

### HOW TO LEVERAGE YOUR STRENGTHS AND UNLOCK YOUR TEAM'S PERFORMANCE - PART 3

Don't hire your clone. That was a painful lesson I had to learn in my first leadership role. When I took over the team, I hired people who matched my profile and had a similar set of strengths. In the interview process, I made sure they thought like me and would approach problems in the same way. In my naivety, this approach made sense. I was seen as a top performer (hence why I got promoted to team leader), so it made sense to me to build a team of only MEs.

For a time, it was great. Our ability to come up with amazing ideas and design solutions was unparalleled. I loved our conversations and how we could just ping ideas off each other. But then it came time to motivate the team and get projects finished. These are not my natural strengths, and I am most successful when partnered with someone who has these kinds of detail-oriented/project execution strengths. Unfortunately, I had just built a team of clones, and none of them were good at those things either. So, what seemed like an amazing start just fizzled into nothing as we struggled to perform.

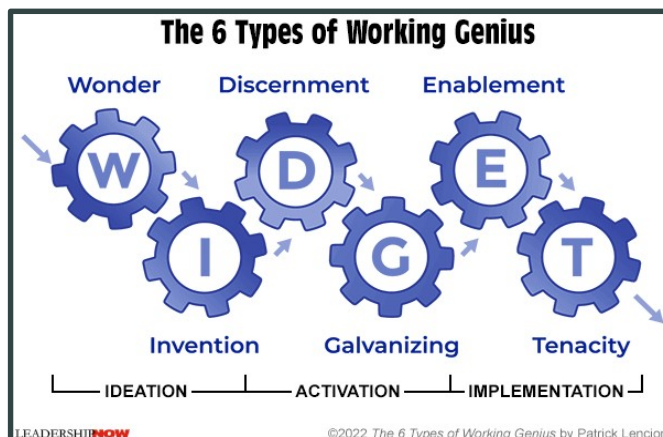
While it might seem like common sense to you, it took me this painful lesson to realize I needed to build teams around people with diverse but complementary strengths. But I am not alone in making this mistake. Over my 20+ years of coaching and working with leaders, this is a pretty common mistake that leaders make. Most only make this mistake once, but others never seem to realize that high-performing teams are built by ensuring that one teammate's strengths cover another teammate's gaps.

#### *How Individual Strengths Can Build Team Strengths*

For long-time readers of this Human Capital series, you know I've written many different articles on the importance of your personal and professional strengths, and how leaders should leverage the strengths within their team. But over time, I realized there was a problem. While there are many great models to assess individual strengths, none of the models could show you how to build an ideal team. They never showed what kind of balance was needed to truly reach sustainable high performance. That is until I read Patrick Lencioni's new book, *The 6 Types of Working Genius*.

Lencioni focuses his book on finding happiness and fulfillment at work. His argument is that you should spend more time doing things you are good at and less time doing what frustrates you. This is pretty much common sense, but where he differentiates his approach is that the strengths within his model are built around how teams work together to accomplish goals. This is radically different from other models that usually categorize strengths based on individual traits or characteristics (i.e., a strength in discipline, analytical ability, or focus).

In *The 6 Types of Working Genius*, Lencioni starts with the belief that the majority of projects and work in teams follow three main phases: Ideation, Activation, and Implementation. The Ideation phase is when your team needs to identify problems you are facing, the needs of your critical stakeholders, and begin proposing solutions. Ideation leads into Activation, where your team starts evaluating the different proposed solutions and selects which one is best. Finally, your team enters the Implementation phase, where you get things done and ultimately execute the solution.



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## The 6 Types of Working Genius and How They Impact Teams

What I love about Lencioni is that he bases his whole model on the simple fact that taking something from Ideation to Implementation requires a different set of skills. What might be great in the Ideation stage is horrible during the Implementation stage. We all know people or teams that get a million ideas but can never turn any of them into reality (remember my first team). This is where Lencioni's model further breaks down the three phases of work into six sets of skills and tasks that all teams should have covered by their members.

Lencioni calls these six sets of skills Working Geniuses, and they are critical for every team. When a team lacks one of the Geniuses, they start to underperform.

1. **Wonder** - The genius of Wonder is all about identifying the need to improve or change. If you are a genius at Wonder, then you naturally see the potential in a situation. You question the state of things and ask provocative questions.

a. **Lack of Wonder** - When your team lacks Wonder, they can get too caught up in the day-to-day and miss what's going on in the bigger picture. Changes in the market, new possibilities, or global trends are more easily spotted by someone with Wonder. So when your team lacks Wonder, they miss opportunities to succeed in the long term.

