What Is
StandOut®
Powered by ADP®

?

What Is This Position?

This Position sets out to define clearly what we mean by the term "StandOut," our most important brand concept, and defines several associated terms, products, and features in our StandOut ecosystem.

I. WHY STANDOUT?

StandOut exists to help people maximize their unique contributions, and the unique contributions of those around them, at work.

We start with a question — "Why StandOut?" — because the story of StandOut is a story of questions. StandOut is founded on the research of **Marcus Buckingham**, which began by asking a simple question: "what lies at the heart of a great workplace?" In pursuit of creating a measuring stick for what makes organizations great, he and we have kept on asking questions.

When you ask thousands of questions of millions of people at thousands of companies, in countries all over the world, eventually, you start to see some patterns, and from those patterns, answers emerge. The clearest, best answer to what causes greatness at work turned out to be: organizations are great when people have the chance to play to their strengths every day.

While our research in this area continues to generate all kinds of interesting data, this insight has remained constant. It provides the foundation for everything StandOut does. In short, StandOut's strengths-based approach isn't a philosophy; it's a *finding*. It was discovered through relentless questioning that revealed the answer to what drives people to create, to contribute, to collaborate at the highest levels.

Incidentally, this finding is aligned to the work of many other researchers in the field. As far back as 1966, management guru **Peter Drucker** wrote that "the effective executive builds on strengths"

// standout.tmbc.com

(*The Effective Executive*). **Dr. David Cooperrider** established the field of Appreciative Inquiry in 1987 "to build organizations around what works rather than fix what doesn't." And **Dr. Martin Seligman**, in 1999, gave a speech at the Lincoln Summit announcing his intent to build the science of positive psychology, to focus for the first time not on repairing illness but on "the side of strength, the side of what we're good at."

In addition to being based on the best available evidence, this finding about the importance of strengths presents individuals and organizations with an appealing win/win situation. Since getting people to play to their strengths allows them to make their greatest contributions, doing so is a win for the organization (for the "we" every individual is a part of); since playing to their strengths makes people more energized and fulfilled, it's a win for individuals, too (for "me"). This means that, while StandOut does focus on individual uniqueness, its approach and appeal need not be limited only to those organizations or cultures that have an individualistic approach. StandOut is built to serve both the individual and the larger group including that individual.

> "The purpose of StandOut [is] to help you pinpoint and channel your unique gifts. Built upon the principles of positive psychology, its application focuses your time on your strength[s] as the path of least resistance to deliver results."
>
> Marcus Buckingham
> *StandOut 2.0*

II. DEFINITION OF STANDOUT

Now that we've explored the "why" of StandOut, let's define what it is precisely:

StandOut is a research-based approach to talent[1] that helps people discover, value, and contribute their unique strengths.

This approach is supported by a dedicated suite of **technology**, **coaching**, and **leader development** offerings.

---

[1] By "talent" here, we mean both individuals' approach to their own talent, and an organization's approach to its people. As Marcus Buckingham has written, talent lies at the heart of each individual's unique contribution: "For most of us, talent seems a rare and precious thing, bestowed on special, faraway people. They are different, these people with talent. They are 'not us.' Great managers disagree with this definition of talent. It is too narrow, too specialized. Instead they define a talent as 'a recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied.'" (*First, Break All the Rules*, p. 71)

III. DEFINITION OF STRENGTH

Because StandOut is based on research findings about the importance of strengths, we use the word "strength" a lot in our work, often with different shades of meaning. So let's define our terms clearly. As many words in the dictionary offer more than one meaning, so in StandOut, the word "strength" encompasses **three distinct but related concepts**:

Strength *Mindset*

The Strength Mindset is a conscious choice to focus on the positive, to emphasize what's working.

In common with the work of Seligman and Cooperrider and others exploring positive psychology, we encourage the opposite of negativity bias or deficit thinking — not to ignore problems or weaknesses, but to address them from a strengths-based perspective. We often refer to this as the "Strengths Lens."

> "The Strengths Lens is about seeing people (including yourself) for what they bring, rather than for what they lack."
>
> **StandOut Team Member Workshop**

Strength *Role*

Strength Roles represent how an individual's intrinsic traits combine into certain themes to create a positive advantage that can be productively applied.

The StandOut Assessment identifies each individual's Top 2 out of 9 possible Roles.

