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**The perceived influence of the Strength-based Approach on the Affective Commitment of A, B and C players.**

**Master Thesis Human Resource Studies 2012**

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## Abstract

Talent as a synonym for the entire workforce is the inspiration of this research. With the strength-based approach an organization can access employees at all levels of the organization. This study explores the perceived influence of the strength-based approach on the awareness of strengths, positive emotions, intrinsic motivation and affective commitment of A, B and C players. An intensive case study research comprising interviews and desk research is the method of this qualitative study. Researching the project 'Building on strengths' (BOS) of Philips Lighting Turnhout should give an answer to the following question: 'To what extent does the strength-based approach influence affective commitment in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?'. Results are analyzed on the basis of qualitative data methods. A matrix was developed to compare answers on questions about different concepts. Thereby, a comparison between different employee groups could be made. Several important conclusions could be drawn. In the perception of all employee groups, the strength-based approach has a positive influence on the awareness of strengths, positive emotions, intrinsic motivation and affective commitment. The perceptions among employees are not very different from each other, except for the fact that some B players and one C player reported to be negatively affected by the reorganization and in that case BOS seems to be not important anymore. Other effects that are researched in this study are the perceived influence of awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation on affective commitment and the difference in perceptions of A, B and C players. In the perception of A players, awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation positively influence the level of affective commitment. B players only report positive emotions to be of influence on affective commitment while C players do not acknowledge any effect at all. It must be mentioned that the restructuring phase of the organization, the implementation of BOS and the use of BOS by the supervisor seemed to have influenced the affective commitment of the B and C players negatively.

*Keywords: strength-based approach - affective commitment - A, B and C players - positive emotions - intrinsic motivation - awareness of strengths*

## 1. Introduction

The global economy has expanded dramatically the previous decade, business leaders and human resource managers worried about the intensifying international competition for talent; and the impact of not having the right people to lead and confront business challenges (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). During the global financial crisis, economic slow-down, and massive restructuring, talent remained a critical agenda item (Guthridge, Komm & Lawson, 2008). Due to the 'war for talent' companies mainly tried to attract, develop and retain the A players (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). Talent often refers to 'the best and the brightest' and organizations adopted the term to refer to their 'A-level' employees who rank in the top 10 to 20% best performers (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin & Michaels, 1998). However, in many organizations, talent has become a synonym for the entire workforce. Several authors in recent years have rightly emphasized the valuable contributions of B players: capable, steady performers who make up the majority of any workforce (Guthridge et al., 2008). Solid C players are very good at very little, but due to their need for stability and certainty these employees are valuable. Organizations can't afford to neglect the contributions of other employees. Guthridge et al. (2008) argue that research on social capital also highlighted the importance of inclusiveness: top talent is more effective when it operates in vibrant internal networks with a range of employees. Performance suffers when such social networks are absent or withdrawn (Guthridge et al., 2008). Companies must therefore address the needs of talent at all levels of the organization. Unsung segments – frontline staff, technical specialists, even the indirect workforce – are often as critical to overall success as A players (Guthridge et al., 2008). Experience suggests that an exclusive focus on top players can damage the morale of the rest of the organization and, as a result, overall performance. A more inclusive approach involves thinking of the workforce as a collection of talent segments that actively create or apply knowledge (Guthridge et al., 2008). Nevertheless, the talents and strengths of the B and C players are often neglected within organizations. The strength-based approach (SBA), originated from positive psychology, does acknowledge the talent of the entire workforce. A strength-based approach refers to the extent to which informal practices in an organization focus on the use of their employees' strengths (van Woerkom & Meyers, 2011). A talent or strength can be defined as 'each recurring pattern of thinking, feeling or behaving which can be used in a productive manner' (van Woerkom et al., 2011, p.29). The

strength-based approach builds on strengths to make employees happier, more engaged, and more productive (Kaiser & Overfield, 2011). In fact, individuals who focus on their weaknesses and remediate them are only able to achieve average performance at best; they are able to gain far more – and even to reach levels of excellence – when they expand comparable effort to build on their talents (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005). At the individual level, the strength-based approach involves identification of talent, integration into one's view of self, and changed behavior (Clifton & Harter, 2003). When people become aware of their talents, through measurement and feedback, they have a strong position from which to view their potential. Subsequently, they begin to integrate their awareness of their talents with knowledge and skills to develop strengths (Clifton & Harter, 2003). By identifying and nurturing strengths, employees are motivated to become engaged. Intrinsic motivation refers to 'doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable' (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.55). According to Ryan and Deci (2000) intrinsic motivation is facilitated by a sense of competence, facing optimal challenges, feeling a sense of choice and self-directedness, supportive relationships and freedom from demeaning feedback; aspects of a strength-based approach. Applying the SBA can also lead to the experience of more positive emotions among employees (van Woerkom, Stienstra, Tjepkema & Spruyt, 2011). Doing what you are inherently good at, using your strengths, leads to the experience of positive emotions (DeWulf, 2011). And, according to the broaden-and-build theory of Fredrickson (2001), the experience of positive emotions causes a positive spiral. The experience of positive emotions will lead to more resilience and therefore to a better resistance to misfortunes, which will lead to more positive emotions (DeWulf, 2011). Besides, every individual that regularly experiences positive emotions will grow on and on to an optimal functioning through dynamic processes, which are fed by positive emotions (DeWulf, 2011).

Thus, the SBA seems to influence many working behaviors in a positive manner. However, there is little research of the influence of the strength-based approach, awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation on the affective commitment of employees. Affective commitment can be defined as 'the desire of the employee to remain in the organization' (Allen & Meyer, 1993). Affective commitment seems to have a positive influence on important organizational outcomes like employee health and well being, on the job behavior and turnover intention (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). Therefore, the aim of this research was to elaborate the scientific knowledge about the strength-based approach and affective commitment in order to clarify the perceived relations between the concepts.

Previous and recent literature mainly focused on talent conceptualized as A players. This research extends the scientific knowledge by focusing on talent conceptualized as the entire workforce. Moreover, this study elaborates the scientific knowledge of the perceived relation between the strength-based approach, a relatively new concept in science, and affective commitment. Scientific research of this relationship is rare. The practical relevance refers to organizations. It is good to be aware of the fact of how the SBA influences affective commitment in the perception of employees. This will give new insights in how to use talent in the organization effectively.

This all led to the following research question: ‘To what extent does the strength-based approach influence affective commitment in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’

In this research, one specific organization is studied. In the case study researched, the strength-based approach is introduced by the HRD department of the organization and is actively used by the managers and employees of the organization. It is interesting to find out how the managers and workers have perceived the introduction of the strength-based approach and what has changed within the organization according to the employees. One sub-question for this research question is therefore: ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced the working environment, way of working and interaction among employees in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’

The other part of this research is focused on how the strength-based approach has influenced awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation and if those three aspects play a role in influencing affective commitment according to the employees. This led to the following sub-questions:

- ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced awareness of strengths in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’
- ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced positive emotions in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’
- ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced intrinsic motivation in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’

- 'To what extent does awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation in the perception of workers influence affective commitment and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?'

More specifically, the aim of this research is to find out how the strength-based approach is influencing the working environment, way of working, interaction among employees, awareness of strengths, positive emotions, intrinsic motivation and affective commitment and if there is a relationship between those aspects according to the employees.

## 2. Theoretical framework

This chapter gives an overview of the literature used for this research. Theories and concepts are explained as well. Furthermore, the relations between different concepts are made plausible by linking the concepts through literature. The chapter starts with a conceptualization of A, B and C players, the subject of interest of this research. It is followed by an explanation of the strength-based approach. Subsequently, the relationship between the two concepts is elucidated. Then, awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation, are defined and elaborated. A description and definition of organizational commitment, in particular affective commitment, is given afterwards. Finally, the relationship between the strength-based approach and affective commitment is made plausible.

### 2.1 A, B and C players

Companies often distinguish talent by developing different employee groups within their organization: the so-called A, B or C players. Where A players are the high-achieving stars, the B players are the solid, good-enough middle team and the C players are the limited bottom-end (Huselid, Beatty & Becker, 2005). The A players are the high performance and high potential employees, the top 10 – 20 % highest performing employees of the company (Huselid et al., 2005). These employees have direct strategic impact and exhibit high performance variability among the employees, representing upside potential (Huselid et al., 2005). Another group of A players are the young, highly educated employees with a potential to develop their skills and knowledge and eventually reach the higher positions in the organizations. Many companies, however, put too much emphasis on their star A players. This leads to battles and dissatisfaction amongst A players and devalued and dejected B players, who may leave or give less than they could. B players make up for 70% of the professional staff and are called ‘solid citizens’ (DeLong, Gabarro & Lees, 2008). These solid citizens deliver regularly and steadily. There are some who could be A players but have chosen not to for lifestyle reasons. These employees are the heart and soul of an organization (DeLong et al., 2008). B players are more modest, with fewer expectations than A players, and with a greater need for work-life balance. Solid citizens also differ from stars in that they usually stay on staff longer and thus build up institutional knowledge, which makes them invaluable when firms merge or downsize (DeLong et al., 2008). The B players take a longer-term perspective because they have been through organizational cycles and understand their



ebbs and flows (DeLong et al., 2008). C players are those that do not play a role in furthering a company's strategy and have little effect on the creation or maintenance of value (Huselid et al., 2005). C players just want a steady job to pay their bills. However, if C players are not solid, they require more management intervention than necessary. This could be very problematic for an organization.

Maister (2005) describes three types of consultants: dynamos, cruisers and losers. These types fit the distinction between A, B and C players. The dynamos are the truly dedicated professionals with career aspirations. Cruisers practice their trade well but have no career aspirations; they are comfortable. Losers, for whatever reason, are simply stuck where they are (Adams & Zanzi, 2005). However, Maister (2005) does not see them as different people but as all of us at different stages in our lives.

## 2.2 Strength-based approach

The strength-based approach (SBA) has been inspired by positive psychology and is a relatively new concept in practice. The SBA is a perspective of development that does not focus on improving the weaknesses of employees; instead it focuses on optimizing talents and strengths (van Woerkom et al., 2011). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) report that in the new science of strength and resilience individuals are no longer viewed as a passive vessel responding to stimuli; 'individuals are now seen as decision makers, with choices, preferences, and the possibility of becoming masterful, efficacious' (p. 8). A strength-based approach refers to the extent to which an organization focuses on the use of their employees' strengths. There are many good levers for engaging people and driving performance – levers such as selecting for talent, setting clear expectations, praising where praise is due, and defining the team's mission – the master level is getting each person to play to his strengths. Pull this lever, and an engaged and productive team will be the result (Buckingham, 2007). Strengths refer to 'a natural capacity for behaving, thinking, or feeling in a particular way that allows optimal functioning and performance in the pursuit of valued outcomes' (Linley and Harrington, 2006a, p. 39). Buckingham and Clifton (2001) clarified that strengths are not innate but must be built by combining the natural talents possessed by an individual with knowledge and skills. Experts claim that employing one's strengths is associated with many positive outcomes (Biswas-Diener, Kashdan & Minhas, 2011). Once strengths are built, they energize individuals, motivate them, and give them a sense of authenticity (Govindji & Linley, 2007).