2. **Invention** - The genius of Invention is all about translating needs into possible ideas and solutions. If you are a genius at Invention, then you are seen as a great ideas person. You are always coming up with new ideas and solutions.

a. **Lack of Invention** - When your team lacks Invention, they often find themselves feeling stuck and frustrated. They know the current way isn't working, but they struggle to come up with new ideas or new solutions. They end up continuously trying to run through a brick wall, even though they know it won't work.

3. **Discernment** - The genius of Discernment is all about evaluating the benefits and practicality of an idea or solution. If you are a genius at Discernment, then you have a great ability to make decisions and judge what is right for a situation. Often this is a combination of pattern recognition, data analysis, and even a little bit of gut feel.

a. **Lack of Discernment** - When a team lacks Discernment, making decisions becomes tougher and tougher. They feel overwhelmed by complexity and ambiguity. They end up stuck in analysis paralysis and needing more and more data to make decisions.

4. **Galvanizing** - The genius of Galvanizing is all about building excitement and enthusiasm behind the chosen solution. Nothing gets done on its own. People make stuff happen, and people who are a genius at Galvanizing are great at rallying people behind an idea and motivating them to take action and get things done.

a. **Lack of Galvanizing** - When your team lacks Galvanizing, no one is rallying people behind an idea or motivating others to actually get something done. There always seems to be a lack of enthusiasm in the team and stakeholders working with the team. In the end, the team ends up being a collection of individuals and not a functioning team that enjoys working together.

5. **Enablement** - The genius of Enablement is all about supporting the execution of a solution. If you are a genius at Enablement, then you are naturally inclined to respond to the needs of others and support them in accomplishing their goals. You often anticipate what kind of help others may need before they even ask.

a. **Lack of Enablement** - When a team lacks Enablement, you get a lot of "It's not my problem" mindsets within the team. No one is pitching in to help on other people's projects. Team members end up going after their individual goals, even if those goals hinder the team's success.

6. **Tenacity** - The genius of Tenacity is all about finishing the job. If you are a genius at Tenacity, then you are known for getting things done and pushing projects across the finish line. You are the person that makes sure all the is are dotted and ts crossed. Ultimately, you are the one focused on getting the results that were desired.

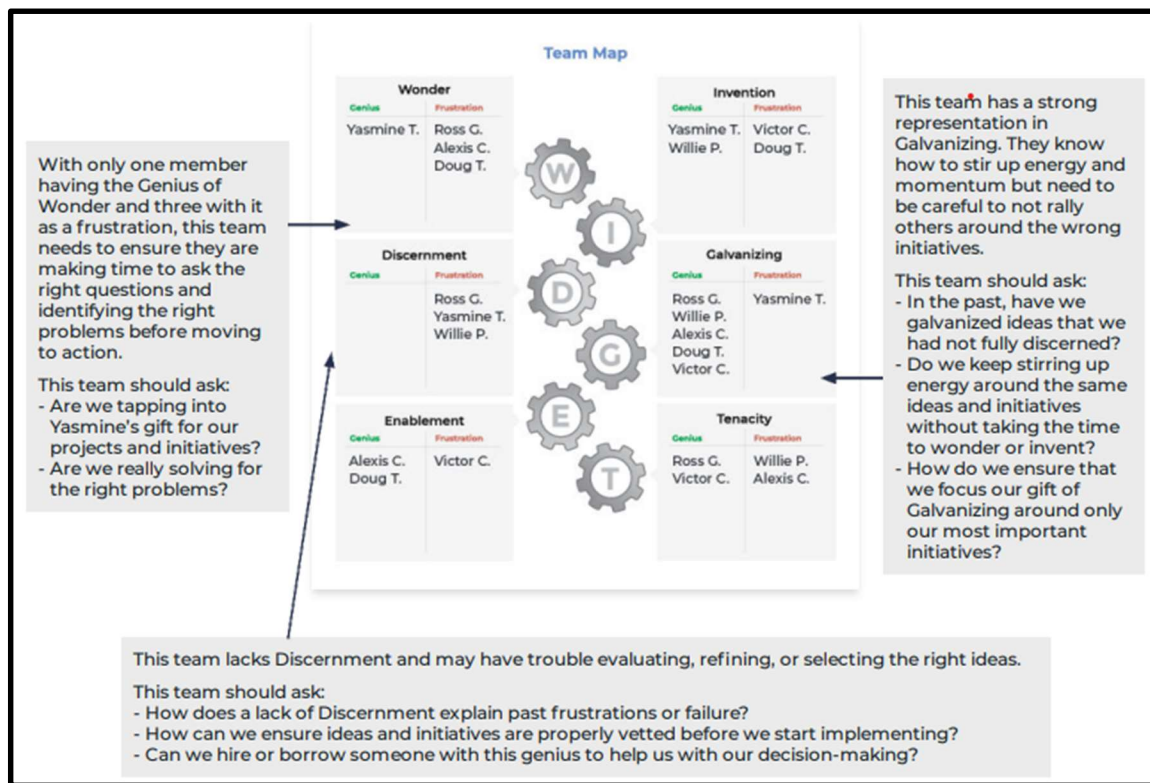
a. **Lack of Tenacity** - When a team lacks Tenacity, things just seem to remain half-finished. Key details go missed and the final actions are delayed. These teams end up getting close to the finish line but are always surprised when they realize another team beat them.

