



Susan Williams | Village Trainer, Gallup-Certified CliftonStrengths®

We want our teams to be well-oiled machines—efficient, focused on the task, and dedicated to the goal. This isn't a negative thing. More work gets done, goals are accomplished, and the organization is more successful. In this quest for efficiency, however, we sometimes forget that “a well-oiled machine” is a metaphor—and metaphors eventually fall apart. When a team doesn't produce the results you expect or has trouble implementing a plan, you can't simply “swap out the parts” and expect everything to work.

What if, instead of thinking of your team as an efficient but inflexible machine, you thought of them as an orchestra, made up of skilled musicians with their own talents and strengths? Messier, for sure, but with guidance and support, capable of so much more. Expanding the metaphor works, too—with your team as the orchestra, leadership as the composer, and the clients or customers as the audience. The composer creates the vision, the audience has expectations, and the orchestra's job is to bring it all together. In the middle is the conductor. That's you.

The conductor's job is to understand the vision of the composer, the expectations of the audience, and the talents

of the orchestra, then create an experience that satisfies everyone. It's not an easy job. The vision isn't theirs, the expectations aren't theirs, and an orchestra is made up of thinking, feeling, and sometimes messy humans with ideas of their own. So, how do they get everyone to perform well together? They know them: what they excel at, what motivates them, what they're capable of, where they can be challenged, and when they'll need help.



A successful orchestra depends on a conductor who understands what needs to be done and who has the strengths to make it happen. Supervisors can do the same by helping each team member understand their role and use their talents where they're needed most. For example, they might help one employee understand why they need to take a smaller role in one project, while giving another employee the support and confidence they need to take the lead. When a conductor knows what needs to be done, understands the capabilities of the entire orchestra, and works with them to be their best, beautiful music is performed and audiences are delighted.

Interested in taking your supervision to conductor level? Contact us at strengths@thevillagefamily.org to start the conversation.