According to van Woerkom et al. (2011), elements of the strength-based approach are: offering possibilities to discover talent and develop these talents into strengths; valuing strengths; and provide employees with an environment in which strengths can be used optimally. Van Woerkom and Meyers (2011) also acknowledge these elements. In their article they mention key features of an organization with a strength-based approach. First of all, individual talents need to be identified. The second key feature is to offer coaching, mentoring and various training activities that advance the previously identified talents in order to create strengths (Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2011). Development of strengths plays to people's inherent drive to nurture and to develop their talents, to fully use their potential, and to achieve personal growth (Linley & Harrington, 2006b). Thirdly, organizations implementing SBA have to make sure that their employees can optimally utilize their strengths while working. The last feature is general appreciation and valuing of individual potential, talents and strengths (Van Woerkom & Meyers, 2011).

### **2.3 Relation between A, B and C players and the strength-based approach**

Linking A players and the strength-based approach is not very hard. This particular group of employees is given the most attention within an organization. A players are treated as high performing and high achieving talents and get room to develop themselves continuously. Moreover, these employees get praised and paid well.

Contrasting, B players are ignored most of the time. One of the things found is that if you ignore B players long enough, they begin to see themselves as low performers (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2003). To manage B players, you need to first accept that they are different from A players and that they respond better to individual treatment. B players are people too and like positive attention. Show them how they fit into the bigger picture and how they are adding much-needed value (DeLong & Vijayaraghavan, 2003). According to DeLong and Vijayaraghavan (2003), managers who bring out the best in B players are tapping into a wonderful and often well-hidden resource.

The attention aimed at C players is often in a negative way. For instance, Huselid et al. (2005) mentioned: 'C players are those that play no role in furthering a company's strategy, have little effect on the creation or maintenance of value, and may in fact not be needed at all' (p. 4). This may not be the best way to treat these employees. If these employees are unable to improve, an organization needs to find a way of getting them into a position where they can contribute to the extent of their true ability and motivation ('Managing C players', 2012). This is not always easy, as 'the right job' is seldom ready at hand.

## **2.4 Affective commitment**

Cook and Wall (1980) defined organizational commitment as “feelings of attachment to goals and values of the organization, one’s role in relation to this, and attachment to the organization for its own sake rather than for its strictly instrumental value” (p. 40). In the studies regarding organizational commitment a lot of researchers refer to the three-component model of Allen and Meyer (1993). According to Allen and Meyer (1993) “the model proposes that employees remain with an organization because of their: 1) desire to remain (affective commitment); 2) recognition that the costs associated with leaving would be high (continuance commitment); and/or 3) feelings of obligation to remain (normative commitment)” (p. 50). In this research, affective commitment is seen as the most important component because of the desire of the employee to be involved in the organization. Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) conceptualize affective commitment as ‘an individual’s attitude towards the organization, consisting of a strong belief in, and acceptance of, an organization’s goals, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization’ (p.27). Affective commitment is expected to develop on the basis of work experiences that increase the employees’ feelings of challenge and ‘comfort’ in the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1993).

## **2.5 Relation between the strength-based approach and affective commitment**

The relationship between the strength-based approach and affective commitment is not often researched. However, there is some evidence that shows an influence of the strength-based approach on affective commitment. Van Woerkom and Meyers (2011) mentioned that there is an effect of the strength-based approach on the development of higher levels of competence, self-efficacy, commitment, motivation and engagement.

There is also some empirical evidence of the relation between the strength-based approach and affective commitment. Elston and Boniwell (2011) showed that being aware of strengths and using strengths, the aim of the strength-based approach, provides a range of benefits. All participants in the research mentioned that commitment was seen as an important outcome of using strengths. Pritchard (2009) also suggests that the use of strengths leads to commitment to work.

## 2.6 Personal outcome variables: awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation

The idea is that the strength-based approach influences the awareness of individual strengths. Most people do not know their strengths. The strengths argument argues that if people knew what their strengths were, they could make better use of them (Kaiser & Overfield, 2011). Thereby, the strengths movement offers the promise that in maximizing one's strengths, one can realize one's potential and achieves self-fulfillment and optimal performance in work, community and family roles (Buckingham, 2008). Pritchard's (2009) work suggests that awareness and use of strengths might lead to greater energy and an accompanying commitment to work. Also DeWulf (2011) mentions that the use of strengths can lead to a higher commitment and better performance at work. Therefore, stimulating self-awareness to discover one's strengths and then encouraging the person to identify how to use those strengths more often and in new situations can be important (Seligman et al., 2005).

According to van Woerkom et al. (2011), applying the strength-based approach can lead to the experience of more positive emotions among employees. Subsequently, experiencing positive emotions can lead to more positive outcomes for employees and the organization. For example, the strength-based approach can influence the development of higher levels of competence, self-efficacy, commitment, motivation and engagement (van Woerkom & Meyers, 2011). Strength-based organizations make employees feel valued, responsible, autonomous and skillful, which can be characterized as positive emotions, and they facilitate employee development and growth. Those features of the SBA should contribute to high employee ratings of positive organizational support (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison & Sowa, 1986), which makes it likely that employees will reciprocate in terms of enhanced commitment, in-role and extra-role performance.

Intrinsic motivation refers to 'doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable' (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p.55). Or stated otherwise: 'the degree to which the employee is self-motivated to perform effectively on the job, that is, the employee experiences positive internal feelings when working effectively on the job' (Hackman & Oldham, 1975, p. 162). Park, Peterson and Seligman (2004) mentioned that using strengths can lead to intrinsic motivation. Also Eby, Freeman, Rush and Lance (1999) argue that intrinsic motivation can lead to affective organizational commitment (Eby et al., 1999).

### **3. Methodological framework**

This chapter gives an overview of the research approach. It provides the research design, description of the case, instruments, procedure and analysis.

#### **3.1 Research design**

To answer the research question: ‘To what extent does the strength-based approach influence affective commitment in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’, this research used intensive case study research. Within an intensive case study research, the researcher focuses on only one specific instance of the phenomenon to be studied, or only a handful of instances in order to study a phenomenon in depth (Swanborn, 2010). An intensive case study research was necessary because the exploratory nature of this research question required in depth information. Besides, to answer the research question, an applied form of the strength-based approach was needed. The strength-based approach is a relatively new approach in practice and is applied by a limited number of organizations. It was important to find an organization that systematically applied this approach. Intensive case study research was necessary to discover explicit information. Furthermore, the relationship between the strength-based approach and affective commitment has not yet been studied extensively. Moreover, the scientific knowledge of the strength-based approach and its outcomes is rare. Therefore, this study conducted exploratory and descriptive research. The subject of interest of this research is a project within Philips Lighting Turnhout called: ‘Building on strengths’ (BOS). The units of observation are the participants of the BOS project. The unit of analysis is on group level. The outcome of this research says something about the employee groups (A, B and C players) that participated in the BOS project. The main goal was to study how the strength-based approach influenced the affective commitment of A, B and C players in the perception of workers. Semi-structured interviews are used because they provide extensive information, which is necessary for an intensive case study research. In addition, desk research is done. Philips Lighting Turnhout provided useful documents to the researcher, such as extensive information about the workshops and procedure and the first results of their own survey about BOS.

#### **3.2 Description of the case**

The case chosen was the project ‘Building on strengths’, which was introduced by Philips Lighting Turnhout in 2009 following a downsizing operation. The organization started a project-team to restore the trust of the employees. The main idea was that focusing on the

strengths of the employees would improve the self-confidence. The project had two different approaches: one for managers and directors and one for employees. Managers and directors participated in workshops for recognizing their own strengths and talents, being able to give positive feedback and appreciative coaching. Employees mainly participated in workshops about recognizing their own strengths and talents, being able to give positive feedback and recognize what their strengths meant for shaping their jobs. Philips Lighting Turnhout employed approximately 1700 employees and the project covered all different employee groups within the organization. Until now, about 1000 employees participated in the workshops of the BOS project. The organization is still actively training the other 700 employees.

Due to the economical crisis a problematic, insecure environment developed during my research at Philips Lighting. Philips Lighting Turnhout has switched to LED lighting a couple of years ago, which meant that plants are moved to other places and investments in Turnhout were frozen. During the execution of this research, Philips Lighting Turnhout received the announcement that another 137 employees needed to be laid off in 2012. Philips headquarter decided that the layoffs would fall among the office employees. Therefore, the A and B players were affected by the restructuring, which obviously had a big impact on the employees and this research. Nevertheless, interviews were held with the participants of the BOS project at all employee levels. The sample was collected on the basis of the willingness of the participants to cooperate. Eventually, 21 respondents were interviewed.

### 3.3 Instruments

The data for this research were gathered with two different instruments: 1) semi-structured interviews and 2) desk-research. Semi-structured interviews were used because they provide more open-ended and in-depth information. A key feature of an in-depth interview is that it combines structure with flexibility (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010). Because this study wants to gather the most accurate information, the interviews were held in Dutch to exclude possible language barriers with the respondents. The interviews were recorded and processed afterwards. Due to the semi-structured basis of the interviews, participants mostly received the same questions and therefore comparisons between participants could be made. Participants were interviewed until no new information was revealed. The interviews were divided into three different concepts: the perceived impact of the strength-based approach on the organization, situational aspects of the strength-based approach and the perceived impact of the strength-based approach on the person. The interview questions about the perceived

impact of the strength-based approach on the organization made it able to answer the first sub question: ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced the working environment, way of working and interaction among employees in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’. The questions regarding the situational aspects of the strength-based approach and the perceived impact of the strength-based approach on the person made it able to answer the other sub questions about awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation. An example question of how those aspects are measured in a qualitative manner is as follows: ‘Considering last month, when were you working extremely motivated on a part of your job? What were you doing? Why did you feel motivated? Can you relate your level of motivation to BOS?’ To find out if the strength-based approach, awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation are influencing affective commitment in the perception of workers, employees were asked about when they were committed to the organization, how the employee expressed their commitment, why they were committed, what had contributed to their commitment and if there is a difference in their level of commitment before and after BOS. Eventually, with additional interview questions and the answers on the sub questions the research question could be answered. Appendix I shows the entire topic list of this research.

To determine which type of employee was interviewed, an extensive analysis of the respondents was set-up. Three ways of determination were used. Firstly, the contact person of Philips, who knows all the respondents and has a working experience of 25 years on several posts within the organization, made a division of different employee groups. He made a pre-selection of the persons to be interviewed to increase the chance of an equal division in employee groups. He denominated specific persons and labeled them as A, B or C players, by means of a description written by the researcher (appendix II). This description was based on literature describing the different employee groups. The researcher did not know the opinion of the contact person in advance. During the interviews, the researcher tried to form an opinion herself on the basis of the answers given by the respondents. Next to these two opinions, employees were asked to categorize themselves. The descriptions of the different employee groups were split up in different quotes. An example of a C player quote is: *‘Stability and security are important for me in work and life’*. For each category, four different quotes were written on separate cards (appendix II, different colors are different quotes). At the end of the interviews, employees were shown the set of cards with all quotes of the different employee groups. Then, employees were asked to pick out three to five quotes that characterized themselves best. After that, employees were shown three different cards

with three positive values that characterize each different employee group (appendix II, above each description a value is mentioned). The employees were asked to denominate a top three, where number one is the value in which they recognize themselves the most and three is the value in which they recognize themselves the least. That way, employees categorized themselves into one of the employee groups in a positive way without knowing the categories to avoid a ranking or valuation of the categories. Thus, the classification of respondents is a combination of the opinion of the contact person of Philips, the opinion of the researcher and the self-categorization of the respondents. Eventually, seven A players, seven B players and seven C players were interviewed. In appendix III, the results of assigning the respondents to an employee group are shown. The three opinions were generally consistent with each other. In the end, the opinion of the contact person was decisive because the researcher could have a wrong first impression of the respondents and the respondents could act according to social desirability by choosing other cards.