> "The number of ways to measure the fine shadings of human uniqueness is infinite. The number of powerful theme combinations, however, is not. We found nine, which we called "Strength Roles."
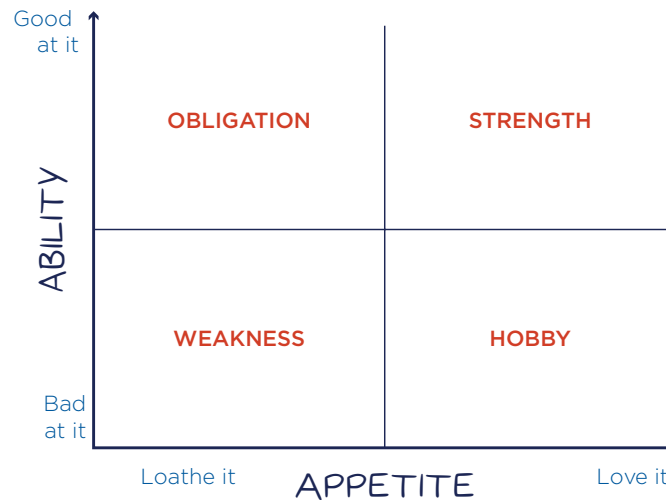>
> Marcus Buckingham
> *StandOut 2.0*
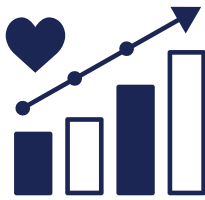
Strength *Activity*

A Strength Activity is a specific action that an individual excels at and loves doing.[2]

Such examples of energized excellence are often referred to in shorthand simply as "strengths." The quadrant below illustrates how Strength Activities are a combination of **appetite** and **ability**.

In people's daily work, Strength Activities are recognizable by four SIGNs:

- **Success**: When you do the activity, you feel effective.
- **Instinct**: Before you do the activity, you actively look forward to it.
- **Growth**: While doing the activity, you feel inquisitive and focused.
- **Needs**: After doing the activity, you feel fulfilled and authentic.

> "You experience your own strengths best not from taking an assessment or from receiving feedback about your strengths, but from using them."
>
> Marcus Buckingham
> ***StandOut 2.0***

---

[2] In *Go Put Your Strengths to Work*, Marcus Buckingham defines this sense of a strength as "an activity that makes you feel strong." In coaching and learning interactions over time, we have found that, while this definition does a good job of emphasizing the emotional energy, the *appetite* associated with strengthening activities, it does not fully capture the component that relates to *ability*.

In the world of StandOut, it is often obvious which of these three meanings someone is referring to in a casual reference to the word "strength." But we should try wherever possible to be precise by specifying which of the three we mean: the Strength Mindset, Strength Roles, or Strength Activities.

What StandOut has in common with other strengths-based approaches is the Strength Mindset. What makes StandOut unique, though, is the focus on Strength Roles and Strength Activities. This combination of all three elements sets StandOut apart, helping individuals discover their unique best and how to contribute it — recalling why StandOut exists

Our StandOut offerings — technology, coaching, and leader development — help people put into practice our strengths-based approach, to deliver win/win results for both individuals ("me") and their organizations ("we")

Strength
Mindset

+

Strength
Roles

+

Strength
Activities

> "No one has quite the same configuration of strengths as you…. You will be at your most productive, creative, focused, generous, and resilient when you figure out how to play to your strengths most of the time…. When you do, your customers, your colleagues, your company, and you will win. Everyone will win…. Let tomorrow begin with your asking yourself, "What are my strengths, and how can I contribute them today?"
>
> Marcus Buckingham
> ***Go Put Your Strengths to Work***

IV.   STANDOUT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

The StandOut Assessment

The StandOut Assessment is a 15-minute situational judgement test that measures people against 9 "Strength Roles" and identifies their Top 2. These Roles provide a starting point for anyone who wants to explore personal strengths, and serve as the foundation for customizing content in the StandOut Platform.

After taking the StandOut Assessment, users are given a multi-page description, presented online or in printable format, called the StandOut Report. It provides a more detailed description of a user's Top 2 StandOut Roles, as well as detailed guidance on how to talk about and use Roles. The StandOut Report is broken into several sections that explore multiple aspects of how a user's StandOut Roles show up in everyday work and life.

