



A Strengths-Based Approach to Defining Roles and Responsibilities

INTRODUCTION

Why is it that more than 80% of those surveyed wish they can change their jobs? I suggest that this can be answered in two short words, **“roles misfit”**. Whether it be in personal or work life ensuring the right fit for any role or responsibility is first a personal duty and second, a leadership issue. Collaboratively, each of us can improve the possibility of finding the best fit. In this way, talents are best applied to achieve the most fulfilling roles.

Well defined roles are the backbone of healthy relationships at home, work or the community.

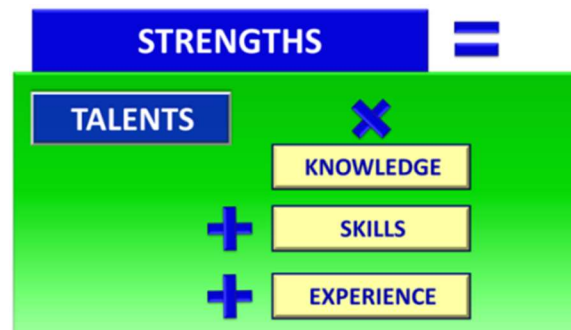
Leveraging thoughts from the Strengths Psychology movement the following pages provide thinking and communication tools. Using a basic coaching question individuals and leaders may engage in a process of discovery that can be documented using an example template provided as an appendix.

Note: We will use the church as a sample organization with many roles. Also, it is helpful to see the role of a purposeful theatrical drama performed on the stage of life. In each drama, there is a team of performers who partner and collaborate by playing different roles. There is also the

audience who benefits from attending each performance.

1. HOW DO YOU DEFINE NEEDED STRENGTH FOR ANY ROLE?

In Romans 12:1 Paul says, *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer **your bodies** as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God.”* Our bodies are an excellent illustration of the unique strengths we each of us possess and how we are created to complement each. Watching a toddler learning to eat with a spoon, fork, or knife is a good illustration of how the fingers, the eyes, the mouth, and the brain seek to work together in a wonderful new experience. Our heavenly Father delights to see His children grow as they collaborate using their unique talents.



Strength is best described in this illustrated formula or process:

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- **TALENTS** are a gift from God. God begins the development of a unique set of talents in each of us long before we are born. Talents are reflected in the unique natural abilities that God gives to each of us. Just as every part of our body is unique, our talents are as unique as our fingerprints. Talents, God's gifts, are developed, grow and mature by:
 - **THE KNOWLEDGE** we acquire through a variety of sources and input
 - **THE SKILLS** we develop in how we use our talents and knowledge in productive endeavors, and
 - **THE EXPERIENCES** where we adapt and apply our talents, knowledge, and skills through the various roles and responsibilities of life.
- **Note:** One of the easiest ways to describe talents is by using **adjectives** or character attributes. Knowledge, skills, and experience can be combined in one word, "**competencies.**"

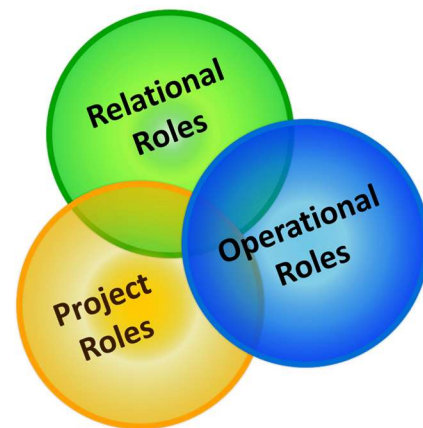
In the parable of the talents written in Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus highlights that we each have two clear responsibilities:

1. **Individuals** are responsible to know, articulate, and communicate their God-given strengths and invest them where they bring the greatest return for His kingdom.
2. **Leaders**, in a similar manner, have a stewardship responsibility for the talents God has placed in their care.

2. WHAT TYPES OF ROLES DO WE PLAY?

Whether at home, work, the church, or the community we all play three different types of roles. These roles often overlap. We play

these roles at different degrees based on our unique strengths and the people or organizations we interact with. While we all play these types of roles, each of us may find one of these roles more suitable to our strengths than others. In the church or at work almost every area of work or ministry will include these three types of roles to varying degrees. The three types of roles are:



- **Relational roles:** These are focused on influencing people. As result, our success in relational roles is not so much based on what we do or control but much more based on what others accomplish.
 - Examples of relational roles include preacher, coach, mentor
 - Ministry areas that may have a higher exposure to relational roles include counseling, evangelism, visitation...
- **Operational roles:** These leverage routine and predictable or repeatable activities performed at a regular time. Success in operational roles depends on the clarity of expectations and clear predefined tasks or activities as well as the pattern of performing them.