Next to the interviews, desk research was used to gather more general information about the organization and the project. Examples of documents that were used were a published article about the BOS project, presentations of the workshops that have been held and the yearly employee survey in which the first results of the project were clearly visible. Thereby, the researcher followed a part of the approach of BOS. The researcher read the same book (Buckingham & Clifton, 2001) as the participants and filled in the Strengthsfinder online. Eventually, desk research was used for building a good knowledge of the background of the BOS project, which made interviewing and understanding the respondents more easy.

### **3.3.1 Validity**

The internal validity was assured in the following way. The questions of the research were formulated, in advance, in a topic list (appendix I) and checked, which assured consistency between research questions and interview questions. Each topic was then elaborated into several questions, to be able to assess if the answers the respondents gave on the same issue were consistent. Besides, three pilot interviews with the three different types of employees were done to enhance the face-validity and to test if the interview questions were understandable for all levels in the organization. After each pilot interview, the respondent was asked for feedback on the interview. This feedback led to minor adjustments to the interviews and the self-selected division of employees. Next to that, the interviewer was the same person in every interview, which reduced bias as well.



Because of the fact that this study is an intensive case study research, acquiring external validity is hard and not the aim of this research. However, by providing an extended description of the case and the context of the case, external validity could be acquired. This research can only be generalized to a technical organization, with a project like BOS and an insecure environment. The results cannot be generalized to a broader context.

### **3.3.2 Reliability**

Providing step-by-step information about the steps made in the research enhanced the reliability of this research. Besides, anonymity was guaranteed. The information provided by the respondents was treated confidentially. Moreover, the interview started with relatively easy and impersonal questions and the more personal questions were asked at the end of the interview. As a result, respondents felt free to answer honestly.

### **3.4 Procedure**

The organization was selected on the strength-based approach being present. The organization was approached via the network of Kessels and Smit. After that, contact was established via e-mail, phone calls and face-to-face contact. A contact person of Philips selected the respondents at the end of May. Subsequently, appointments for interviews were made. At the beginning of May, the semi-structured interview format was designed. The three pilot interviews, to practice and verify the questions, took place at the end of May. Within the interviews a clear instruction was given without providing too much information, which could lead to biased participants. The duration of the interview varied from half an hour to an hour. The same researcher conducted the interviews in June. During the research, relevant documents were available.

### **3.5 Analysis**

Data collected by the interviews were categorized according to qualitative methods for analyzing. A program for coding, Atlas.ti, was used to analyze the data. This research used three different kinds of coding: open, axial and selective coding. Open coding is the ‘process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.61). Axial coding refers to ‘a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). And selective coding refers to ‘looking for connections between the categories in order to make sense of what is happening in the field’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 116). The three different forms of coding were intertwined with the different steps made in

this research. After conducting all the interviews, transcripts of the interviews were made. The following step was to insert the raw data into Atlas.ti. Then general themes and concepts of the raw data were identified. After that, the data were labeled and tagged by concept or theme, which belongs to the open coding process (appendix IV). Next, the data were sorted by theme or concept (appendix V). Then, the data were summarized, which led to the identification of elements and dimensions and to the refining of categories and classifying of the data, the axial coding process (appendix VI). The next step was to establish typologies, which led to the detection of patterns, associative analysis and the identification of clustering, all part of the selective coding process. After that, explanations were developed to be able to answer the how and why questions. The last step was to seek explanations to wider theory/policy strategies if possible (Ritchie & Lewis, 2010). In the end, a matrix is developed (appendix VII). This matrix was set up according to the five most important concepts researched in this study. The concepts that are displayed in the columns are the organizational changes (working environment, way of working and interaction among employees), the awareness of strengths, intrinsic motivation, positive emotions and affective commitment. The rows represent the respondents of this research, to which employee group they belong and a summary per respondent, of answers given on the interview questions about the different concepts. To be able to answer the first sub question about perceived changes in the organization after the introduction of BOS, the first column is used to study and analyze the data. The data described in this column are used to find out what has changed according to the respondents of this research. To answer the second part of the sub question about the differences in perception, the different respondents are labeled (A, B or C player) and the answers on the questions could be grouped together. That way, comparing the employee groups has become possible. The same method counts for the sub questions about the perceived influence of the SBA on awareness of strengths, intrinsic motivation and positive emotions. Input from the first column about the BOS project was used and compared with the columns of awareness of strengths, intrinsic motivation and positive emotions. The specific columns of the concepts and the combination of the columns are used to analyze the information of all respondents and in the end answers of different employee groups were compared. For the sub question about affective commitment the last column (affective commitment) has been used. Thereby, the columns of awareness of strengths, intrinsic motivation and positive emotions are compared to the column of affective commitment. All the information together was studied and in the end, comparisons between employee groups could be made. After analyzing the data and studying the existing documents, the research question and sub questions were answered.

## 4. Results

This chapter describes the results of the research based on the data derived from the interviews, desk research and a detailed data analysis. This chapter will be structured according to the sub questions as provided in the introduction. The results will be illustrated by various quotes of the respondents in order to enlarge the transparency of the research and elucidate the line of reasoning of the researcher. In appendix VIII an overview of the characteristics of the respondents is shown.

### 4.1 Perceived influence of the SBA on the working environment, way of working and interactions among employees

Philips Lighting Turnhout introduced the project ‘Building on strengths’ officially in 2009. This research is focused on how BOS has influenced the organization according to the employees. Therefore, one sub question is: ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced the working environment, way of working and interaction among employees in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’ To be able to answer the sub question, respondents were asked about the major changes within the organization since the introduction of BOS.

#### 4.1.1 Influence of the SBA on the working environment in the perception of workers

The overall opinion about the project seems to be positive when analyzing the data. Most of the respondents speak about BOS in a positive way, a project that gives them insight in their own personality and the personality of their colleagues. Only a few respondents mentioned that BOS had little to no influence on their working environment. However, since the introduction of BOS some major changes have occurred in the organization in the perception of the employees. One of the major changes mentioned by the respondents was the change of focus in viewing employees. Some employees call it a switch from a GAP analysis where the focus is on points of improvement to awareness of talents and strengths and a focus on what an individual employee really enjoys in performing their job.

‘The way we view employees now is that we focus on the fact that we are all different individuals with unique talents and capabilities.’ (R4)

‘The major change within the organization for me is the shift in the development of employees from filling gaps and repairing weaknesses to an awareness of talents that strengthen the employees which then can cover or compensate the weaknesses.’ (R10)

Employees also speak of a positive spiral when using the positive approach.

‘I can see that when people are doing the things which are very close to them, to who they are and their core qualities, it will be confirmed by other people and in an unconscious way they receive positive feedback which gives an enormous energy boost to continue with what they are doing.’ (R16)

Another major change in the perception of the employees is the culture of the organization. By making the talents and strengths of all the employees explicit and by believing in BOS, a common language is created. According to the employees, this changed their vision and mindset and showed that by focusing on the positive side of people, a better working environment was created. A good practical example, mentioned by many respondents as an obvious change in the culture of the organization, is the sharing of success.

‘What we are doing different now is appreciating. An example of that is the sharing of success, which we have not done before. We now have the possibility to share our successes on television screens in the personnel restaurant where we all come together. Previously, I did not know what a colleague has done the last couple of months and if that was perceived as a success. Now, we share our successes through which we create positive energy amongst each other.’ (R4)

#### **4.1.2 Influence of the SBA on the way of working in the perception of workers**

The positive approach also seems to have an influence on the way of working within the organization. Employees mainly mention person-job fit to be a huge change in their way of working. Employees seem to be more self-conscious in what they are good at and in what

they like to do through which they more often indicate what tasks they would like to perform. Also the managers acknowledge to use person-job fit more often, the strengths and talents of the employees have become more visible and it is better negotiable due to the common language and open communication about individual talents and strengths. Besides, due to the knowledge of the strengths and talents of employees, diversity within teams is also more often created.

‘How can I ensure that my employees are at the right place in the organization, getting assignments and tasks of the organization whereby they are fully able to use their talents? I am working more conscious, like a chess player, with my employees to put them into roles where their strengths are at best so that my team becomes stronger.’ (R4)

At the lower levels in the organization the major changes mentioned above are less directly visible. Among some of these employees (C players), resistance towards BOS is present. Some were enthusiastic to work on their self-development but reported to become negative because their colleagues were resistant to BOS and did not share the positive feeling. Others mentioned that they had the feeling that they could not use their strengths in their work and thus did not believe in BOS. However, these employees do mention more structured and routine work as a visible positive change due to BOS. Another remarkable change is that these employees are now giving more positive feedback to each other. They are trying to find a balance in giving negative and positive feedback and acknowledge that positive feedback is a better way to approach people.

#### **4.1.3 Influence of the SBA on the interaction among employees in the perception of workers**

The most significant change in interacting, in the perception of the employees, is a shift to open communication about strengths, talents and feedback. Employees are complimenting each other and they try to make each other aware of their strengths. Getting to know each other’s strengths seems to lead to a feeling of understanding. According to some employees, this causes less conflict.

‘Previously, a couple of employees had conflict regularly. Now, they tell to each other how their personality works and they can better understand why they are reacting the way they are. They take into account the character of different employees more than they did in the past. They now accept that the way they react is their nature.’ (R6)

Thus, to give an accurate answer to the sub question: ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced the working environment, way of working and interaction among employees in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’, it seems that BOS has a positive influence on the organization in the perception of workers and there seem to be differences in the perceptions of A, B and C players. In the organization the positive approach towards employees is used with an individual focus on talents and strengths of employees, which seems to create the experience of a positive spiral. According to the employees, the culture of Philips Lighting has changed by using the positive approach in a conscious way. This also seems to influence the way of working within the organization. Employees and managers acknowledge making regularly use of person-job fit, a positive way of working which focuses on the individual talents and strengths, needs and preferences of individuals and their job. However, there seem to be some differences in the perceptions of A, B and C players. It seems that the A and B players experienced the bigger changes and have a better view of what has changed within the organization while C players mentioned more practical changes in their department or team. Thereby, in the lower levels of the organization, the positive changes seem to be less visible. Among these employees there is some resistance towards BOS because some of them do not recognize that their superior treats them differently. However, these employees do remark other positive changes. Moreover, in all employee groups, the interaction seems to have changed into a way of open communication where complimenting each other, making each other aware of their strengths and positive feedback plays a central role.

## **4.2 Perceived influence of the SBA on awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation among different employee groups**

As described in the theoretical framework awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation can be influenced by the strength-based approach. Findings on different sub questions aimed at awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation will be described.

