

# *Degrees of Strength* Team Acceleration Guide

"... Restoring excitement and engagement is as rewarding as the improved results that will follow for the enterprise. If you haven't tried this approach, you are missing a powerful opportunity."  
- Kevin McEvoy, CEO, Oceaneering International Inc.

*degrees of*  
**STRENGTH**

the innovative technique to  
*accelerate greatness*

ROSS & VANNOY



[www.degreesofstrength.com](http://www.degreesofstrength.com)

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Use this guide to *develop and accelerate* . . .

<b>Accelerator Mindset</b> (Guide pages 3-8)	<b>Capability</b> (Guide pages 8-9)	<b>Performance</b> (Guide pages 10-12)	<b>Agility</b> (Guide pages 13-14)	<b>Accountability</b> (Guide pages 15-17)
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Each focus area of this guide includes key references in the book and action steps to maximize your use of *Degrees of Strength*.

### Degrees of Strength Technique (page 37+)

- 1) The paradigm: It's impossible to have less than zero of any desired quality or characteristic. Some level of strength is inherent in everyone and everything, in every situation, everywhere.
- 2) Once the Degrees of Strength are identified, master focus on those strengths, practice and sustain them.
- 3) Use Degrees of Strength to accelerate the person, partnership or performance by asking Forward Focus Questions.

### **2. Accelerate Your Greatness:** **Create a personal *Degrees of Strength* Journal**

How can you best leverage your experience using this innovative technique? How can you create your own *acceleration moments* ... where you advance your transition from mere intelligence to applied wisdom?

In your journal, identify specifically how you are using the Degrees of Strength technique to build people, partnerships and performance. Use observed outcomes to celebrate, review and improve your own performance with the Degrees of Strength technique. Your journal will be a cache of your experience and wisdom — and a tool that will support developing the Accelerator in you!

This icon designates personal learning opportunities.



### **Two strategies to leverage this guide:**

#### **1. Accelerate Your Team's Greatness: Use this guide *with* your team**

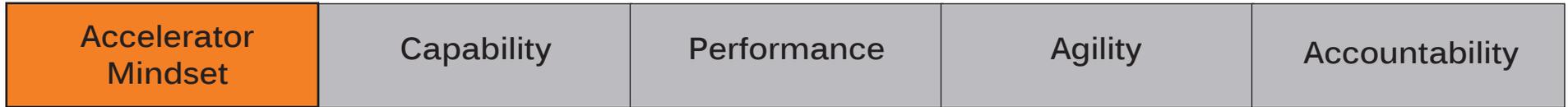
What is possible when your team operates in Degrees of Strength more consistently? How will you access and integrate this technique so your team is operating at full potential?

The exercises in this guide reference *Degrees of Strength* – so grab your books as you explore and develop your team's Accelerator Mindset, Capability, Performance, Agility and Accountability.

Look for this icon throughout the guide for team acceleration opportunities.



# build and accelerate . . .



“Everything becomes an opportunity” with an Accelerator Mindset, so let’s start at the beginning: your current mindset. We’ll use the “Five Choices Accelerators Make” as a framework.



**Accelerators choose to see people, events, and situations in Degrees of Strength.**

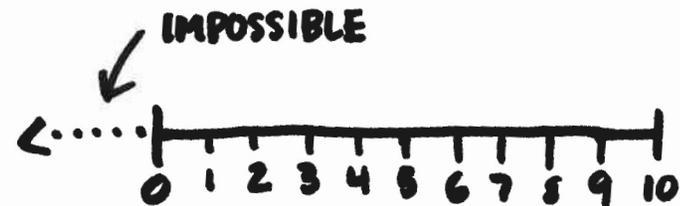
## Five Choices Accelerators Make (page 109+)

- 1) Accelerators choose to see people, events, and situations in Degrees of Strength.
- 2) Accelerators choose to act with the wisdom that people already have greatness within them.
- 3) Accelerators choose to see what’s possible – and be inspired.
- 4) Accelerators choose to develop people, partnerships, and performance in every interaction of every day.
- 5) Accelerators know that what they experience is their choice. They choose the richer experience.