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## How to Ensure Your Team Has All 6 Working Genius Types

Clearly, lacking one of the 6 Working Genius Types is not ideal. It doesn't mean that you still can't be successful as a team; it just means that it will require a lot more focus and effort. But when you have all the different Genius Types covered within a team, life becomes a whole lot easier, especially if you start aligning how your team works to their Genius Types. The first step is to have each team member identify their own two Genius Types, their two areas of Competence, and their two areas of Frustration. You can do this by using my simple assessment tool from last month's *Newsletter*, but I recommend that each team member complete the full assessment created by Lencioni ([www.workinggenius.com](http://www.workinggenius.com)).

Once everyone has completed their assessments and identified their Geniuses and Frustrations, we recommend using another tool created by Lencioni. In the picture below, you will see the Team Map tool that is part of the full assessment sold by Lencioni. What I love about this tool is it is a simple way to visualize how your team is aligned across the 6 Working Genius Types. For example, in the example provided by Lencioni, this team is unbalanced when it comes to Discernment and Galvanizing. No one has the Genius of Discernment, so the decision-making process is harder than it should be. Also, they have a surplus of people with Galvanizing, and too much of a good thing can also be bad. This team might be great at building a lot of motivation for an idea that is not well thought through.



Mapping out your Geniuses and Frustrations is a great start, but it isn't enough. Unless you actually take action, your team's problems will remain. For some teams, that means changing your processes to better leverage the different Genius Types in your team. For other teams, it means taking advantage of the team's next recruitment to fill some of the key gaps. In some situations, it might mean disbanding the team and reforming it with different profiles. There is not one solution that will fit all teams, but all teams can use this information to continue working towards a balanced team profile.



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### **Final Thoughts on Leveraging Team Strengths**

If I could do my first leadership role all over again, I wouldn't make the same mistakes. My Genius Types are Invention and Discernment. I have a strong ability to come up with multiple solutions and map out which one is right for the situation. My Competence types are Wonder and Galvanizing. While not naturally enthusiastic about it, I try to keep my finger on industry trends and can build up enthusiasm for an idea. But that leaves Enablement and Tenacity as my Frustrations and gaps. I struggle when helping myself or others get projects done.

The Lencioni assessment wasn't a true A-Ha moment for me, as I already kind of knew this about myself. I would joke that I can fly the plane from 30,000 ft down to the last 100 ft, but then I want my co-pilot to land the plane. Otherwise, I would crash it straight into the ground. The true A-Ha moment with Lencioni's Working Genius model is that it finally gave me a vocabulary to explain something about myself and my teams that I intrinsically knew. My failed teams were lacking Genius Types, and my most successful teams not only had all six but leveraged our strengths in how we worked together.

So, what does this mean for you? Well, I hope that after reading this article (and hopefully the previous part 1 and part 2 articles), you start the process of leveraging your own personal strengths and the strengths in your team. Hopefully, you don't make the same mistakes I made when building my career or leading my teams, but if you do, maybe these articles can help point you in a better direction. Whether it is Lencioni's 6 Types of Working Genius or any of the other strength-based models, the more we focus on our strengths, the more we will succeed.

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***You can follow his blog at [www.cavemaninasuit.com](http://www.cavemaninasuit.com) or download leadership and team development tools at (<https://highperformanceculture.org/>).***