### **4.2.1 Influence of the SBA on awareness of strengths in the perception of workers**

The second sub question is aimed at awareness of strengths: ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced awareness of strengths in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’

According to most employees, the design of the BOS project influenced the level of awareness of strengths. A part of the workshop around BOS was to read the book of Buckingham and Clifton (2001) and fill in the Strengthsfinder, which reveals a top five of your personal strengths. Thus, all employees, except few employees who are at the starting stage of BOS, reported to be aware of their individual strengths after participating in the BOS workshops. Reactions to the knowledge of their own strengths included recognition, surprise, acknowledgement, appreciation and acceptance. In the perception of the employees, there seem to be more positive outcomes of the awareness of strengths. All employee groups mentioned that awareness of strengths gave them a feeling of positive emotions. Employees reported to feel more self-confident, self-conscious, satisfied, calm and the awareness created positive energy. Being aware of individual strengths also seemed to influence the frequency of using strengths. Respondents mentioned that they more often used their strengths while working and that using strengths influenced their level of motivation, pleasure at work and feeling of added value. However, some C players mentioned that they do not have the feeling that they can use their strengths in their job. Thus, the strength-based approach influenced awareness of strengths in the perception of workers through the design of the BOS project in which every participant will get to know its own strengths. The perceptions differ among employee groups in a way that some C players mention that they cannot use their strengths while working and sometimes do not know their strengths yet.

#### **4.2.2 Influence of the SBA on positive emotions in the perception of workers**

The third sub question is aimed at positive emotions: ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced positive emotions in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’

In the perception of all employee groups, the strength-based approach (BOS) creates the experience of positive emotions. Different aspects of the strength-based approach like structured work, the sharing of success, openness and person-job fit create positive emotions like proud, enthusiastic, satisfaction, self-confidence, energy and pleasure in work among the different employee groups. Moreover, a feeling of responsibility, teamwork, the use of talent, challenge and appreciation also creates feelings of positive emotions and pleasure in performing the job. A and B players seem to experience positive emotions when they can use their strengths, when they can add value to their work and when they can create energy in the company by applying person-job fit on lower level employees, motivate employees and being meaningful for other employees. While C players seem to experience positive emotions when

management listens to their individual opinion, when they achieve the target of the day, when they have the prospect of enough working activities for one day, when they can work together, when their work is appreciated and only few of them mentioned to experience positive emotions when they can use their talent in their job. So, there seems to be a difference in the level in which positive emotions are experienced. To give an answer on the third sub question; aspects of the strength-based approach seem to create positive emotions on all levels in the organization. However, where C players are experiencing positive emotions on a more practical level, A and B players seem to experience positive emotions when they are meaningful for the organization, job and/or colleagues.

‘I really like to go to work. Especially when I can work with my colleagues and get appreciation for my work’ (R20)

‘I have a job that gives me energy. I have a card on my wall that says: Give me a job that fits me and I will never have to work again.’ (R10)

‘I experience energy gain when I perform work which is in line with my strengths and talents.’ (R13)

#### **4.2.3 Influence of the SBA on intrinsic motivation in the perception of workers**

The fourth sub question is aimed at intrinsic motivation: ‘How has the strength-based approach influenced intrinsic motivation in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’

All employee groups mentioned aspects of the strength-based approach like a positive attitude, open communication, challenge, person-job fit, use of talent, autonomy, the sharing of success and the development and support of employees to be factors that influence their intrinsic motivation. This form of motivation can be called intrinsic because the employees experience positive internal feelings while working, like appreciation, pleasure in performing the job, satisfaction, energy, self-confidence, proud, boost and the building of relationships. For example, employees have become aware of their strengths and because of that are better able to use their strengths, when they use their strengths while working, they receive positive feedback on their work, which in turn is a motivation for employees to continue the work they are doing. Another example is the sharing of success, the positive approach focuses on every



success achieved by the employees, these successes are acknowledged and celebrated, in turn, the employees feel appreciated and proud for the work they delivered, which is a motivation to continue their job. However, all employee groups also mention aspects of motivation that are more business related, like satisfied customers, enough working activities, achievement of targets, functioning of a team and good results. Few employees (B and C players) reported that their motivation is affected negatively by the announcement of the reorganization of Philips Lighting. The future perspective of the employees and the organization apparently had a negative impact on the intrinsic motivation of these employees. They feel that there is no need to be motivated anymore if their future within the organization is uncertain. To answer the fourth sub question; different aspects of the strength-based approach seem to influence intrinsic motivation positively in the perception of the employees. The perceptions among employees are not very different from each other, except for the fact that some B players and one C player reported to be negatively affected by the reorganization and in that case BOS seems to be not important anymore.

#### **4.3 Perceived influence of awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation on affective commitment**

The fifth sub question is aimed at the perceived influence of awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation on affective commitment: ‘To what extent does awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation in the perception of workers influence affective commitment and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’

##### **4.3.1 Influence of awareness of strengths on affective commitment in the perception of workers**

Surprisingly, the awareness of strengths seems to influence positive emotions and intrinsic motivation rather than affective commitment. In the perception of the B and C players, there was little to no effect of the awareness of strengths on affective commitment. This could be due to the fact that BOS is not implemented completely on the lowest levels (C players) in the organization. Besides, supervisors seem to not always apply the SBA on the C players. The little effects found for B players could be influenced by the restructuring phase of the organization. According to A players, there is a perceived influence of awareness and use of strengths on affective commitment. For example, some A players mention that awareness of strengths makes them more self-confident and self-conscious, in turn,

employees use their strengths more often, which creates energy gain, in turn, these employees become more committed to the organization. A players also reported a positive influence of awareness of strengths on more practical working outcomes like a better control of their job, the making of targeted choices, teamwork, openness and an improvement in results.

‘BOS does have an impact on the commitment of employees. By understanding the feedback I have received in the past and linking the feedback to the strengths or pitfalls of their strengths, I am better able to understand myself. By concentrating on my strengths, I create more positive energy. As a consequence, I enjoy my work even more and will reach better results which leads to appreciation.’ (R10)

#### **4.3.2 Influence of positive emotions on affective commitment in the perception of workers**

According to the A and B players, positive emotions seem to influence affective commitment positively. For example, one A player mentioned that she developed herself since the introduction of BOS and that she appreciated the chances she got from the company. That makes her committed.

‘If employees can evaluate and develop themselves towards their core qualities and if that is mutual, so if the organization, supervisor and colleagues recognize and admit your talent in order that you can make your own choices about the place and job you want to be. I think you achieve a situation where employees are happier in the role they perform. Automatically, I think that it influences the engagement and commitment of employees in a positive way.’  
(R16)

‘What I try to do is stimulate our teams to be committed. We have a strong culture of autonomy in our plant. We do not supervise our employees, so the commitment of the employees needs to be high. We try to achieve that by sharing our success and put that in the picture. Those are really beautiful moments to experience. I think that leads to enthusiastic and committed employees.’ (R17)

However, in the perception of the C players there is no effect of the experience of positive emotions on affective commitment. Employees of all employee groups do acknowledge some other beneficial outcomes of the experience of positive emotions, like motivation and being able to motivate other employees, reduced absenteeism, lose track of

time while working and an improvement of results. Other perceived consequences of positive emotions seem to be a good atmosphere, feelings of appreciation and satisfaction, and being able to deal better with negative feedback.

#### 4.3.3 Influence of intrinsic motivation on affective commitment in the perception of workers

The influence of intrinsic motivation on affective commitment is once again not perceived by all employee groups. The B and C players do not mention intrinsic motivation as a factor to influence their affective commitment. Few B players even report negative influences on its motivation, like the restructuring of the organization and routine work. It seems that this is also influencing the affective commitment of employees. However, in the perception of A players intrinsic motivation does influence affective commitment positively.

‘The teamwork, the motivation, the enthusiasm, which everyone experiences from the lowest to the highest level of the organization, that is what I call commitment. And receiving it back. That they say we have done this together. That is a way of being committed together. To find the motivation to give the group enough energy to perform the best they can the next day.’

(R3)

‘I have always had a really strong belief in BOS. It is something you need to believe in otherwise it will not work. I always supported BOS and tried to perform activities around BOS. That gave me a feeling of commitment to the organization.’ (R21)

Eventually, the fifth sub question: ‘To what extent does awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation in the perception of workers influence affective commitment and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’, can be answered. A and B players are more or less committed on the same level. These employees mention to be committed to the organization, department, team and individual employees. Most of these employees have a managerial function on different levels in the organization. A players reported to be committed through motivation, enthusiasm, teamwork, person-job fit and the use of strengths. A players also mentioned that their commitment is dependent on the future perspective of the organization. Thereby, A and B players also mention that commitment is determined by the nature of the person. Some persons are naturally more committed than others. B players reported to be committed through a feeling of responsibility,

the sharing of success, proactive behavior, supporting employees, open communication and the use of talent. Some B players also mention to be negatively affected by the reorganization of the company. There are some other differences between A and B players. In the perception of A players, awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation influences affective commitment positively. Contrasting, in the perception of B players, only positive emotions influence affective commitment positively.

If C players mention to be committed, it seems that these employees are mostly committed to the department, their team and the tasks they perform. They like to work for Philips in general but are not really concerned with what happens within the organization on higher levels. Thereby, their commitment seems to be influenced by the more practical side of working like autonomy and achievement of targets. Only one C player mentioned to be committed when using his strengths while working. Another C player mentioned that commitment was diminished by the implementation dip of BOS.

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

The aim of this research was to elaborate the scientific knowledge about the strength-based approach and affective commitment in order to clarify the relations between the concepts. It led to the following research question: ‘To what extent does the strength-based approach influence affective commitment in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’. In order to answer the research question, an intensive case study research was done. In the following paragraph, the research question will be answered, limitations and recommendations for future research will be given and the scientific and practical implications of this research will be elaborated.

### 5.1 Conclusion and discussion

Looking at the results of the sub questions, it can be concluded that the strength-based approach has a positive influence on all employee groups in the perception of all respondents. According to the employees, the strength-based approach seems to influence the awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation positively amongst all employee groups. However, to give an accurate answer on the research question: ‘To what extent does the strength-based approach influence affective commitment in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’, results should be compared intensively.

#### 5.1.1 Perceived influence of the SBA on affective commitment

By asking respondents directly about their commitment, the employees mention that their level of commitment stayed the same over the years. The answers are probably influenced by the fact that employees tend to give socially desirable answers. Social desirability is mainly demonstrated because the control questions do show a perceived positive influence of the strength-based approach on the affective commitment of employees. All employee groups acknowledge that aspects of the strength-based approach: the positive attitude, person-job fit, open communication, autonomy and the sharing of success are influencing the affective commitment of employees positively in their perception. This form of commitment can be called affective because some employees indicate that the corporate culture in which they work now, is a culture which they appreciate and are accustomed to in such a way that they want to work in this particular organization. As mentioned in the

theoretical framework, Elston and Boniwell (2011) also acknowledge the influence of the strength-based approach on affective commitment and showed that being aware of strengths and using strengths leads to commitment. Thereby, Pritchard (2009) also suggested that the use of strengths could lead to commitment. Thus, it can be concluded that, in the perception of employees, there is a positive influence of the strength-based approach on the affective commitment of employees.