1. Choose a current and relevant issue you want the team to accelerate.
2. On a scale of 1-10, how is our team seeing the issue in Degrees of Strength? Please provide examples to support your rationale.
3. What is already working with this issue that prompted you to give this rating?
4. How does this rating – your current perspective – create the foundation to accelerate this issue?



Choose a performance issue at work or at home. Where am I already seeing myself in Degrees of Strength with this matter? What difference does it make for me, personally, when I see myself and others in Degrees of Strength?



# build and accelerate . . .

Accelerator Mindset	Capability	Performance	Agility	Accountability
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***Accelerators choose to act with the wisdom that people already have greatness within them.***



1. Choose a current and relevant issue you want the team to accelerate.
2. What evidence exists that we already have the greatness within us to move this issue forward? To accelerate performance with this issue, where else can we leverage the 3 Mind Factors (see page 121 in *Degrees of Strength*) with a similar assessment?
3. Given that we all already have the greatness necessary to move this issue forward, what are 2-3 Forward Focus Questions that will lead our team to access our greatness more consistently? And where/when will we ask those questions?

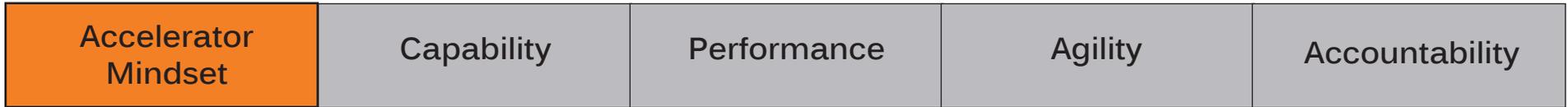


1. In the seemingly toughest challenges I have with this issue, where is there evidence that I do have the greatness necessary to move performance forward?
2. What is my plan to master the 3 Mind Factors (see page 121 in *Degrees of Strength*) to sustain and leverage this focus even more?
3. How is functioning with the wisdom that others have greatness within them consistent with my personal values?

“The prize for using Degrees of Strength, for being an Accelerator, means that instantly everything that happens during a day – good or bad – becomes an opportunity to do something special. It’s remarkable to watch your team seize events that used to be ‘problems,’ find the Degrees of Strength that exist, and turn situations into moments of acceleration.”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p. 90)

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***Accelerators choose to see what's possible – and be inspired.***



1. Choose a current and relevant issue you want the team to accelerate.
2. Once we accelerate this issue, what are the possibilities in this area? In other words, what will be possible? Identify at least 5 possibilities.
3. Of the possibilities, which of these are most aligned with our vision and values as a team (and/or organization)? Which of these, once actualized, would be evidence that we are doing important work?
4. When we focus on the possibilities we are creating and moving towards, what effect can we expect that to have on us? Our partnerships? Our organization?
5. Given 3 and 4 above, what are 2-3 specific actions that will demonstrate our belief in our own and others' capabilities?

“This is how Degrees of Strength inspires, because the solution is right in front of me...”

- Andrea from *Degrees of Strength* (p. 51)



In what specific ways am I already choosing to see what's possible, thereby facilitating forward movement? What opportunities do I have to be even more inspired? And what's my plan to deliver on these opportunities? Why is it important to me to function even more consistently in an inspired state?

# build and accelerate . . .

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***Accelerators choose to develop people, partnerships and performance in every interaction of every day.***



1. Choose a current and relevant issue you want the team to accelerate.
2. Given the issue, what are 2-3 things we do on a daily basis that develop the people involved?
3. In what ways are we functioning together that subsequently builds the partnerships necessary to accelerate performance?
4. How are we already building performance related to this issue in ways that set us up for even greater performance in the long-term?
5. What will accelerate this situation most right now? Building the people, the partnerships or the performance?
6. In the next week:
  - What specific actions will we take to leverage our interactions with people to develop them even more?
  - What partnerships, when strengthened, will accelerate this issue forward . . . and why?
  - How can we leverage the Recipe for Partnership<sup>SM</sup> (see page 122 in *Degrees of Strength*) to build these valuable relationships?
  - In what ways do we need to improve performance to achieve our outcomes? Do we need improved capability? Agility? Accountability?

