advice — but that advice can lead strong leaders to overdo it. When you consistently flex your greatest talents, you may inadvertently train your direct reports to rely too much on you, robbing them of the opportunity to grow. If you identify a strength you're overusing, make a plan to back off — and to enable your direct reports to step up.

"Sorry, that was supposed to be my x-ray vision. My bad."

How to do it:

1. Identify strengths that you're at risk of overusing.

Your strengths could be technical skills core to your team's work or leadership skills, such as strategic thinking and proactive communication. To identify strengths you may be overusing, ask yourself:

- *What do I take pride in doing better than others?*
- *What skills do I employ regularly because my team doesn't have them or doesn't use them?*
- *What tasks do others come to me to do or what do I get consistently recognized for?*

You can also ask direct reports or trusted colleagues to give you an unvarnished opinion.

2. Write down what overusing each strength would look like.

With any strength, it's possible to have too much of a good thing. Here are examples of strengths and their overuses:

- Data analysis
  - Overused: You do all the complex analyses, making your team dependent on you.

- Strategic thinking with a vision for the future
  - Overused: You paint too clear a picture, shutting down big-picture thinking from your team.

- Proactive communication
  - Overused: You are seen as the voice of the team, creating a bottleneck of people communicating through you instead of directly with one another.

Look at your own list and be honest: Do you do any of the things you describe?

3. If you suspect you're overusing a strength, determine how you might ease off and help your team to advance in that area.

Using the examples in No. 2, you could identify a direct report interested in learning next-level data analysis skills and then collaborate on [a development plan](#). Or, you could seek more strategic input from your team when [shaping team goals](#). Or, you could work with your team to reset expectations about how they share information.

4. Try rolling out a change with your direct reports — and check in with them about how it's going.

Ask your direct reports if they're building knowledge, skills, or capacity in the areas where you're strong. If so, keep going! If not, talk with them about what they might need (e.g., more autonomy, additional skill-building help, or something else).

More on empowering your team:

- [9 types of help managers give — and when to use each](#)
- [5 ways to connect direct reports' work to their motivators — plus tips for when you can't](#)
- [Help a manager: How do I get my direct reports to take more ownership?](#)