The StandOut Platform

The StandOut Platform is StandOut's core technology product, providing tools that enable people to embed the StandOut approach in their day-to-day work and pay continuous attention to people's uniqueness and contribution. StandOut features are designed to complement each other and work together to create a high-performing, engaged, strengths-based organization: Engagement Pulse helps team and org leaders measure engagement; Check-Ins help team leaders give team members the attention that drives engagement higher; Performance Pulse tracks each individual's contribution; and the StandOut Assessment provides everyone with a common language to describe, identify, and leverage strengths, day by day. Then, admin tools and reporting paint a picture of the entire organization, turning the StandOut Platform into an ongoing evidence engine that provides insights to further drive engagement and performance

Check-Ins

Check-Ins are frequent 1:1 strengths-based connections[3] about near-term future work.

They are a way for team members to record their connection to their work — how they feel about their work — week by week. The technology captures trends, provides a way for people to track how they felt about the tasks they've worked on ("Loves" and "Loathes"), and openly invites team members to ask their leaders for what they need. All of this information can then serve as a rich basis for a one-on-one connection. Frequent connection leaves team members feeling more engaged in their work (as StandOut data continues to demonstrate). Check-Ins also prompt individuals to share priorities and reflect on the work they'll be doing each week.

[3] We often use the word "conversations" to define this practice, but "connections" is appropriately broad enough to acknowledge (1) that not every team leader with a large span of control can have a real-time conversation with every team member every week, and (2) that the Check-Ins tool actually provides many ways to provide attention efficiently and connect people through the technology.

> "We found four characteristics common to the 'performance management' routines of great managers. First, the routine is simple. Great managers … prefer a simple format that allows them to concentrate on the truly difficult work: what to say to each employee and how to say it. Second, the routine forces frequent interaction between the manager and the employee…. Frequent performance meetings force both manager and employee to pay attention…. Third, the routine is focused on the future…. Last, the routine asks [team members] to keep track of [their] own performance and learnings…. These four characteristics — simplicity, frequent interaction, focus on the future, and self-tracking — are the foundation for a successful 'performance management' routine."
>
> Marcus Buckingham
> ***First, Break All the Rules***
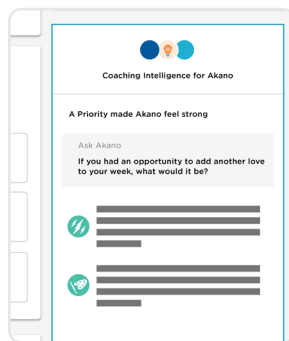
Coaching Intelligence

Coaching intelligence provides situational open-ended questions and tips that promote a strengths-based approach to work based on specific data users provide in the StandOut Platform (in Check-Ins, the Assessment, or other features).

Available to both team leaders and team members in each weekly Check-In, coaching intelligence is based on the team member's Top 2 Roles and responds to what was recorded in the Check-In itself. It provides insights that can create more meaningful and productive connections and gives team leaders questions to help guide a rich conversation. These tips also help build self-awareness about the trends that impact people's relationship to their work, such as ways their Top 2 Roles may be contributing to successes or frustrations.
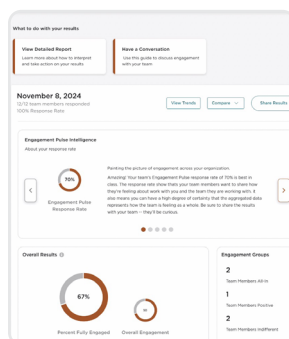
Engagement Pulse

Engagement Pulse is a survey constructed to measure the conditions of engagement a team leader has created for a team. It measures team engagement based on the eight critical questions that differentiate high-performing teams, and delivers results to team leaders as soon as all team members have responded (or the survey window closes). Launchable directly by the team leader (or centrally by organization admins) it creates a picture of the team's experience through the eyes of the people on it. The Engagement Pulse Results walk-through and debrief guides are designed to help team leaders encourage team connection by paying close attention to results and working on engagement together as a team.
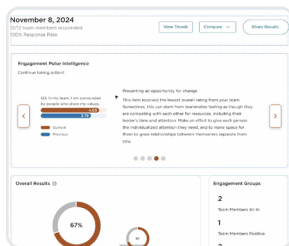
## Engagement Groups / Engagement Pulse Intelligence

Engagement Groups provide a nuanced picture of the continuum of engagement in teams and organizations. Individual team members will fall into one of four groups: *All In* (the highest end of "Fully Engaged"; *Positive* (hovering around the cutoff criterion for "Fully Engaged"; *Indifferent* (providing neutral ratings to EP items); or *Not Engaged* (providing generally low ratings to the EP items).