“There’s always a strength to build on. And it’s taking us beyond simply being engaged as employees. Now, it’s about ownership - owning where we are and owning the path forward in a way that builds people, partnerships and performance.”

- Bernie from *Degrees of Strength* (p. 30)



Answer the team acceleration questions above in your journal for yourself. BONUS: What’s the effect on my family when I become even stronger at developing people, partnerships and performance?

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1. Choose a current and relevant issue you want the team to accelerate.
2. What have I chosen to focus on regarding the situation so far? What is the correlation between my current focus and the experience I am having?
3. Where do we have evidence that the experience we're having (due to our focus) is effecting the experience others are having?
4. What are two actions we'll take to we ensure our focus – and therefore our experience – is in the direction we know will accelerate performance?
5. What Forward Focus Questions can we ask to affect a more productive focus and experience in others involved in this situation?
6. What does it mean to me to have a 'richer experience' more often while dealing with this issue? And why is that important for me to achieve?

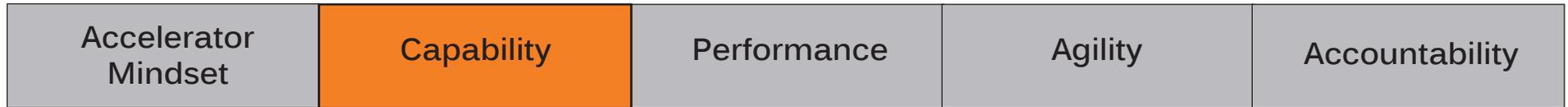
“I said, ‘You have two choices: Be a victim of the differences between you and them or be accountable to your values and the team and lead forward.’”

- Eric from *Degrees of Strength* (p. 77)



Answer the questions above in your journal for yourself.  
BONUS: What sort of an experience is important for me to have at work?

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## **What outcomes will we be able to produce when we advance our collective capability?**

### **Remember Ray in Chapter 8?**

He's the VP of sales for a division within the second largest pharmaceutical company in the world, and used the Degrees of Strength technique to build his team's capability. As an Accelerator, he wants his team members to differentiate themselves from their competition by how they respond to "problems." He did this by equipping people to make different choices, which allowed them to be more responsible and move faster.

Ray developed the capability in his team members to increasingly look at the tough issues they encounter through the Degrees of Strength lens – and then ask Forward Focus Questions (see page 92 in *Degrees of Strength*):

- What's the critical issue here?
- What is already working in this area?
- Where do we have momentum – and how do we leverage that?
- What feedback are our customers giving us that we have to address immediately?
- How do we respond to customer feedback in a way that builds greater partnerships with them?
- What are three ways we can leverage our current resources even more?
- What are we learning about ourselves that will prove helpful in the long term?
- What could we have done earlier that would have created a better result in this situation?
- What are the successes taking place that we can celebrate and leverage?
- What does our collective responsibility look like moving forward?
- Who is stepping up and being responsible that we can identify as a model for the rest of the team?

“From the moment the team was introduced to this technique – Degrees of Strength – we continue to advance our collective capability,” Rachel said. - *Degrees of Strength* (p. 11)

Accelerator Mindset	Capability	Performance	Agility	Accountability
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**Your team's turn to give it a go!**  
Leverage the Degrees of Strength technique to build and develop individual and collective capability

1. What specific capability, when our team builds and develops it even more, will lead to accelerated delivery on our outcomes (Explain your rationale)?
  - a. to be more responsible?
  - b. to move values-to-action?
  - c. to respond more effectively?
  - d. to develop speed and agility?
  - e. to be able to look at tough issues and ask Forward Focus Questions?
  - f. to succeed sooner and more often?
  - g. to \_\_\_\_\_?  
(What do you want to develop?)
2. Using the first step in the Degrees of Strength technique, where does evidence exist that we already have a foundation for the desired capability identified above?
3. With the Degrees of Strength paradigm in place, what Forward Focus Question will we ask ourselves or our partners to develop this capability? (For starters, consider referencing Ray's list on the previous page.)
4. In the next week, where will we apply the Recipe for Partnership<sup>SM</sup> (see page 122 in *Degrees of Strength*) to develop this capability?



In what specific ways am I already using the Degrees of Strength technique to develop individual and collective capability? What two opportunities do I have to leverage this technique even more? What's my plan to make this happen?