#### **5.1.2 Perceived influence of the awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation on affective commitment**

At the start of this research, the idea was that there also could be a perceived influence of the awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation on the affective commitment of employees. By looking at the results it seems that these three aspects are more interrelated with each other than thought beforehand. According to the employees, the awareness and use of strengths leads to the feeling of positive emotions and intrinsic motivation. While positive emotions are necessary to achieve intrinsic motivation among employees, factors that influence intrinsic motivation like autonomy and challenge simultaneously lead to the feeling of positive emotions. Thus, it seems that by using the strength-based approach, a positive spiral is created. The idea of a positive spiral is also acknowledged in literature. Fredrickson (2001) with the broaden-and-build theory mentions that positive emotions are working as an upwarding spiral. People, who experience more positive emotions, develop more resilience, which makes them better resistant to misfortunes. The satisfaction that follows will lead to the feeling of more positive emotions. Besides, DeWulf (2011) connects awareness of strengths and positive emotions by mentioning that doing what you are inherently good at and using your strengths leads to a feeling of positive emotions and a feeling of subjective well being or happiness. DeWulf (2011) also mentioned that the use of strengths leads to a higher commitment to the organization. However, only in the perception of most A players there is a positive influence of awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation on affective commitment. Nevertheless, one B player and one C player mentioned that awareness of strengths influences their affective commitment positively.

Among other employees the perceived effects are limited. However, four out of seven B players do recognize the positive effect of positive emotions on affective commitment. An important explanation for the lack of influence of intrinsic motivation could be that B players are under pressure due to the restructuring of the organization. Layoffs will occur amongst the

A and B players. This announcement was given at the time of this research. Three out of seven B players mentioned to be negatively affected by this announcement. Remarkable is that this apparently had no effect on the perceived commitment of most of the A players. This could be linked to the phenomenon of the psychological contract. Psychological contract can be described as: 'expectations about the reciprocal obligations that compose an employee-organization exchange relationship' or more specifically: 'a set of beliefs about what each party is entitled to receive, and obligated to give, in exchange for another party's contribution' (Levinson et al., as cited in Morrison & Robinson, 1997, p. 228). This theory can explain the difference in perception of affective commitment of A and B players because each employee group appreciates different values in their work. B players are aimed at work-life balance and stability, these employees like the job they have and do not want to change organizations. In return these employees are loyal to the company and deliver regularly and steadily. The restructuring of the organization is putting B players in an insecure position while their feeling of loyalty makes that they do not want to leave the organization. This could be damaging their psychological contract and thereby possibly their affective commitment. Morrison and Robinson (1997) also underpin this opinion; they state that violating the psychological contract will lead to reduced organizational commitment. Contrasting, A players want to grow and develop themselves. They seem to be committed to the organization because they have the opportunity to develop themselves within the company. Due to the strength-based approach they apparently still have the opportunity to do that unlike the insecure environment. Therefore their psychological contract seems to be not damaged and they still seem to be committed to the organization.

In the perception of the C players, awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation does not influence affective commitment. An important explanation for the lack of influence of those three aspects on the affective commitment could be that not all C players recognize visible changes in their working environment if their superior does not actively use BOS. Building on strengths is a voluntary project within Philips and it is not obliged to actively use BOS. In a situation where BOS is not actively used, there is a feeling of not having a chance to use talent in performing the job. This seems to cause some resistance towards BOS because the positive way of working is not always applied to these employees. Besides, some C players are at the starting stage of BOS and are not exactly aware of what their strengths are or how to use them in their job. These employees still need to form an opinion about the project and do not yet see the positive consequences it could have. It seems that the SBA, the awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation are

not on the same level compared to the level of A and B players. This seems to influence the lack of commitment. Also DeWulf (2011) acknowledges the importance of at least a balance between using and not using the strength-based approach. Two perspectives are described in his book. One of them is about the GAP analysis: making progress by determining the lack of the gap between reality and the norm and by eliminating those deficiencies. The second perspective is about growing by building on to reality and developing in the direction of the desired future. Where supervisors or employees are still using the GAP analysis instead of the positive approach, the delivered efforts of employees are damaged. Contrasting, the positive approach acknowledges talents through which autonomy and responsibility is activated. This encourages the wish to grow and develop yourself even more. It is important to find a good balance in these two perspectives. Only focusing on deficiencies will damage the development of talent while only focusing on the development of talent despite of the level of the employees will damage the realization of the objectives of an organization (DeWulf, 2011). Looking at the C players, it seems that a lot of them are still experiencing only the GAP analysis within Philips. However, when the advocates of BOS do use the strength-based approach in practice, the C players do acknowledge the positive influence of the strength-based approach.

### 5.1.3 Relating variables

In this research other factors have been taken into account. The interview questions were open-ended, which means that other aspects influencing affective commitment could be discovered. In fact, in the perception of the employees, commitment is also influenced by factors like the future perspective of employees and the organization, a secure environment, teamwork, personality and the achievement of results. These factors were not taken into account in advance but seem to be important by influencing affective commitment. The future perspective of employees and the organization and the insecure environment seem to be important due to the restructuring phase of the organization. According to some employees, it does impact affective commitment negatively. Literature supports this opinion. Heany, Israel and House (1994) defined perceived job insecurity as “an individual’s perception of a potential threat to continuity in his or her current job” (p. 1431). Employees do not know who has to leave within Philips, which means that there is a form of perceived job insecurity present in the organization. According to De Witte and Naswall (2003) perceived job insecurity leads to reduced organizational commitment in the Netherlands. Moreover, Sverke and Goslinga (2003) show in their research that job insecurity negatively affects affective



commitment on a significance level of  $p < 0,05$  in the Netherlands. This means that with an increase in the perception of job insecurity, there is a decrease in affective commitment.

## 5.2 Overall conclusion

Comparing the results of the data analysis enabled the researcher to answer the research question: ‘To what extent does the strength-based approach influence affective commitment in the perception of workers and to what extent do these perceptions differ for A, B and C players?’. It can be concluded that, in the perception of workers, the strength-based approach does have a positive influence on the affective commitment of all employee groups. This means that by introducing the strength-based approach in the organization, employees of all levels in the organization became more affectively committed to the organization in the perception of the employees. According to the employees, the strength-based approach does also positively influence the awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation of all employee groups. This means that due to the strength-based approach, employees seem to experience an awareness of strengths, self-consciousness, which enables them to use their strengths, which seems to lead to the feeling of more positive emotions and a feeling of intrinsic motivation. In the end, that seems to lead to a positive spiral, which continues the positive attitude of employees. Only in the perception of A players, this eventually influences their affective commitment. B players seem to only experience an influence of positive emotions on affective commitment. In the perception of C players, there is no influence of awareness of strengths, positive emotions and intrinsic motivation on affective commitment. With caution, it can be concluded that in the perception of B players, the insecure environment and perception of job insecurity influences the effect of the strength-based approach on affective commitment negatively. Thereby, C players seem to be dependent on the use of BOS by their supervisors. At last, the implementation of BOS in the lower levels of the organization seem to be limited which also could affect the outcomes of this research.

## 5.3 Evaluation classification of respondents

This research tried to develop a tool to categorize employees in different employee groups, the so-called A, B and C players. Classifying employees appeared to be a sensitive topic within organizations, especially when there is an insecure environment. At first, there was some resistance towards the categorization of respondents because it tends to be negative. In fact, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, literature shows a negative attitude toward

the lower level employees. However, it is also mentioned that a positive attitude toward these employees could be beneficial for organizations. This research wanted to find out if the impact of a strength-based approach would be positive for all employee groups. In order to achieve that, employees needed to be classified within the different employee groups. To prevent a negative attitude towards the self-selection, this study used a strength-based approach to categorize specific employees. In fact, this study found a practical way to classify different employee groups in a positive manner. Organizations need all the employee groups in their organization to work effectively and be profitable. According to literature, every employee group has different needs and values in what they think are important in work and life. These needs and values were used to sketch an image of the different employee groups in a positive way. Due to the positive quotes and values, employees were able to recognize themselves in each employee group without creating a negative attitude toward one of these groups. The method of self-selection seemed to work well but there are some remarkable conclusions. Of the total number of quotes chosen, A player quotes were chosen the least. This means that respondents recognized themselves slightly more in quotes about loyalty, work-life balance and stability instead of quotes about their career and growth opportunities. It seems that this could be linked to the insecure environment of the organization at the time of the research. Thereby, A, B and C players mainly chose the quotes and values that fit their employee group but preferred other quotes and values as well (appendix IX). I think that demonstrates the positive approach of this self-selection tool and the fact that there is no superior employee group within this tool. The combination of ranking the values of employee groups and selecting quotes in which the respondents recognized themselves the best made a realistic and objective self-selection possible. Thus, while categorizing employees in different employee levels seems to be negative, this research tried to find a way to classify the respondents in a positive way.

#### **5.4 Limitations and future research**

An important limitation of this research was the fact that during the research a restructuring of the organization was announced. The future perspective of the employees and the insecure environment obviously had its impact on this research. The strength-based approach lost some of the impact on several respondents. Employees still believed in BOS, were aware of their strengths and felt positive emotions, but seemed to be less motivated and committed to the organization due to the situation. The idea is that if the insecure environment was absent, some B players would experience more intrinsic motivation and thereby affective

commitment. Also some C players mentioned to be insecure about their future because it is the second restructuring of the organization in only three years time. They are wondering how long it takes before the whole plant is moved to a foreign country. Consequently, it seems that they are insecure of their future perspective within Philips Lighting Turnhout. Therefore, a recommendation for future research is to repeat this research in an organization that is not so heavily affected by the economic crisis.

Another important limitation is the fact that this research had a single case study design. The strength-based approach was introduced through a top-down process. In principle, this is positive because the importance of the belief in BOS among supervisors is huge. Otherwise, employees will not believe in this approach either. However, the introduction of BOS is three years ago and has not yet reached every employee on the lower levels of the organization. Some respondents even mentioned to the researcher to come back in a couple of months and do the interview again because their knowledge about the project would have grown by then. This could be an explanation for the lack of influence on affective commitment among the lower level employees. So maybe this research came to soon for finding out the real impact of the strength-based approach on the lower level employees. Therefore, a recommendation for future research is to perform longitudinal qualitative research and study the effects on multiple times to find out what has changed in the perception of the employees.

Subsequently, it would be useful to compare the results with an organization that has not implemented the strength-based approach in the organization. In this research, there is one case and results are compared to the previous situation in the same company. Effects of the strength-based approach were checked within the interview but it could be that changes in the organization and person are also caused by other factors. A person changes in three years time and other projects within the organization are probably influencing organizational changes as well. To determine what can be attributed to the strength-based approach it would be useful, for future research, to find another similar organization to Philips that does not use the strength-based approach. Longitudinal qualitative research in the same company could also be a solution.

Furthermore, including more variables could extend this research. In this research job security and personality seemed to have an influence on affective commitment. As mentioned in the conclusion, in the perception of the employees, job insecurity negatively influenced affective commitment in this research. Personality seemed to be important in this research, in the sense that if employees already had a positive attitude and were open about themselves

they seem to be better able to adapt to the strength-based approach. Thereby, respondents mentioned that some employees were naturally more committed than other employees. A separate research could determine the perceived effect of those variables on affective commitment. Besides, when qualitative research of the relation between the strength-based approach and affective commitment has expanded, statistical analysis could give an insight in the exact coherence between variables.

