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Screw Weaknesses

Once we know our weaknesses they cease to do us any harm.

—Georg C. Lichtenberg

Damage control can prevent failure, but it will never elevate you to excellence.

—Donald O. Clifton, *Now, Discover Your Strengths*

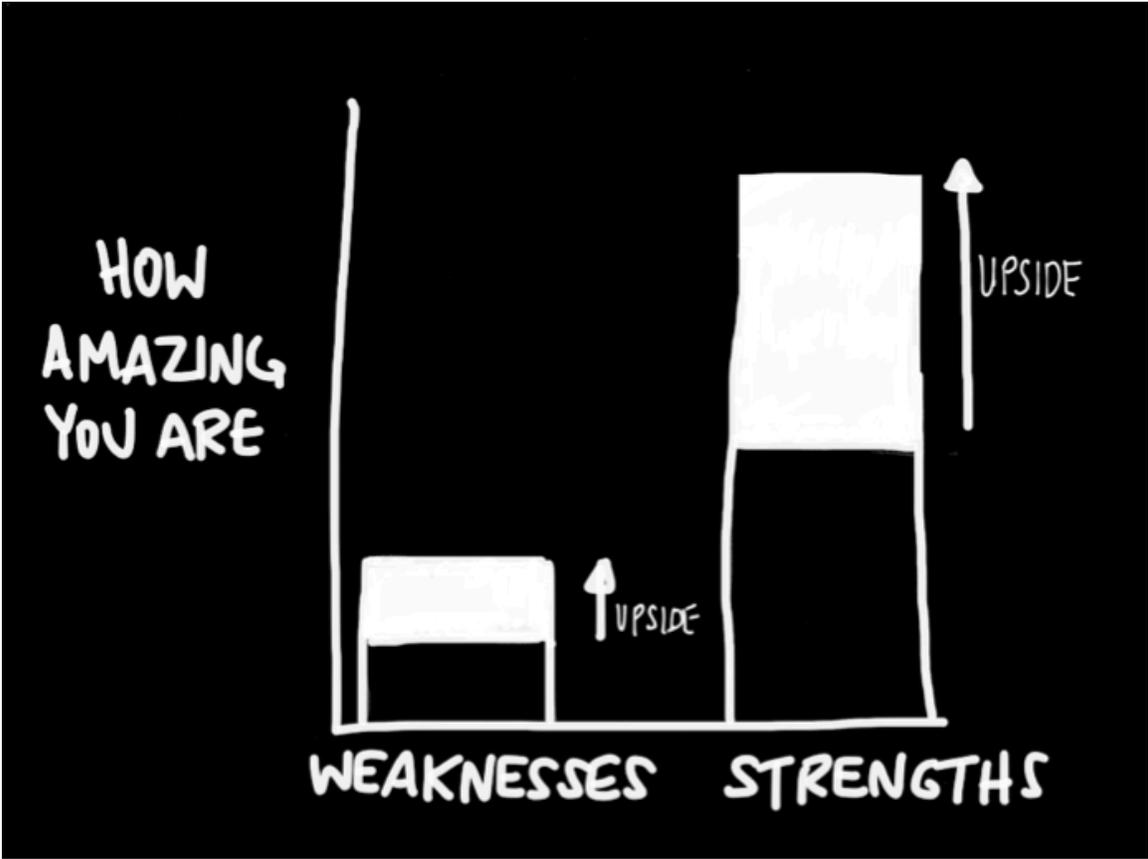
Our educational system and society as a whole train us to spend an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to rid ourselves of our so-called “problem areas.” Although teachers and mentors sometimes talk about classes in which students get As, they spend the bulk of their focus on classes where students get Cs and Ds. During a formal review process, bosses also overemphasize areas where improvement is needed instead of celebrating the places where employees exceed expectations. Over time, we are left with one clear message: The secret to getting ahead in life is to eliminate our weaknesses.

Rubbish. You cannot eliminate weaknesses. Research has shown that by your mid-teens your synaptic patterns—the formations of neurons in your brain that lead to your strengths—are formed and, for the most part, your strengths and weaknesses are anchored in stone. This means that if you are a terrible public speaker today, you will more than likely never be the next Barack Obama or Steve Jobs. It is not that you cannot work to overcome a weakness, but you will not be able to turn a real weakness into a true area of strength.

Spending too much time on your areas of weakness is a poor investment strategy; excelling in life is all that matters.

People hire for greatness. When is the last time you saw a job description from an employer who was looking for someone who was just “okay” at something? Chances are, you haven’t. Job descriptions like that do not exist because people are not looking for “so-so,” they are searching for mastery. People want to hire you because of what you are the best in the world at doing, not the worst. Consequently, if you have one additional hour to invest in yourself, nine out of ten times that hour will be best used by focusing on an area where you already excel—or have the potential for excellence. You separate yourself from the pack by moving from being good to great, not from bad to okay.

Fixing weaknesses is not a strategy for winning; it is a strategy for avoiding outright failure. You should focus on your problem areas only when your weaknesses are preventing you from delivering extraordinary outcomes. Otherwise, screw ’em! If a weakness does not stand in the way of your potential for greatness, then that weakness does not deserve your attention.



About the Author



As one of the advertising industry's youngest executives, Detavio Samuels has helped some of the world's biggest companies build their brands and connect to consumers. At the age of 32, Detavio sits as the President of GlobalHue-Detroit where he leads teams to develop crossover strategies and ideas that tap into the influence of the fast-growing multicultural market and drive total market business. When not helping brands develop innovative marketing programs, Detavio works with people (young and old) to help them unleash their personal magic and reach their full potential.

Detavio has been recognized for his work on both the marketing and personal development fronts with awards such as: 40 Under 40 (Crain's Detroit, 2013), Men of Excellence (Michigan Chronicle, 2012), Power 30 Under 30 (The Apex Society, 2011) and Top Executives In Marketing and Advertising (Black Enterprise, 2011).

Currently, he lives in New York City with his beautiful wife, Tanya. Together they are focused on loving each other and living a life that reflects the presence of God in their lives.

Learn more about Detavio or read his weekly blog by visiting [his web site](#). You can also follow Detavio in [Twitter](#) or sign up for his [weekly newsletter](#).