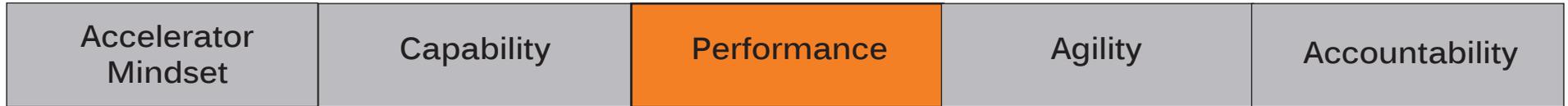
**Recipe for Partnership<sup>SM</sup>** (page 34+)

- 1) What's working well in this area right now?
- 2) What created those successes?
- 3) What are our objectives?
- 4) Why are accomplishing those objectives important?
- 5) What can we do more of, in addition to, or better to achieve our objectives?

**Preparation to Apply the Recipe for Partnership<sup>SM</sup>:**

1. In what areas of our business do we need increased alignment and shared vision?
2. What needs to be stated as important to accomplish – and why – prior to using this tool?
3. Where are there groups within the organization that could benefit from a more collaborative approach?
4. When we've accomplished Steps 1-5 from the Recipe for Partnership, would it be beneficial to discuss "lessons learned" in past and similar situations?
5. As action steps are identified in Step 5 from the Recipe for Partnership, what questions will we ask to establish shared understanding of what accountability looks like moving forward?

*build and accelerate . . .*



“This is the promise of Degrees of Strength: It develops capabilities and performance faster than anything else because it’s a mechanism to call the potential that so many mistakenly think resides outside of people or in the future . . . into now, into reality.”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p. 17)



**Leverage the Degrees of Strength technique to develop – and transform – performance.**

- a. In what specific way(s) do you want your team to perform better?
- b. Why is it important that our team be able to perform better in this way?
- c. What’s the relationship between questions a. and b. (what’s important and why) and performance?

## *build and accelerate . . .*



### **In Chapter 7, Eric, Luc and Rachel reflected on how using the Degrees of Strength technique transforms performance.**

Some of their key discoveries:

- Eric realized this about his brother: “1) My brother, when in an inspired state, didn’t feel like his job was work; 2) When he focused on what he didn’t like, he lost his inspiration; 3) By addressing those same factors in Degrees of Strength, he saw the opportunity and took responsibility; and 4) He could now move forward with those same factors present and remain inspired, regardless of the circumstances.” - *Degrees of Strength* (p. 78)
- Luc discovered “the beauty of the Degrees of Strength technique,” when referencing ineffective leadership approaches such as labeling someone as a poor performer or trying to convince them they’re a better performer than they actually are. Luc said this about the Degrees of Strength technique: “It gives you a third option. It is a step beyond the ‘focus on the areas of your strengths,’ because everyone has some level of strength in every area. So I can go to this person who in the past has suffered with strategic thinking (for example) and begin to focus and expand those areas in which there is already some proficiency in strategic thinking.” - *Degrees of Strength* (p. 79)
- Rachel imparted the wisdom of the “human factor” to Luc and Eric. Luc shared, “You (Rachel) differentiated yourself by adding the human factor to this list of performance variables. You knew that to transform our performance, you had to change our behaviors. And to do that, you discovered you had to change our paradigm, the way we were seeing ourselves, each other, and the work we do.” Eric added, “She accomplished that by shifting our thinking from degrees of weakness to Degrees of Strength.” - *Degrees of Strength* (p. 80)

### **Your team’s turn to give it a go!**

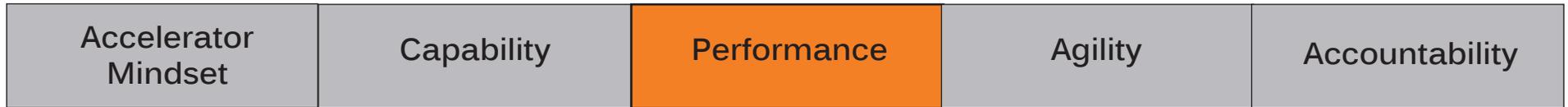


1. What three lessons can we apply from Eric, Luc and Rachel’s insights and experiences to develop our targeted performance issues? What specifically would that look like – and when will we take these actions?
2. What types of questions are we currently discussing as a team that inspire us, regardless of the circumstances? What are examples of questions we’d like to ask even more of to fuel more inspiration?
3. Of all the performance variables we’re managing, what are we already doing to leverage the “human factor”? What ways can we develop this variable to make it even stronger?