## 5.5 Scientific implications

The scientific implication of this research is that it elaborates the scientific knowledge of the perceived relationship between the strength-based approach, the awareness of strengths, positive emotions, intrinsic motivation and affective commitment among all employee groups. Due to an intensive case study, there is now more information about the perceived relations between the concepts. In advance, there was only limited information about the relationship between the strength-based approach and affective commitment. Only Elston and Boniwell (2011) and Pritchard (2009) mentioned that the strength-based approach could have a positive impact on commitment. However, affective commitment was not researched in these studies. This qualitative research shows a perceived positive influence of the strength-based approach on the affective commitment of employees in all levels of the organization. Thereby, the perceived effect of awareness of strengths on affective commitment was not researched before. In advance, Buckingham (2008) and Seligman et al. (2005) showed an impact of the strength-based approach on the awareness of strengths. Besides, DeWulf (2011) mentioned that awareness of strengths leads to a higher commitment. This research specifically focused on the perceived effect of awareness and use of strengths on affective commitment. Moreover, it showed the perceived influence it has on other factors as positive emotions and intrinsic motivation and according to the employees these aspects are more interrelated with each other than thought before. The effect of positive emotions on affective commitment was researched by van Woerkom and Meyers (2011) and Eisenberger et al. (1986). In this research there was also a perceived influence of positive emotions on affective commitment among the higher-level employees. However, my study also found out that the feeling of positive emotions alone is not enough to influence affective commitment among the lower level employees. A factor as the use of the strength-based approach by the supervisor seems to influence this relationship as well. Lastly, the effect of intrinsic motivation in relation to affective commitment is not researched specifically. Thus, this research extends the scientific knowledge by researching this relationship and found out that, in the perception of the

employees, intrinsic motivation has some positive influence on the higher-level employees. However, intrinsic motivation seemed to be influenced by the restructuring of the organization on the lower level employees. The most important contribution to scientific knowledge is the focus on talent as the entire workforce. This research found out that the strength-based approach is beneficial to use for all employee levels because the influence of this approach to awareness of strengths, positive emotions, intrinsic motivation and affective commitment were perceived as positive among all levels in the organization.

## 5.6 Practical implications

The practical implication of this case study regards the HRM policy of organizations. The importance of the perceived effect of the strength-based approach on the awareness of strengths, positive emotions, intrinsic motivation and affective commitment has been shown in this case study research and can be addressed in HRM policies. It seems that the strength-based approach does have a positive impact on all employee groups. According to the employees, the strength-based approach leads to the awareness of strengths, positive emotions, intrinsic motivation and affective commitment among all employee groups. This is an important finding and is very useful for organizations. Most employees reported to experience pleasure in work, to be intrinsically motivated and to be more self-confident. According to the managers, this positive spiral enabled the employees to perform better at work and achieve better results. Thereby, a positive culture is created within the organization, which seemed to positively influence affective commitment. Organizations are now only focusing on their A player employees while according to the perception of workers, the strength-based approach is beneficial for every employee in the organization. This idea is supported by Guthridge et al. (2008) who acknowledge that the inclusive approach is more beneficial for organizations than the exclusive approach. Thus, a recommendation for organizations is to implement the strength-based approach for all employees because it seems to cause a positive flow within the organization. Therefore, HR should create an environment in which the positive approach works best. HR should adapt its policy to the strength-based approach and implement the approach themselves through, for example, workshops. To make it work, HR should be an ambassador for the positive approach, share their knowledge about putting strengths to work and appreciative coaching and support managers and employees in their change process.

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## Appendix

## Appendix I. Topic list

*Short introduction of the researcher:* My name is Katja Pardoën and I am a master student Human Resource Studies at Tilburg University.

*Short explanation of the research:* My study is aimed at the project ‘Building on strengths’ which is introduced in your organization a couple of years ago. Within this interview, there are no wrong answers so please feel free to answer honestly.

*Duration of the interview:* The duration of this interview is expected to be half an hour to one hour.

*Guarantee anonymity:* Your anonymity will be guaranteed within this research. Your name will not be used for any objective. Before we start the interview, I would like to ask if you have any objection to recording this interview?

*Introduction of respondent:* Could you please give me a short introduction about yourself and your job within Philips?

*Change in working environment:*

1. If you think about the time before the project ‘Building on Strengths’ and after. What would be the most important change within the organization/department/team according to you?
  - a. Could you mention an example?
2. What has exactly changed in your way of working? What are you doing differently now? Where does the change took place? When do you experience these changes?
3. And if you think of the way of interaction among colleagues. What has changed in approaching each other? What is different now?

*Situational aspects*

4. Considering last month, when were you working extremely motivated on a part of your job?
  - a. What were you doing? Why did you feel motivated? Can you relate your level of motivation to BOS?
5. Considering last month, when were you extremely affectively committed to the organization?

- a. What were you doing? Why did you feel committed? Can you relate your level of commitment to BOS?
6. By participating in BOS you got a chance to get to know your own strengths and talents. How have you experienced that process?
  - a. What did you like about it? How did it affect you? Have you changed due to the participation and in what way? How did it affect your way of working? How did it affect your view at your organization and colleagues?
  - b. Can you mention an example of a situation in which you had the feeling that you added value to the organization when performing your job? When did that take place? What were you doing? How did you manage to use your talents?
7. Considering last month, when were you extremely happy with your job?
  - a. What were you doing? Why did you feel so happy? Can you relate your level of joy to BOS?
  - b. What would be the consequence of the joy in work? Can you mention an example?

*Change in person*

8. How did you experience participating in BOS?
  - a. What do you remember best of the project?
  - b. What do you think is important about that fact?
9. On what things in work and/or life had BOS some influence? And how did it influence those things?
10. If you have to describe yourself before and after BOS. How have you changed? Can you elucidate this with three key words before and after the intervention?
11. How did participating at BOS influence your commitment to the organization?
  - a. When are you committed? How does the commitment show?
  - b. How has the commitment established itself? What has contributed to the feeling of commitment?
  - c. Is there a difference in commitment before and after the project?
12. Have you some remarks that could be of added value to this research?

I would like to thank you for this interview. Give a short explanation of use of information and procedure of my research and answer any questions.

*Questions for the self-selection tool:*

1. You will receive twelve cards with a different quote on every card. Would you pick three to five quotes, which characterize yourself the best? In which quotes do you recognize yourself the best?
2. You will receive three cards with three different values on every card. Would you rank the cards in a top three, in which number one is the value in which you recognize yourself the best and number three is the value in which you recognize yourself the least?
  - a. If employees chose stability and certainty another question is: Would the top three be the same a month ago, before the announcement of the organization? And why?

## Appendix II. Description of different employee groups

Passionate about work (A player)	Personal development in work and private life (B player)	Stability and certainty (C player)
<p>I have a huge enthusiasm for my specialism and I enjoy to keep up with everything that has to do with my specialism. When I am working I sometimes totally lose track of time and I even forget to stop working. I like it if my job continuously develops; the more complex and varied, the more enjoyable it is. Growing within the organization is important for me.</p>	<p>I have a huge feeling of commitment and loyalty towards the organization. I think a healthy balance between work and private life (family and leisure) is important. I involve this in my considerations. With this job I am at the right place in the organization and I do not have a need for growth opportunities. Personal development in work and private life are important for me.</p>	<p>Job security is an important motive for me. Using my knowledge and capabilities are in service of this. I am at my best when there are clear working agreements. I will not easily go home before I finished my work for the day. Stability and security are important for me in work and life.</p>

## Appendix III. Classification of respondents

	Contact person Philips	Researcher	Employee	Order of values employee	Final decision
R1	B/C player	B player	B/C player	B - C - A	B player
R2	C player	C player	C player	C - A - B	C player
R3	A player	A player	B player	B - C - A	A player
R4	A player	A player	A/B player	A - B - C	A player
R5	B player	B player	B/C player	B - C - A	B player
R6	C player	B/C player	B/C player	C - B - A	B player
R7	A/B player	A player	A/B player	B - A - C	B player
R8	B/C player	C player	B/C player	C - B - A	C player
R9	C player	C player	C player	B - A - C	C player
R10	A player	A player	A/B player	A - B - C	A player
R11	C player	C player	B/C player	C - B - A	C player
R12	A player	A player	A/B player	B - A - C	A player
R13	A/B player	A player	A player	A - B - C	A player
R14	B player	B player	C player	C - B - A	B player
R15	B/C player	C player	C player	C - B - A	C player
R16	A player	A player	A player	A - B - C	A player
R17	A/B player	B player	A player	A - B - C	B player
R18	A player	A player	A/B player	B - A - C	A player
R19	C player	C player	C player	C - A - B	C player
R20	C player	C player	B/C player	B - A - C	C player
R21	B player	B player	A/B player	A - B - C	B player



## Appendix IV. Coding scheme after open coding

	Codes	Number of times named
1.	Autonomy	7
2.	Accentuating the positive	1
3.	Accepting	1
4.	Acknowledgement of strength	7
5.	Added value	3
6.	Appreciating strength	1
7.	Appreciation	5
8.	Appreciative inquiry	1
9.	Approaching	1
10.	Assertive	11
11.	Assigning activities	1
12.	Atmosphere	2
13.	Availability	2
14.	Awareness	12
15.	Balance	2
16.	Bear	1
17.	Belief	2
18.	Bilateral conversation positive	1
19.	Boost	4
20.	Challenge	8
21.	Change in task distribution	5
22.	Change in working hours	1
23.	Changing workplace	1
24.	Coaching conversation positive	1
25.	Comfortable	1
26.	Common language	2
27.	Compensating	1
28.	Complimenting	2
29.	Confirmation	1
30.	Consciously using strength	2
31.	Consultation	1
32.	Control	4
33.	Culture	6
34.	Culture change	1
35.	Daily activity	1
36.	Decision-making	1
37.	Deepen	3
38.	Developing	4
39.	Disagreement	1
40.	Diversity	2
41.	Drive	2
42.	Dynamic	1
43.	Employment creation	1
44.	Energy	12
45.	Enthusiasm	1
46.	Extra effort	1
47.	Extra-role behavior	1
48.	Familiar environment	1

49.	Feeling	3
50.	Freedom	1
51.	Functioning of the team	1
52.	Future-oriented thinking	2
53.	Future perspective	4
54.	Honesty	2
55.	Impact	1
56.	Independent	2
57.	Individual	1
58.	Individual focus	1
59.	Insecure	1
60.	Interest	1
61.	Job evaluation conversation positive	4
62.	Knowing strengths	5
63.	Lack of communication	1
64.	Lack of integration	1
65.	Learning point	1
66.	Lose track of time	1
67.	Loyalty	1
68.	Making it explicit	1
69.	Meeting	1
70.	Mindset	2
71.	Minimum effort	1
72.	Minimum of competences	1
73.	Mock	1
74.	More focused choices	5
75.	Motivating	5
76.	Motivation	1
77.	Nature	7
78.	Naturally	2
79.	Negotiable	1
80.	Of improvement point to positive	8
81.	Open communication	8
82.	Open-minded	1
83.	Openness	4
84.	Ownership	2
85.	Participation	1
86.	Persevere	1
87.	Person-job fit	17
88.	Person-organization fit	1
89.	Perspective	1
90.	Pleasure	6
91.	Positive approach	20
92.	Positive feedback	5
93.	Pro-activity	5
94.	Prosperity of the employee	1
95.	Proud	6
96.	Recognition	20
97.	Reduced absenteeism	1
98.	Relationship building	1
99.	Relativize	2
100.	Reorganizing	3
101.	Resilience	2
102.	Responsibility	5
103.	Result	12