Engagement Pulse Intelligence provides team leaders with useful tips for making a team even more engaged at work, helping to celebrate successes, take action to improve, and follow up on engagement efforts.
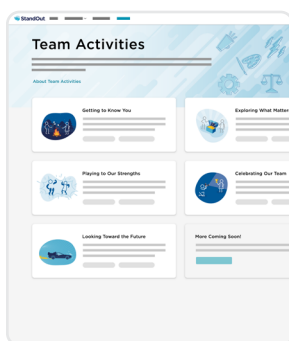
Team Activities

Team Activities provide engaging, light-touch, strengths-based experiences for any group of people. They offer a simple way for any team to learn more about each other and become closer as a group. These activities allow teammates to get to know new team members, discover what tasks strengthen and weaken colleagues, and connect on multiple levels so that working together becomes more enjoyable and more productive.
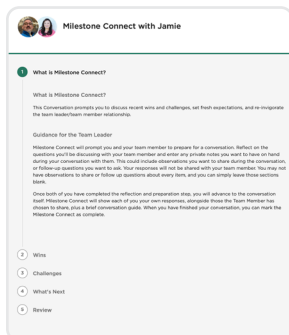
Milestone Connect

Milestone Connect is an interactive conversation guided directly within StandOut, asking team members to answer questions that get to the core of their strengths, challenges, wins, and goals at work over several months, as the foundation for a deeper conversation between team member and team leader. These conversations give the team leader and team member a chance to look at the bigger picture from time to time, ensuring that team leaders understand what matters to team members and what they can do to thrive.
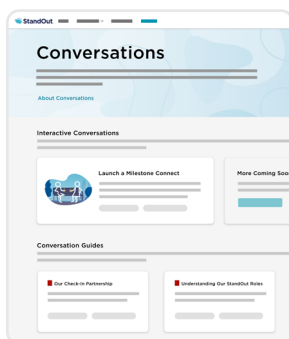
Conversation Guides

Conversation Guides help colleagues create deeper connections by offering an engaging framework for discussion between two (or sometimes more) people on a variety of topics. (Examples include how to make Check-Ins even more powerful, how each person's Roles show up, and how each person prefers to approach various aspects of work.) These conversation guides create meaningful connection points that help people understand each other better, work together more effectively, and feel that they are seen for the talent they bring.

Performance Pulse

Performance Pulse is a subjective measure of team member performance that helps nullify rater bias by asking team leaders not to rate team members, but to indicate what they intend to do with each team member. This approach accounts for the infamous Idiosyncratic Rater Effect (in which any individual's rating of another person reflects the rater more than it does the person being rated). Performance Pulse makes measuring performance both simpler and more reliable.

How to Work Best with Me

Based on each person's StandOut Roles, the "How to Work Best with Me" section of a StandOut Platform user's Snapshot makes it easier for colleagues to connect with one another, starting from a foundation of how they naturally show up at work. Specific themes such as "How I Feel about Change," "How to Give Me Constructive Comments," and "How to Receive My Comments Constructively" provide a framework for removing friction in workplace interactions and helping people build understanding of themselves and each other.

Strength Statement Builder

Strength Statement Builder, familiar from StandOut workshops and now built into the StandOut Platform, helps individuals capture specific details about the activities that make them feel strong. Beginning with a verb representing an action the user loves to do, it walks people through a series of questions that explore which factors contribute to making an activity a strength. Users can create as many Strength Statements as they want and share them on the Platform. Strength Statements are a useful tool for anyone who wants to identify how to make the greatest contribution possible.