“Now, with Degrees of Strength, our differences are our alchemy, the accelerator, that produces a bond. This gives us an advantage over our competition.”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p. 73)

# build and accelerate . . .



## Andrea, in Chapter 5, had an insight about what Degrees of Strength IS NOT.

“I was so afraid that if we didn’t talk about how bad things were we would be lying. But this approach is not about lying. The Degrees of Strength technique doesn’t mean we don’t tell the truth or don’t state our perspective of where we believe things currently stand. Degrees of Strength is about telling that truth or perspective in a way that releases us to move forward faster. This is about communicating in a way that gets us to resolution quicker.

You want to know what that sounds like...it’s like this:

- ‘It’s essential that we address these results and see immediate improvement.’
- Or ‘The current results are not acceptable. We must improve immediately.’
- Or ‘It’s critical that our customers experience our best-in-class effort. What will we do right now to ensure that happens?’”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p. 62)

## Your team’s turn to give it a go!



1. Trick question: What’s an appropriate amount of time to talk about how bad things are so people know we’re telling the truth?
2. How does using the Degrees of Strength technique allow leaders to tell the truth *faster*, in greater detail, and in a way that allows people to accelerate to solutions quicker?
3. In your book, go to page 37 and review the Degrees of Strength technique. What will we resolve quicker by using the Degrees of Strength technique to communicate the truth and/or where we believe things currently stand? Where will we apply this technique next week?
4. What have we been looking at in degrees of weakness that, when we ‘flip it’ into Degrees of Strength, will propel our performance forward?
5. What do we need to acknowledge realistically and in Degrees of Strength so we can move forward in meeting our objectives?
6. What are two additional ways we can apply what we’ve been discovering in these questions?

### *Having the urge to focus on how we aren’t performing?*

Example: *Where are our greatest gaps in performance?*

Knowing we go toward our focus, and that team members will also go in the direction we lead, what would we develop by focusing on the problems?

activate

THE ACCELERATOR MINDSET

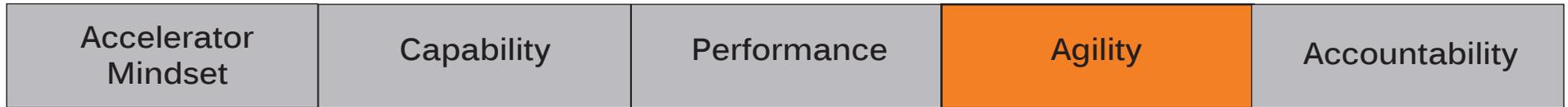
### *Having the urge to activate your team’s motivation?*

Example: *In the areas where our objectives are moving forward, what are we doing to create that progress?*

Knowing we go toward our focus, and that team members will also go in the direction we lead, what would activate motivations in our team members?



Inventory Exercise: When I shift from seeing myself in degrees of weakness to seeing myself in Degrees of Strength, what is now possible for me to achieve? What are three specific examples in my own performance where I show or have shown some strength (it could be a very small strength)? What are 2-4 specific ideas I can act on in the next two weeks to build on these strengths I already have to accelerate my performance?



start here

## Use these excerpts from *Degrees of Strength* to leverage the Degrees of Strength technique to develop agility.



“When Accelerators like Rachel empathetically interact with others and leverage the unique Degrees of Strength within a particular person, that teammate has greater freedom to achieve. As this is accomplished, it naturally develops the capability of agility. Here’s why: When employees are responsible or accountable to a boss (rather than something more important), they can’t act or make decisions on their own. They will wait and make choices based upon their best guess of what the boss desires. Conversely, when people are responsible to themselves – their inner greatness – agility happens.”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p .89)

1. What evidence exists, specifically, that we are already agile?
2. What is possible when we are able to operate with even more agility?
3. What wisdom from this excerpt will we apply to develop greater agility within our team? And what does it look like to do that?