104.	Routine	3
105.	Serenity	3
106.	Satisfaction	1
107.	Satisfied	1
108.	Satisfied customers	1
109.	Security	1
110.	Self-confidence	20
111.	Sharing of success	7
112.	Small group	2
113.	Stability	2
114.	Stay informed	2
115.	Strategy	1
116.	Structured work	5
117.	Success	1
118.	Sufficient work	2
119.	Supporting	6
120.	Surprise	4
121.	Target	4
122.	Teamspirit	1
123.	Teamwork	9
124.	Time passing by	1
125.	Together strong	1
126.	Trust	1
127.	Understanding	12
128.	Uniformity	2
129.	Upwarding spiral	4
130.	Use of ownership	1
131.	Use of strength	6
132.	Use of talent	19
133.	Variation	4
134.	View of people	2

## Appendix V. Coding scheme after axial coding

	Changed from	To	Total times cited
1.	Of improvement point to positive	Accentuating the positive	9
2.		Accepting	1
3.		Acknowledging strength	7
4.		Added value	3
5.		Appreciation	5
6.		Appreciating strength	1
7.		Approaching	1
8.	Understanding	Assertive	17
9.		Atmosphere	2
10.	Freedom, independent	Autonomy	9
11.		Awareness	12
12.		Balance	2
13.		Bear	1
14.		Belief	2
15.		Challenge	8
16.		Common language	2
17.		Compensating	1
18.		Complimenting	2
19.		Confirmation	1
20.		Control	4
21.	Culture change	Culture	7
22.		Decision-making	1
23.		Deepen	3
24.		Developing	4
25.		Disagreement	1
26.		Diversity	2
27.		Drive	2
28.		Dynamic	1
29.		Employment creation	1
30.	Boost	Energy	16
31.	Extra effort	Extra-role behavior	2
32.		Familiar environment	1
33.		Functioning of team	1
34.	Future-oriented thinking	Future perspective	6
35.		Honesty	2
36.		Independent	1
37.		Individual	1
38.		Individual focus	1
39.		Knowledge of strength	5
40.		Making it explicit	1
41.		Mindset	2
42.		Mocking	1
43.		More focused choices	5
44.		Motivating	5
45.		Motivation	1
46.		Naturally	2
47.		Nature	7
48.	Negotiable	Open communication	9

49.	Open-minded	Openness	5
50.		Ownership	2
51.	Ownership	Participation	3
52.	Change in working hours, feeling, change in taskdistribution, person-organization fit, availability	Person-job fit	24
53.	Enthusiasm	Pleasure	7
54.		Positive approach	20
55.	Bilateral conversation positive, coaching conversation positive, job evaluation conversation positive	Positive feedback	11
56.		Pro-activity	5
57.		Proud	6
58.		Recognition	20
59.		Reduced absenteeism	1
60.		Relationship building	1
61.		Relativize	2
62.		Reorganizing	2
63.		Responsibility	5
64.		Result	12
65.		Routine	3
66.		Satisfaction	1
67.		Satisfied	1
68.		Satisfied customers	1
69.	Insecure	Self-confidence	21
70.		Serenity	3
71.	Success	Sharing of success	8
72.		Small group	2
73.		Stability	1
74.		Stay informed	2
75.		Strategy	1
76.		Structured work	5
77.		Sufficient work	2
78.		Supporting	6
79.		Surprise	4
80.		Target	4
81.	Together strong	Teamspirit	2
82.		Teamwork	9
83.	Losing track of time	Time passing by	2
84.		Trust	1
85.		Understanding	6
86.		Upwarding spiral	4
87.	Consciously using talent, use of strengths	Using talent	21
88.	Changing workplace	Variation	5
89.		View of people	2
90.		Vision	1

	Deleted codes	Number of times named
1.	Appreciative inquiry	1
2.	Comfortable	1
3.	Consultation	1
4.	Daily activity	1
5.	Impact	1
6.	Interest	1
7.	Lack of communication	1
8.	Lack of integration	1
9.	Learning point	1
10.	Loyalty	1
11.	Meeting	1
12.	Minimum of competences	1
13.	Minimum effort	1
14.	Persevere	1
15.	Prosperity of employee	1
16.	Resistance	2
17.	Security	1
18.	Uniformity	2
19.	Use of ownership	1

## Appendix VI. Coding tree

### Change in working environment

- Most important changes in the organization
  - Positive approach
    - Accentuating the positive
    - Individual focus
    - Upwarding spiral
  - Culture
    - Belief
    - Common language
    - Making it explicit
    - Mindset
    - Sharing of success
- Way of working
  - Change in way of leadership
    - Person-job fit
      - Diversity
    - Positive feedback
  - Change in work
    - Compensating
    - Stability
    - Structured work
    - Routine
- Interacting
  - Approaching
  - Complimenting
  - Open communication
    - Negotiable
    - Understanding
  - Mock
  - Teamspirit
    - Relationship building

### Situational aspects

- Awareness of strengths
  - Appreciating strength
  - Acknowledgement of strength
    - Confirming
  - More focused choices
  - Recognition
    - Surprise
  - Knowledge of strengths
    - Deepen
    - Naturally
      - Accepting
- Positive emotions
  - Added value

- Time passing by
- Energy
- Consequence positive emotions
  - Atmosphere
  - Appreciation
  - Bear
  - Relativize
  - Satisfaction
- Pleasure
  - Disagreement
  - Dynamic
  - Employment creation
  - Honesty
  - Openness
  - Reduced absenteeism
- Proud
- Satisfied
- Self-confidence
  - Independent
- Motivation
  - Autonomy
    - Trust
  - Challenge
  - Functioning of team
  - Future perspective
    - Control
    - Strategy
  - Other people:
    - Developing
    - Motivating
    - Supporting
  - Participation
  - Pleasure
  - Result
  - Satisfied customers
  - Sufficient work
  - Target
  - Teamwork
  - Variation

### **Change in person**

- Personal change
  - Awareness
    - Assertive
    - Control
  - Serenity
  - View of people
  - Vision
- Personal commitment
  - Committed to:



- Decision making
- Individual
- Committed by:
  - Balance
  - Drive
  - Extra-role behavior
  - Familiar environment
  - Motivation
  - Nature
  - Pleasure
  - Pro-activity
  - Responsibility
  - Small group
  - Stay informed
  - Using talent

## VII. Matrix respondents

	Organizational changes	Awareness of strengths	Intrinsic motivation	Positive emotions	Affective commitment
<b>R1(B)</b>	From GAP analysis to positive approach. Performance appraisal is positive. Interaction in a positive way. People appreciate each others strengths.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. The awareness and use of strengths made her more self-confident and gave her an energy boost.	Motivated by the awareness and use of talents. It led to positive emotions like proud, energy and self-confidence.	Open communication and honesty leads to pleasure at work. Positive approach leads to self-confidence. Awareness and use of talent also led to positive emotions.	Always committed. Change in working hours made person more informed which gave her a feeling of more commitment. Open communication about strengths increased the level of commitment. Awareness and use of talents led to commitment. Pleasure at work also leads to commitment.
<b>R2 (C)</b>	Not many changes in way of working, working environment and interaction. Only change is the awareness of strengths.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Made her self-conscious.	Striving for the target of the day is a motivation for this person. This fits two of her strengths, so using her strengths is a motivator.	Always happy to go to work. Bringing up opinion and use of opinion by management gives her a good feeling.	Always committed. Commitment is influenced by achieving the targets.
<b>R3 (A)</b>	The positive attitude is highlighted. Positive approach gives employees more autonomy, leads to self-confidence, which in turn improves the results of the organization. Performance appraisal has become positive. Positive approach has become a culture and a common language is	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Made him more self-conscious and changed the focus from a GAP analysis to a positive approach to compensate the weaknesses.	Teamwork creates energy, satisfaction and a challenge, which motivates this person. Accentuating the positive attitude is also a motivation.	Not happy when he cannot add value in work. Adding value is created when actively using own strengths. Teamwork also influences pleasure at work. Positive approach creates energy.	Commitment is influenced by teamwork, motivation and enthusiasm. A familiar environment and teamwork leads to energy and drive, which leads to a higher level of commitment. Together strong and making the difference together also increases commitment.

	created within the company.				
<b>R4 (A)</b>	Change in view of people. From GAP analysis to positive approach. Performance appraisal has become positive. Individual focus to peoples' talents and strengths. Person-job fit, consciously using strengths of people in work. It is a culture change which leads to positive energy and drive within the group. The sharing of success has become important and also leads to positive energy.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. He now consciously uses those strengths. Actively using strengths leads to the feeling of added value, which leads to pleasure at work and the time passing by fast.	Sharing of success, positive feedback leads to a positive boost and energy among employees and that is a motivator for this person, in turn this leads to commitment.	Person-job fit is influencing pleasure at work. The possibility to use your strengths. Positive approach leads to positive energy, you are creating energy within a company.	Level of commitment is dependent on future perspective of the company and of himself within the company. Positive approach and proactive attitude leads to energy and commitment. The corporate culture of the company makes this person committed to the organization. He does not want to work in another culture. Also the sharing of success influences his commitment. Commitment is expressed by extra-role behavior.
<b>R5 (B)</b>	Change in mindset, positive attitude. Looking at the capacity of the employees (person-job fit).	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Awareness of strengths influences self-confidence of person.	Person-job fit gives person energy and pleasure at work which leads to motivation. Doing the things you like and you are good at stimulates motivation.	Responsibility leads to pleasure at work. Pleasure at work leads to motivating other people.	Always committed. Responsibility influences pleasure at work, which influences level of commitment.
<b>R6 (B)</b>	Consciously focusing on what people like to do, if there is enough strength-diversity within a team etc. Communication has become more open. There is more understanding for each other. It also changed the level of autonomy among employees within the company.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Surprised to see that the Strengthsfinder only showed hard components of his strengths. Made him more self-conscious.	The development and support of employees leads to positive energy which leads to motivation and satisfaction.	Always happy to go to work. A dynamic environment and the direct impact on employees makes his work enjoyable. That leads to a good atmosphere, being able to relativize and bear misfortunes.	Always committed. Committed through the reorganization of the company (supporting people). Reorganization has negative impact on the employees, try to talk to these people.