Come to Me When Statement

Available on users' Snapshots, "Come to Me When" is a simple yet powerful way for people to connect to colleagues based on their own strengths. These statements are an invitation for people to connect and work together, creating win/win situations in which people are able to do what they love in order to help others be more productive.
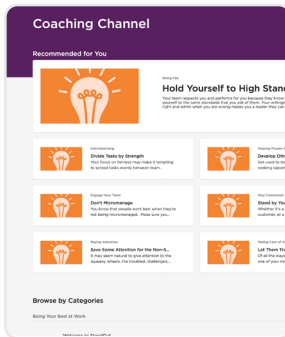
Coaching Channel

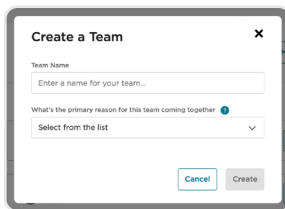The Coaching Channel is the central location for ongoing tips offering strengths-based coaching insights for team leaders and team members. These tips are also delivered once per week, by email, to both team leaders and team members.

Dynamic Teams

StandOut offers any user the ability to create a Dynamic Team and invite anyone else within the organization to join it. Going beyond the traditional team leader/team member relationship of the org chart, this can enable people to share Check-In responses and even engagement sentiments with a wider range of colleagues.
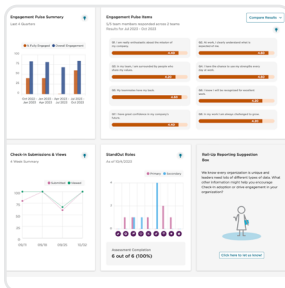
Leader Summary

The Leader Summary presents team leaders with a quick overview of their teams' latest Engagement Pulse results and how their StandOut Roles are distributed. Keeping StandOut Roles top-of-mind is a great way to build team connectedness.

StandOut Strengths Coaching Products

StandOut Strengths Coaching

StandOut Strengths Coaching is personalized 1:1 coaching that focuses on leveraging strengths to unlock potential and accelerate performance. While our coaches have extensive backgrounds in any number of models and deep knowledge of general coaching techniques, this is the specific type of coaching offered by TMBC, based on our proprietary strengths coaching methodology that helps people maximize their contributions.

Informed by decades of applied strengths coaching experience combined with strengths research, our methodology leverages the four principles of Situation, Story, Strategy, and Strengths. This simple but powerful approach asks people to apply their unique strengths to real-world challenges and opportunities. Our coach approach is not limited to our 1:1 coaching, but is the basis of all of TMBC's core offerings, including workshops and technology.

StandOut Debrief

A StandOut Debrief is a standalone 60- or 90-minute personal 1:1 session with a certified StandOut Debrief practitioner to deepen a person's understanding of how Roles can be used to create the greatest impact at work. StandOut Debriefs dive into an individual's StandOut Report in depth, helping people embrace the positive language the StandOut Assessment provides to understand and describe their comparative advantage.

Strengths Coaching Certifications

StandOut Debrief Certification and StandOut Strengths Coaching Certification teach coaches and leader development practitioners to leverage the StandOut Assessment and our StandOut Strengths Coaching model. Equipping the Coaching, LD, and OD teams who support an organization's leaders with these StandOut certifications will allow the organization to support the types of connection discussed above.

Strength Development Offering

StandOut eLearning Modules

StandOut eLearning modules introduce people to StandOut concepts in highly interactive, engaging self-paced sessions that can be added to any Learning Management System.

StandOut Team Member Workshop

The StandOut Team Member workshop provides individuals or entire intact teams with a simple yet powerful way to learn more about their StandOut Roles and strengths, so that every team member can connect and work more effectively with others.

StandOut Team Leader Workshop

The StandOut Team Leader workshop helps team leaders understand the power of connecting to their people based on Roles and strengths, and gives them practical experience applying Platform tools — specifically Check-Ins and Engagement Pulse — effectively to sustain connection week by week throughout the year

Coaching Essentials for Team Leaders Workshop

The Coaching Essentials for Team Leaders workshop teaches leaders how to ask coaching-style questions that will foster connection by empowering team members. By meeting people where they are and enabling them to discover insights about the best ways to approach their work, team leaders can create meaningful impact across their teams.

Cultivating Connection for Your Team Workshop

The Cultivating Connection for Your Team workshop deepens interpersonal connections within teams based on shared values and strengths, and fosters a stronger, more unified organization.
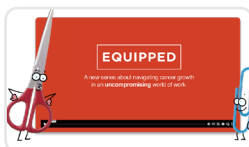
Micro-Coaching Video Series

StandOut video series offer micro-coaching explorations of common issues and challenges in the workplace, such as career development and building connection at work.