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- Examples of operational roles include bookkeeper, manager, administrator...
- Ministry areas that may have a higher exposure to operational roles include finance, communication, benevolence...
- **Project roles:** These leverage change and the desire for improvement. By their nature project roles engage more planning relying on a mix of different strengths in the ministry team.
 - Examples of project roles include visionary, resource, change agent...
 - Ministry areas that may have a higher exposure to project roles include missions, special events, children camps ...

A key mistake in the church is that we often approach project roles with an operational mindset. We assume since we have done it before, so we will do it the same way the next time. In our fast-changing world, this is often incorrect, leading to disappointment and frustration.

God desires for the church to grow through change. Projects and project roles are pathways to achieving God's purpose. The Bible has many examples of great project roles and structures. The book of Nehemiah records one of the best-documented examples of a great project that was completed on time, on budget, and under very complex and dangerous conditions. This need not be complex or complicated. You may download a simple free plan template from <https://nomoreoverload.com/Data/Templates/GanttChart-Simple.doc>. This is often called a Gantt Chart.



3. HOW DO YOU DEFINE ROLES?

"There are no roles without strengths, no Strengths without responsibility, no responsibility without people, and no people without empowerment."

The attached diagram illustrates the steps and the key questions we must ask in defining each role. These same questions will be used in a simple template that can be used in defining most roles. This you may download at

[https://nomoreoverload.com/Data-Web/Templates/RolesTemplate.docx](https://nomoreoverload.com/Data/Web/Templates/RolesTemplate.docx)

A. NAME: What do you call this role and what is its purpose?

Clarity is critical for healthy communication and collaboration. Organizational titles can be misleading. Every title encompasses many different roles. Regardless of our titles, each of us must focus on the most important roles giving them a **unique descriptive name**. The role can be further defined with one or two paragraphs. It may be helpful to explain how this role interacts with other roles in the organization.

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B. STRENGTHS: What Strengths are needed for this role?

Based on the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, God never assigns us **roles** without giving us the talents needed to fulfill these roles. **Starting** with simple descriptive adjectives it is important to highlight the talents and the most important character and spiritual attributes needed for this role.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES: What are the responsibilities, objectives, and goals assigned to this role?

Responsibilities are the area where we apply and use our God-given strengths to bring the highest returns in the Kingdom of God. Strengths wisely used must be focused on specific areas of **responsibilities** that have **objectives and goals**. It is wise to ensure that the assigned responsibilities are related to appropriate knowledge, skills, and experience.

D. PEOPLE: Who are the people engaged in this role?

Roles are performed in relationships. People are the stakeholders in defining the role. Their impact is directly related to how well we define these relationships. No role should exist in isolation. Here we urge you to consider and define:

1. The Important People: No role should exist without important people. The important people are the partners who

are committed to the success of the role. They share the purpose and vision with the role but play different roles. In addition to partnerships, important people play coaching, coordination, and the administration that ensure the harmony needed for the smooth performance of any role. Important people give the role the needed **authority or permission to act** without any doubt or hesitation. The absence of clear authority leads to frustration and inaction. Another function of important people is to offer accountability. In the church, this could be the most overlooked and misunderstood function of the important people. **Why?**

The primary purpose of accountability is for the protection of God's people. We should never forget that we are engaged in spiritual warfare. **1 Peter 5: 8 reminds us of the risks we face in ministry.** Authority in the absence of accountability is dangerous and should be avoided at all costs. David, Samson, and even Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, all faced temptation and sinned because of the lack of accountability.

- Accountability is part of the leadership oversight outlined in **Acts 20:27, 28.**
- Accountability is for the **protection of the assets of God's Kingdom.** Those who are placed in the role of overseers must be vigilant and have a documented oversight plan. Oversight plans should provide answers to some key questions:
 1. What is the potential vulnerability or weakness in the following four key areas:
 - Biblical authenticity and Biblical truth



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- Church vision, mission, and core values
 - Laborers in the Kingdom and people entrusted to our care
 - Physical assets and financial stewardship
2. What are the needed tools and resources? These may include:
- What are the **policies and processes** that must be applied to avoid these risks?
 - What are the **key indicators of progress or risk** to be observed in each of these areas?
 - What are the most critical **oversight questions** that should be asked for each risk area?

