A Step Forward in Assessment
Accounting for Overkill and Versatility

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Learning Objectives

1. See hidden oversights in typical assessment tools.
2. Learn deceptively simple solutions.
3. Work hands-on to apply them.

A Curious Disconnect

Oversight #1

Case: Rodney Strong

Overkill is rampant. But do we assess it?
**Frequency Rating Scale**

How often does Rodney do the following?

1. Lets people know clearly where he stands on issues. Declares himself.

2. Direct; a straight-shooter. Tells people candidly what he thinks.

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**Effectiveness Rating Scale**

How effective is Rodney on the following?

1. Lets people know clearly where he stands on issues. Declares himself.

2. Direct; a straight-shooter. Tells people candidly what he thinks.

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**How to measure overkill?**

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Too little</th>
<th>Barely too little</th>
<th>Barely too much</th>
<th>Too much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rating</td>
<td>-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**Aristotle’s notion of virtue**

- **Deficiency**
- **VIRTUE**
- **Excess**

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**The "Curvilinear" Rating Scale**

1. Lets people know clearly where he stands on issues. Declares himself.

2. Direct; a straight-shooter. Tells people candidly what he thinks.

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**Detecting Excess Too**

Average subordinates' ratings for 107 executives.
Versatility

The ability to turn the volume up or down depending on the situation.

Versatility isn't moderation in all things. Extreme situations call for extreme measures.

What are the truths about effective leaders?

For every truth about leadership there is an equal and opposing truth.

Case: Linda Newhart

Oversight #2

Lopsidedness is rampant. But do we assess it?

How to measure lopsidedness?

1. Have to measure overdoing.
2. Have to conceptualize leadership as two-sided.

The Two-Sidedness of Leadership

The ability to freely draw upon opposing virtues, unrestricted by bias in favor of one and prejudice against the other.

Complex Versatility
Lynda Newhart

**Forceful & Enabling**

- **Forceful Leadership**
  Leading off of your own intellect and energy
  taking charge, taking stands, having leadership presence, being decisive, setting challenging expectations for people, holding them accountable, making tough calls, asking probing questions, and so on.

- **Enabling Leadership**
  Creating conditions for other people to be forces in their own right empowering them, being receptive to where they stand on issues, being responsive to their needs, understanding when they don’t deliver, sharing the limelight, and so on.

**From Virtue to Vice**

- Going overboard corrupts an otherwise valued quality
- "Strengths become weaknesses"

**Leadership Versatility Index®**

- What's it like using this scale?
  - Less restricted, more room to express
  - Expect multiple raters to show more agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Scales*</th>
<th>&quot;Too little/Too much&quot; Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Superiors .44</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers .36</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subordinates .30</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average .37</td>
<td>.47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on Conway & Huffcut's (1997) meta-analysis

- What's it like using this scale?
  - Raters use more scale points
  - Should spread scores out; pull extreme scores into relief

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"Our company uses a five-point scale in the 360° that is part of our annual performance appraisals. What happens is almost all the respondents give you a 3 or 4. They don't use the full scale. So what you get is this ridiculous thing where your highest score is 3.9 and your lowest is 3.3.

So the 360° doesn't differentiate. It doesn't identify the problem players. And it doesn't help you sort out your strengths and weaknesses."

— Senior Line Executive
Why the Difference?

Half of the picture

The whole story

Versatility

The ability to freely draw upon opposing virtues, unrestricted by bias in favor of one and prejudice against the other.
Versatility & Overall Effectiveness

How do the two relate statistically?

Two Overarching Balances

- **Forceful-Enabling** *(how you lead)*
- **Strategic-Operational** *(what you lead)*

Strategic & Operational

- **Strategic Leadership**
  Positioning the organization for the future
  setting long-term direction, thinking broadly about the organization, seeking ways to grow the business, aligning people with the vision and strategy, and the like.

- **Operational Leadership**
  Driving the organization to execute in the near term
  focusing on results, getting involved in details, being grounded in the realities of implementing strategy, using processes to keep people on track, and so on.

Summary of Research

**Correlations: Versatility & Effectiveness**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Forceful-Enabling Versatility</th>
<th>Strategic-Operational Versatility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53 Execs</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79 Execs</td>
<td>.53</td>
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<tr>
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<td>.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>138 Mid mgrs</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted Avg.</td>
<td><strong>.59</strong></td>
<td><strong>.68</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Leadership Versatility Index

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**The Outer Work of Dev't**

Do less. Be more selective. Use a counterweight.

Do more. Don’t hold back or avoid it. Compensate.

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**The Inner Work of Dev't**

Underrating yourself... get the strengths to sink in.

Crooked thinking... straighten it out.

Prejudicial attitude... get over it.

Blind spot... turn around.

Faulty gauge... recalibrate.

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**Upshots**

1. Leadership models used to assess leaders ought to be simple enough to remember and yet complex enough to be interesting.
Upshots

2. Most of our assessment tools overlook key things that we know about leadership.
   • Overkill is everywhere—strengths taken to an extreme. How can we not assess for it?
   • We all talk about versatility, agility, balance. Leaders frequently lack it. How can we not assess for it?

Upshots

3. There is a revival of the "focus on strengths" movement. Be wary of simple models and prescriptions.
   • It is all too natural to over-value what we are good at; be on the lookout for strengths overused.
   • The step prior to leveraging strengths is to accept them in the first place. Does your client internalize her strengths?
   • Assignments that exploit a strength rob the manager from stretching to develop a more well-rounded repertoire.

Upshots

4. What does it take to assess versatility?
   • One, define leadership in terms of opposites.
   • Two, capture overdoing it—because half of lopsidedness is overdoing one side.

Upshots

5. The central development need for leaders is arguably lack of versatility.
   • Versatility is key to effectiveness.
   • But versatility is the exception, and lopsidedness the rule. Fewer than 10% are truly versatile.
   • Lopsidedness taps into a most basic, and unfortunate, tendency in human beings to go one-dimensional, to think in black-and-white terms, to polarize.

Coaching Opportunities

1. Assess for overkill as well as deficiency and strength.

Coaching Opportunities

2. Too-little and too-much ratings can open the door to the inner work of development.
Coaching Opportunities

3. Working on lopsidedness offers an opportunity to harness the power in tension:
   - Establish that what is responsible for the lopsided behavior is a one-sided mental model, usually a highly charged one.

Coaching Opportunities

3. Working on lopsidedness offers an opportunity to harness the power in tension:
   - Ask the leader: what is the opposite of the thing you emphasize and identify with?

Coaching Opportunities

3. Working on lopsidedness offers an opportunity to harness the power in tension:
   - Demonstrate that defining yourself with one side creates a blind side.

   "Certainly I believe in strong leadership. And have no use for go along-get along, feel good."

Coaching Opportunities

3. Working on lopsidedness offers an opportunity to harness the power in tension:
   - Point out that leaders can’t compensate for limitations unless they value what they lack.

Coaching Opportunities

3. Working on lopsidedness offers an opportunity to harness the power in tension:
   - Remember Heraclitus: "People do not comprehend how a thing at variance with itself is in agreement."
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