



# Building on Strengths-An Introduction

By Willing Phillips

CEOs are proven problem solvers. Every day you are faced with a set of problems- some long standing and some brand new. Your still being in business is a testament to your ability to fire fight these problems. This article presents a totally different approach to solving problems and making improvements. It will give you the basics for getting better and implementing change without ever solving a problem!

Most of you solve problems with a formula like this: 1-Identify the problem, 2-Look for the cause, 3-Find a solution, 4- Take action. Now if this is working for you don't change it. But many of you report: We don't have a really good solution (to competition, to increasing profits, to driving sales up, etc). or when I confront my staff with a problem they get defensive or start blaming or when I try to implement change, we back slide, people object and resist the change. If any of this sounds familiar to you, it is time for you to change your approach. Remember the definition of insanity? It is the person who keeps trying the same thing and expects a different result!

**1<sup>st</sup> Building on strengths** begins by identifying what you are already doing well. And I guarantee you that every business is doing at least a few things very well. But the things you are doing poorly neutralize the good things. Here is how to identify the things you are doing well. Ask your staff!; ask your customers questions like : Why do you keep buying from us? What do you really enjoy about our company and its products and services? What do we do best? What motivates you to refer new customers? Etc. These are interviews where you and your staff dig and probe for specifics and details.

**2<sup>nd</sup>** Don't edit them. Collect the responses on little Post-It Notes™. Stick them on a wall and arrange similar ones together into patterns. Choose several of the strongest patterns. Give them a name in a phrase or sentence. Then go to the next step.

**3<sup>rd</sup>** What factors enable or cause or strengthen the occurrence of these patterns? And now talk about what your club would look like if you strengthened the strengths you identified by addressing the factors?

**4<sup>th</sup>** Discuss and sort through these factors. Brainstorm ways that you could strengthen each of them.

**5<sup>th</sup>** Select one or more of these factors and begin actions to strengthen the things that give your company the strengths that it already has.

This is how you **Build on Strength**. You are building on things you already know how to do and that people are already doing. It does not require lots of changes or starting lots of new things.

**To learn more about Building on Strength see the book by Willing Phillips and Mary Case on the subject copies available at I Universe.com Bookstore or from the CEO Fulcrum.**