2. The Teachable People: Think of the teachable people as the audience. The teachable people participate based on their needs and/or their desire to develop and grow their strengths. Their purpose is to receive the benefit of the role and apply it in their own life, work, and ministry. In the absence of teachable people, the role loses its purpose and ceases to exist.

E. EMPOWERMENT: How will this role be empowered to fulfill its goals?

Empowerment is reflected in the resources needed to fulfill the role. Responsibilities cannot be fulfilled in the absence of appropriate financial and physical resources, money, and time. The provision of the needed resources is God's way of affirming the roles. Resources should be specific and measurable. Although people's time is the most valuable resource in the

church, it is often the least planned, estimated, and valued.

As individuals, we are given personal and corporate control on only two aspects of our life, **time**, and **money**. One day we each will give an account for how we used both. Properly planning and defining how we use time and money is an issue of personal and corporate stewardship. A well-defined role is an act of stewardship.

4. ABOUT COMMUNICATION?

If well-defined roles are the backbone of healthy relationships, clearly defined communication plan is the life blood.

Once again, we look at how our bodies are shaped by the all-wise God. While each part has different roles to play, they are all connected with a network of nerves and blood vessels.

A well-defined communication plan articulates clear expectations that avoids wasted effort and information overload. Depending on the scope and complexity of the role these expectations may answer the following questions:

- How often do we communicate?
- What should we communicate? Is our communication based on "Like to know" or Need to know?
- What communication tools do we use? (texting, phone, email, meetings...)
- When do we communicate or the communication frequency?

Roles Template

1. Treasurer > Overseer

As part of the finance ministry team the purpose of the church treasurer/overseer is to:

- Support the pastor and board in creating a culture of biblical stewardship in the church
- Exercise the fiduciary responsibility for the financial management of the church.
- The term of this role is **two years renewable**.

A. What do you call this role?	Overseer – Financial Planning and Oversight
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Note:

- This template seeks to answer five key roles related question regarding this role
- Where needed, provide policies, processes, tasks, and forms related to this role.

B. What are the Biblical qualification and Strengths needed and for this role?

- **Biblical:** Acts 6: 1-6, ACTS 20:27
- **Talents:** High integrity, Analytical, Organized
- **Competencies:** Understanding of Financial management and reporting

C. What are the responsibilities and goals assigned to this role?
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Responsibilities	Objectives and Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directing: Financial planning and stewardship. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare annual faith budget for review by the board no later than December 15 of each year. • Approve or lead the approval of any unbudgeted expense or project.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversight: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Financial Management system ○ Finance team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure training of finance team in system, processes, and forms • Connect monthly with team members to ensure their wellbeing (spiritually, emotionally, and physically and financially)

D. How will this role be empowered to full fill its goals?

- The Ministry Handbook provides roles-based processes and task list for each finance team member
- For ease of use, unless otherwise indicated **task lists will serve as policy**.
- For budget planning, the **Project Charter and Action Plan** template is provided
- For team oversight, the **Progress Dashboard Template** (See Appendix) will be used
- This role is **60%** leadership, **20%** operational, and **20%** Project-oriented.
- The estimated effort for this role is:
 - Budget planning (Annually - 20 hours)
 - Financial and Team reporting (Monthly – 4 hours including board meeting)
 - Team oversight (Monthly 5 hours)
 - Audit participation (Annually 5 hours)

Roles Template

E. Who gives authority and permissions to play this role?

- The authority for this role is given by the church board and Government expectations.
- The treasure is expected to report regularly on the financial health of the church and the well-being of the finance team.
- The treasurer- overseer has the authority to delegate some of his functions to competent finance team members.

F. Who and how will accountability and oversight be exercised for this role?

- Unless otherwise stated in board minutes accountability will be exercised by the board chair
- The treasure must present regular **financial operating statements** to the board
- Using the **Progress Dashboard**, the treasurer – overseer will report on his well-being and the well-being of the finance team. See:
 - Personal: <https://nomoreoverload.com/Data-Web/Templates/PrgDash.Personal.doc>
 - Leadership: <https://nomoreoverload.com/Data/Templates/PrgDash.Leader.doc>

G. What is the communication plan

- Weekly and as needed by email with the finance staff
- Monthly by reports with the church leadership and Governance.
- As defined by project plans depending on the roles played in specific assigned projects.
- By phone for exceptional needs and emergencies
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Note: Depending on the level of detail required this document can be expended to reference operational policies as well as work instructions and forms.