“Savvy Accelerators know they must push decision making out of their office and empower those doing the work. They also know that agility is a skill to be learned and developed. This means equipping others with a technique to make better choices in the moments that fill up a day.”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p .89)

### Read the Five Choices Accelerators Make.

1. Choose one of the Five Choices and discuss the following questions:
  - a. How will our focus on this choice build our agility?
  - b. Why is this important to our team’s objectives?
2. Now identify another one of the Five Choices and discuss the two questions above.

Challenge: In the next week, use the 3 Mind Factors to your advantage by giving sincere, specific and selective feedback to those you see making the Accelerator Choices. Inform them of the difference this makes to our team’s agility.

### Five Choices Accelerators Make (page 109+)

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## build and accelerate . . .

Accelerator Mindset	Capability	Performance	Agility	Accountability
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In Chapter 8, “Agility, Agility, Agility,” Ray (the VP of sales) shares, “The prize for using Degrees of Strength, for being an Accelerator, means that instantly everything that happens during a day – good or bad – becomes an opportunity to do something special. It’s remarkable to watch your team seize events that used to be ‘problems,’ find the Degrees of Strength that exist, and turn situations into moments of acceleration. By choosing to be responsible in such moments, we build the capability and capacity for speed and agility as we respond to and drive market conditions.” - *Degrees of Strength* (p. 90-91)

1. What happens when we move from allowing daily events to define us . . . to growing in our ability to define events?
  - a. What is a current issue we’d like to have greater control of, and move forward, rather than having it define us?
  - b. What is currently going well with this issue?
  - c. How is our agility contributing to favorable outcomes?
  - d. What are we doing that is producing favorable outcomes, even if small?
  - e. What else do we need or need to do in order to move this issue forward?
  - f. What are our best 5-7 ideas to accomplish this?
  - g. What will be our evidence we are moving forward and are developing agility around this issue?
2. How does agility become the natural by-product of our ability to respond when things go ‘wrong’?
3. How does focusing on solutions (instead of problems) build more agility?
4. What evidence is there we are being responsible for the focus we’re creating by focusing on solutions (instead of problems)?



Am I like many leaders who feel agile in some areas and not in others? In what areas am I particularly agile? In what ways do I want to build and develop my agility even more? When I have more agility, what becomes possible for me to accomplish?  
BONUS: In what ways do I want to become more agile with my family?

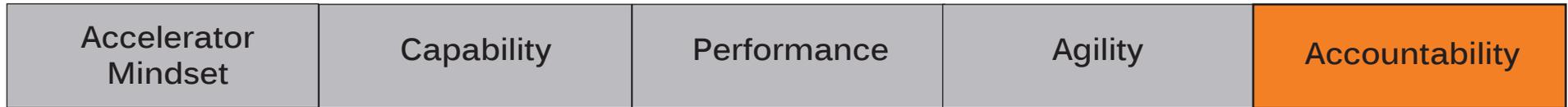
“More than any time in history, agility is a requisite for success.”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p. 89)

### TWO MORE AGILITY-BUILDING QUESTIONS:

1. What capabilities, when we build them even more, will enable us to be more agile?
2. What concrete steps will we take in the next 1-2 weeks to build these agility-enhancing capabilities?

*build and accelerate . . .*



“Accountability is an individual choice. You’re not going to get far mandating it,” she (Rachel) said. “And it’s my job as the leader to improve Luc’s ability to make greater choices, as well as create the environment that encourages those choices.”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p. 4)



**In Chapter 7, Eric relayed a powerful interaction he had with his brother** who loved his work...and didn’t exactly feel the same about a couple of people he worked with. Eric asked the following Forward Focus Question about his brother’s relationship with these two colleagues:

Eric: ‘What is your responsibility in developing a stronger partnership with these two?’

Brother (with shock): ‘*My* responsibility?’

Eric: ‘Yes. You have two choices: Be a victim of the differences between you and them or be accountable to your values and the team and lead forward.’

- *Degrees of Strength* (p. 77)

Accelerator Mindset	Capability	Performance	Agility	Accountability
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### Your team's turn to give it a go!