V. STANDOUT RESEARCH

StandOut is both the product of research, and a producer of research. StandOut's foundations lie in trying to measure the immeasurable. In his book Love + Work, Marcus Buckingham says, "How the heck do you measure something as squishy as a person's level of empathy, or ego, or assertiveness, or competitiveness? The challenge was not only how to define these strengths but, more importantly, how to measure them when the person didn't even know if they had them or not." StandOut's mandate to build constructive applications based on the research data resulted in StandOut and its associated products and services. As part of ADP, StandOut's research also demonstrates connection to many of the initiatives by the ADP Research Institute (ADPRI).

The StandOut Platform's Check-Ins, Engagement Pulse, and Performance Pulse continue to generate data that can provide insights into the world of work. A key concept for measuring the impact of the StandOut approach is "Full Engagement." Engagement Pulse can identify workers who are "Fully Engaged," defined as highly committed to the organization and its mission (see more about this in the Additional Key Terms section below). The instrument reveals to organizations and team leaders what percentage of a team is Fully Engaged, providing a basis to understand how a team is experiencing work at any given moment in time

VI. ADDITIONAL KEY TERMS AND LANGUAGE

In addition to the products and services we sell, there are other terms that will frequently arise in conversation about StandOut

Long-Term Priorities (note: called Focus Areas at ADP)

Found in the Check-Ins feature on the StandOut Platform, Long-Term Priorities are a space to track longer-term projects and goals that go beyond the current week. This feature can be used as team members and team leaders see fit to capture ongoing, complex work and individual goals.

Loathes

Loathes are activities that someone avoids, dreads, and feels drained by. They are the opposite of loves, and the emotional component of weaknesses. There is a section of the Check-In feature on the StandOut Platform devoted to capturing what users loathe doing. Note: The word "loathe" can have extreme connotations for some users. StandOut has chosen it precisely to evoke a powerful emotional response. The term is used in Check-Ins to help people distinguish those activities that truly drain them and make them disengaged from those activities that are simply not exciting or mildly off-putting. In a strengths-based context, while we accept the reality that everyone will have some job duties that may not be invigorating, ensuring that people are not spending excessive time on the things that deplete them is crucial to building engagement and performance.

Loves

Loves are activities that someone anticipates eagerly, tackles with energy, and enjoys doing. The opposite of loathes, loves are the emotional component of strengths. There is a section of the Check-In feature on the StandOut Platform devoted to capturing what users love doing. Team leaders can help their team members play to their strengths more frequently by ensuring that the team member regularly spends time doing something they love during the work day.

Overall Level of Team Member Engagement (also Overall Team Engagement)

Part of the results of an Engagement Pulse, this is a standardized score for a weighted mean measuring the average engagement level of the individuals on the team. (Compare to Percent Fully Engaged below.) The Overall Level of Team Member Engagement is an average of standardized scores based on the Overall Engagement Level calculated for all team members. This number ranges from 0 to 100, but is not a percentage.

Note that this score does NOT capture a metric of an entire team's engagement level, but rather an average of a metric that is calculated at the individual level. "Overall Engagement" is sometimes used as shorthand in technical reports. The key concept to keep straight is that Overall Team Engagement/Overall Engagement Level is distinct from Percent Fully Engaged.

Percent Fully Engaged (also Fully Engaged Team Members)

Part of the results of the Engagement Pulse, the Percent Fully Engaged score measures the number of people on a team (expressed as a percentage) who are passionately committed to the team and their role within it. The score compares each team member's combined survey responses to a specific threshold that indicates a team member is "all-in" — highly committed and willing to give the greatest effort to the team and organization. The calculation is expressed as the percentage of team members who are Fully Engaged. We should never say, "The team's engagement is [%FE]. Instead, we should say "the percent of the team members Fully Engaged is…."

Priority

Found in the Check-Ins feature in the StandOut Platform, Priorities are the most important work an individual is focused on in a given week. Every week, users can mark a Priority from the prior week as complete or carry it over to continue. They can also indicate whether a Priority has made them feel strong, weak, or neutral.

Weakness

A weakness is an activity that makes you feel weak. Although "weakness" is a familiar and common word, in StandOut's world, it has a precise definition that focuses less on outcomes or competence than on energy. One of the most fundamental "aha" concepts we try to enable people to understand is that you can be weakened even by doing something you excel at, if you feel drained by doing it.