	Employees get the possibility to do the things they like.				
<b>R7 (B)</b>	From GAP analysis to positive approach. Performance appraisal is positive. Creating team diversity on the basis of strengths. Interaction: complimenting each other and a more open communication.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS, a positive experience. It creates positive energy. Makes you more self-conscious and you are going to chose projects which fit your personality.	Using your talents is a motivation for this person. It leads to pleasure at work which makes it easier to motivate other people. BOS makes you conscious of your strengths and it causes positive energy which leads to being motivated.	Always happy to go to work. Using strengths in her job makes her proud of herself.	Commitment was diminished because of two different jobs in one company. She is therefore only committed to the job and organization and less to the team she is working with. Due to BOS she has become more proactive in work and that gives her a feeling of commitment.
<b>R8 (C)</b>	More structured work due to BOS. Another huge change is approaching people in a positive way instead of a negative way. Giving more positive feedback. More open communication.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Awareness creates satisfaction and self-confidence. However, does not get the chance to use strengths in work.	BOS makes this person more self-confident and due to the more structured work and the awareness of achievement of results makes her job more of a challenge and that motivates this person.	Structured work makes her more self-confident and teaching other people creates pleasure at work. Achieving results creates satisfaction. Challenge creates pleasure at work and an added value to work, a feeling of appreciation.	Always committed but only committed to the department and giving education. The achievement of results increases commitment.
<b>R9 (C)</b>	You can now respond to the strengths of colleagues. No other changes.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. He recognized own strengths. Already knew strengths and it did not change him or his way of working.	The prospect of enough working activities motivates this person because time is passing by fast. Also the achievement of a target is a little motivation but that is part of teamwork so he feels less responsible for that.	Happy to go to work but also happy to go home. Enough working activities makes his day enjoyable and motivates him.	He feels committed when he can use his strengths in his daily tasks. Committed to his team and colleagues.
<b>R10 (A)</b>	From GAP analysis to accentuating the positive. Making people conscious and aware of their strengths. Individual focus on	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Awareness makes you self-conscious and gives insight and directions. Better understanding of feedback	Coaching and supporting people and seeing individuals develop creates energy and motivates this person. Can be linked to BOS	Person-job fit makes that she is happy to go to work every day. Her job gives her energy because she is doing something she truly likes.	Committed to decision-making, department, and every individual. Personality and your nature influences commitment in a way that you are naturally more or less committed, it is a character trait.

	strengths. Actively using person-job fit. Open communication in a positive way. Positive feedback.	given in the past and understanding for the personality of other colleagues. People work together better and achieve better results. It also makes her more calm.	because strengths fit these aspects. Creation of a positive spiral which in turn leads to commitment.		Awareness of strengths can help employees to become more committed by focusing on strengths. You create a positive spiral.
<b>R11 (C)</b>	There has not been any change since the introduction of BOS.	Has not participated in all the BOS workshops yet, only the first one. Does know some strengths and the acknowledgement of strengths gives him a feeling of appreciation and respect.	The announcement of the reorganization affects this person negatively. The future perspective of the company and his job is negatively influencing his motivation.	Happy to go to work. Using strengths lead to feelings as appreciation.	Always committed.
<b>R12 (A)</b>	More consciously using the strengths of the employees (person-job fit). Meanwhile it has become part of the organizational culture. Interaction: more often trying to compliment colleagues.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. He deepens and improves his strengths. Awareness of strengths makes that he is working more efficiently and has a better control over his job. It also led to a better understanding of other colleagues.	Achieving good results with a team is a motivator. Besides the sharing of success with the team is also a motivation for this person. BOS is responsible for the motivation because you put people in roles that fit their personality.	Always happy to go to work. Enjoys his job and is very satisfied. He can therefore motivate other people easily.	Always committed. Commitment is expressed by taking responsibility. He can use his strengths in his work and that also influences his commitment.
<b>R13 (A)</b>	From GAP analysis to accentuating the positive side. Change in mindset, what do you like to do, what are you strengths and how can you combine those things. As HR manager she mainly supports the employees and managers in dealing with the strength-based approach. Interaction: positive approach creates a positive spiral.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Makes her more self-conscious and keeps her focused on what she likes to do and what she is good at. It leads to more consciously taking choices and that is experienced as very positive. Awareness of strengths gives her a comfortable feeling and gives her self-confidence.	This person gets motivated when she can use her strengths. When she uses those strengths, the strengths are acknowledged by other colleagues and that is an extra motivation for her to keep using those strengths.	Using strengths makes her happy to go to work. In turn, she thinks that it leads to a better result. She has become more self-conscious and open to other people.	When she uses her strengths, she experiences energy gain, that motivates her, which in turn makes her more committed to her organization, job and colleagues. The future perspective of the company gives her a feeling of responsibility and commitment. She wants to influence the strategy of the company. Commitment is expressed by working proactively and take responsibility.

<b>R14 (B)</b>	Consciously using strengths of employees (person-job fit). Insight in the differences of individual strengths. Approach people in a positive way.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Strengths are recognized by him and colleagues. He is therefore more self-confident. He now tries to use those strengths more often by using projects, which fit his strengths.	Using talent in the job is a motivation for this person.	Always happy to go to work. Using strengths creates a nice day at work. Besides, being able to be meaningful for people also creates a satisfied feeling.	Commitment to the organization, department and employees. Commitment is expressed by a feeling of responsibility. Positive emotions influences level of commitment.
<b>R15 (C)</b>	Way of working has become more structured. Employability has improved and therefore employees are able to help each other, atmosphere in the team improves. There is a more open communication toward each other. There is more of a team spirit instead of an individual focus.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. Try to give more positive feedback to each other.	Autonomy at work creates satisfaction, which in turn is a motivation for this person to continue with the job. She mentioned that she is especially motivated when management listens to her ideas. Also open communication and variation in work motivates her.	BOS made her more self-confident. Also the use of strengths made her more self-confident. When management listens to her ideas that gives her a good feeling.	Implementation dip of BOS seems to negatively influence her commitment. She is very enthusiastic about BOS and when other people are less enthusiastic she cares because she thinks everybody needs to be positive towards BOS to make it work.
<b>R16 (A)</b>	Positive attitude. Giving positive feedback instead of negative. More use of person-job fit, what do employees like and are good at? Development of employees.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. It creates self-confidence among employees of all levels in the organization. Awareness creates openness and consciously making choices.	Motivated when employees can use strengths. Creation of a positive spiral. Doing the things you are good at, leads to positive feedback, positive energy and that in turn leads to continue your job motivated and happy, in turn that leads to commitment.	Awareness of strengths creates positive energy and makes you more self-conscious and give you more self-confidence. Making good choices in work leads to more positive emotions and energy, then you are happy at work.	Person-job fit makes employees happier at work and therefore more committed to the organization. Awareness creates a feeling of self-confidence and independency, which in turn creates more commitment among employees.
<b>R17 (B)</b>	From GAP analysis to a positive approach. Has become a culture change. Looking at the strengths of the	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. When using the positive approach you need to find a balance in what people can do and	Creating strengths-diversity in a team and creating a working environment with open communication led to an	Always happy to go to work. Using own strengths in work creates pleasure at work. Teamwork, creating employment, developing	Always committed. Autonomy means responsibility and that makes employees more committed to the organization. Also the sharing of success is appreciated,

	employees and change the tasks of employees when those do not fit their strengths (person-job fit).	what relates to their strengths. There needs to be a basis level of functioning.	improvement in the functioning of the team and that in turn led to motivation for this person. The positive approach stimulates the building of relationships (getting to know strengths of other employees, working together) and that increases motivation. However, focusing on strengths becomes less important when the reorganization is announced, motivation can be diminished.	employees and creating profit for the organization is leading to pleasure at work. However, reorganization makes the processes of focusing on strengths less important and can create more of a negative attitude.	creates feelings of happiness and that also increases the commitment. Commitment is also determined by the nature of the person.
<b>R18 (A)</b>	Focus on what you like to do and where your strengths are. More future directed thinking of the organization. Employees need to become more proactive and focus on their strengths themselves. More positive feedback and complimenting each other.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. She proactively wanted to do something with those strengths and therefore she developed herself and her job so that she can use those strengths.	She likes the job that she performs and is satisfied with the things she may and can do and therefore she is really motivated. Autonomy also creates motivation. The use of strengths and challenge in work are also motivators for this person.	Always happy to go to work. She has a very positive attitude, which leads to pleasure at work. However, positive atmosphere in company is negatively affected by the announcement of the reorganization.	The use of talent makes her committed to the company. Positive approach led to the awareness of strengths, which in turn led to the development of herself, which in turn led to commitment to the organization.
<b>R19 (C)</b>	No changes in the way of working, working environment and interaction with colleagues. Overall, a negative attitude towards BOS. Says that BOS is a voluntary project and he has the feeling he is forced to participate by other	Only took part in the introduction course. He says he already knows all his strengths.	Is not really motivated in work. But he developed a sticker and he liked that because it fits the things he liked.	He is happy to go to work. He does not think he can use his strengths while working.	He is not really committed to the organization.

	people.				
<b>R20 (C)</b>	No change in the way of working, working environment and interaction with colleagues due to BOS.	Only took part in the introduction course. He knows some of his strengths and thinks he can use some of them in work.	Motivated by the appreciation of others for his work. And he is also motivated by happy customers and few complaints. Also pleasure at work is a motivator.	He likes his job when he gets appreciation for his work and when he can work together in a team.	He is committed when he has autonomy in the job.
<b>R21 (B)</b>	Not many changes on operator level. There are changes on a higher level in the organization. Actively using strengths. It created another vision in the company. When there is a reorganization, the focus on BOS becomes less important.	Awareness of strengths by participating in BOS. He uses it to set tasks.	Teamwork and achieving good results together is a motivator for this person. But he does mentions that motivation is influenced negatively due to the reorganization of the company. People will be motivated to show that they need to stay in the organization or they will work on a routine basis because they do not care anymore. The last one is more visible within Philips.	Using talent creates a feeling of satisfaction and added value. Challenge at work leads to pleasure at work. No pleasure at work when he has to do standardized work. Autonomy does lead to pleasure at work.	Reorganization influences the commitment of employees negatively. Focus on BOS becomes less when a reorganization is the centre of attention. However, he always believed in BOS.



## Appendix VIII. Characteristics of respondents

	Gender	Function	Employee group
R1	Female	Secretary HR	B player
R2	Female	Operator	C player
R3	Male	Production Manager Outdoor	A player
R4	Male	Production Manager Indoor	A player
R5	Male	Project leader improvement projects	B player
R6	Male	Production leader	B player
R7	Female	Secretary/purchase	B player
R8	Female	Operator	C player
R9	Male	Technical Operator	C player
R10	Female	Manager Efficiency	A player
R11	Male	Technical Operator	C player
R12	Male	Production leader	A player
R13	Female	HR Manager	A player
R14	Male	Production leader	B player
R15	Female	Operator	C player
R16	Male	Financial Manager	A player
R17	Male	Production leader	B player
R18	Female	Development	A player
R19	Male	Operator	C player
R20	Male	Operator	C player
R21	Male	Production leader Entertainment	B player

## Appendix IX. Quotes

	Quotes	Nr of times chosen by A player	Nr of times chosen by B player	Nr of times chosen by C player	Total times chosen
<b>A player quotes</b>	I have a huge enthusiasm for my specialism and I enjoy to keep up with everything that has to do with my specialism.	1	2	1	4
	When I am working I sometimes totally lose track of time and I even forget to stop working.	3	1	2	6
	I like it if my job continuously develops; the more complex and varied, the more enjoyable it is.	4	3	3	10
	Growing within the organization is important for me.		1	1	2
<b>B player quotes</b>	I have a huge feeling of commitment and loyalty towards the organization.	2	4	1	7
	I think a healthy balance between work and private life (family and leisure) is important. I involve this in my considerations.	3	5	2	10
	With this job I am at the right place in the organization and I do not have a need for growth opportunities.	1	1	1	3
	Personal development in work and private life are important for me.	4	2		6
<b>C player quotes</b>	Job security is an important motive for me. Using my knowledge and capabilities are in service of this.		1	3	4
	I am at my best when there are clear working agreements.	1	2	5	8
	I will not easily go home before I finished my work for the day.	2	3	3	8
	Stability and security are important for me in work and life.		2	4	6