Leverage the Degrees of Strength technique to develop accountability.

1. What is the current paradigm with which most people on the team view accountability: that it can be mandated and it only works to demand it? Or that accountability is a choice – and a leader's responsibility to develop the capability in others to make that choice?
2. Another paradigm question: Do most people currently focus on where and when people aren't accountable – or where and when accountability is being demonstrated? When we focus on where and when accountability is being demonstrated, what difference does this make?
3. In what targeted ways do we want our team to be even more accountable so we're able to accelerate delivery on our outcomes?
4. What are a) my own and b) our team's top 5 values that inform and inspire me/us?
  - a. How does it serve our team to go through the process of identifying our top 5 values (versus operating with 8-10 values)?
  - b. How do we and/or others experience our 'values in action'?
    - How do we know when we are operating from our values? Individually? As a team?
    - How does operating from our values enable us to be even more accountable to ourselves? To each other?
5. What happens to performance when we connect our values to our discussions about accountability?
6. What does it look like to leverage the 3 Mind Factors (see page 121 in *Degrees of Strength*) to create greater accountability? When will we commit to taking these actions?
7. What Forward Focus Questions can we ask ourselves that will enable us to be even more accountable (see the suggestions in "Apply the 3 Mind Factors using Forward Focus Questions")?

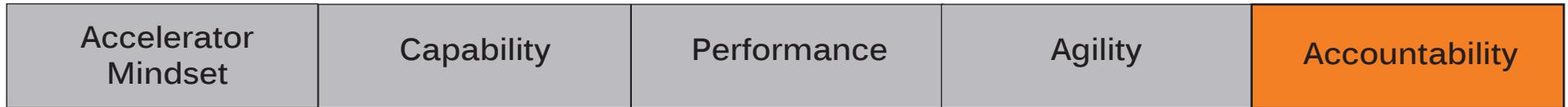
### 3 Mind Factors (page 26+)

- 1) You can only focus on one thought at a time.
- 2) You can't avoid a "don't."
- 3) You go in the direction of your focus.

### Apply the 3 Mind Factors Using Forward Focus Questions:

1. What focus do we demonstrate that supports our effort to accelerate accountability?
2. What approaches to our leadership are we using that reinforce a productive focus?
3. In what areas of our leadership can we increase and sustain a more productive focus?
4. How will an increased clarity of focus support our efforts to develop enhanced accountability within the team?
5. What steps will we take to model clearer focus in our daily interactions?
6. What are other Forward Focus Questions we can ask to develop even greater accountability?

## build and accelerate . . .



“But there he was, being vulnerable and providing full information, which ultimately would set us up for greater success. To seize the moment, I had to see the strength in his action and the situation and leverage it so we’d create greater accountability moving forward.” - Rachel, *Degrees of Strength* (p.3)

1. How will modeling the type of vulnerability that Rachel discusses set our team up for greater performance?
2. How did Rachel’s approach to Luc (referenced in the excerpt above) actually build greater accountability with Luc and the rest of the team?
3. How is being accountable, as well as growing others’ abilities to be accountable, inspiring?
4. What’s the connection between our level of personal inspiration – and our ability to be vulnerable and transparent?
5. What other Forward Focus Questions will create greater accountability among our team? What questions will we use with those we lead and partner with to develop greater accountability in them?

### Check out these additional accountability-related Forward Focus Questions:

- a. Which of the actions we discussed will propel us forward the most – and why?
- b. How will we know we are making adequate progress?
- c. Where does this fit on our list of priorities?
- d. How will we measure our success/progress?
- e. What benchmarks will tell that we are going to effectively/efficiently hit the target?
- f. How will we know when we’ve done it?
- g. How will we measure success in this area?
- h. What does the completed objective look like?
- i. What does “success” look like?
- j. Who is committed to moving this aspect of the project forward?

“People who work for Accelerators can *feel* it. This means they’re more likely to take responsibility, especially when things become difficult.”

- *Degrees of Strength* (p. 92)



What are my own core values that inform my leadership? When I lead fully engaged with my values, what is then possible? What are 2-3 actions I can take to be even more accountable for developing the people and partnerships around me? When I am being fully accountable to myself and others, how is that impacting my team’s/our organization’s ability to deliver performance excellence? What specific steps can I take now to be more accountable to those around me and their deliverables? How will I know I am moving up the Degrees of Strength scale in terms of being more accountable?

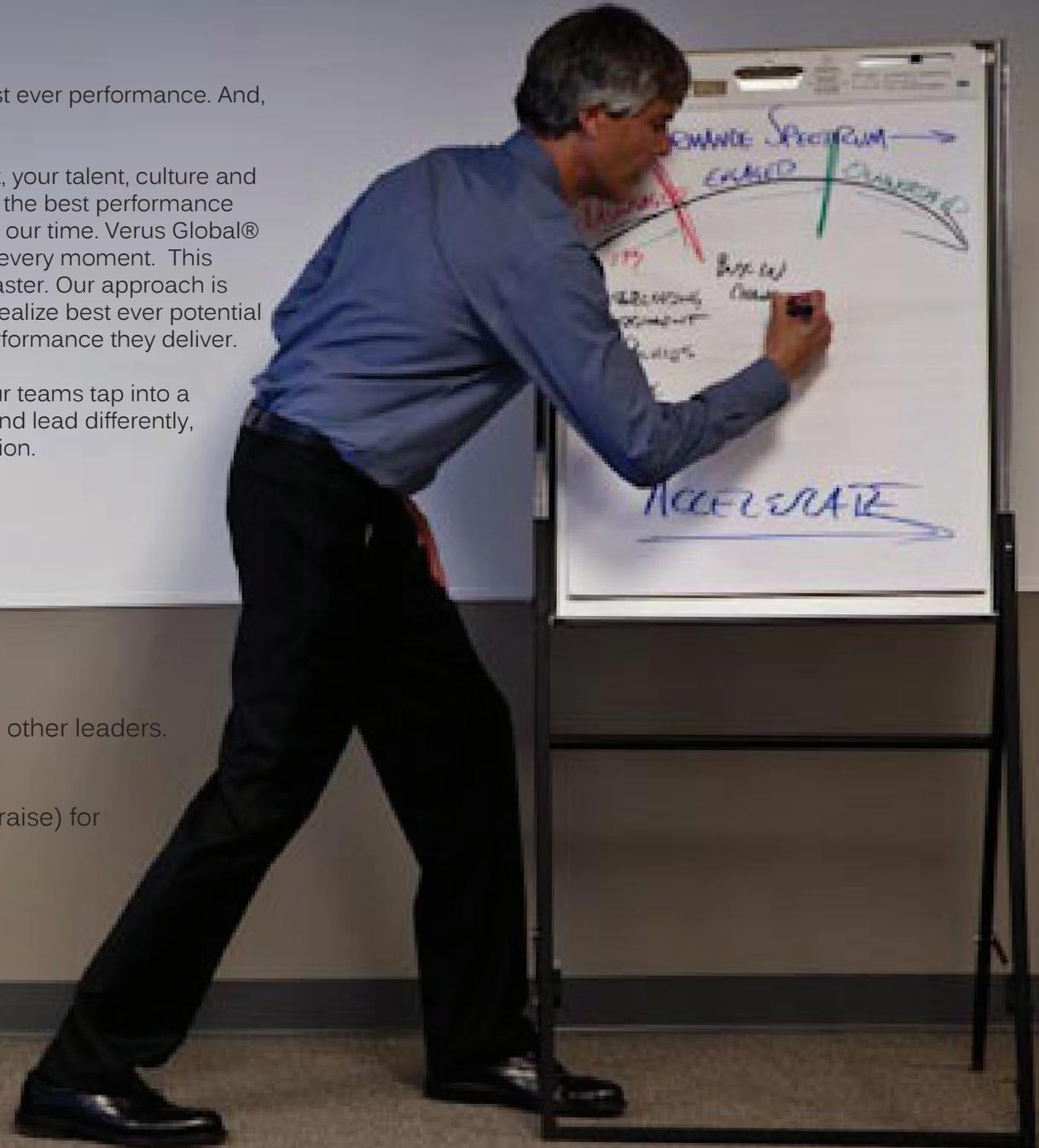
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