

Extraordinary You™

The Untapped Performance Opportunity in Your Workforce

A Research-Based Case for Developing Your Largest, Most Underdeveloped Population

Zenger Folkman | 20+ Years of Research | 2 Million Assessments

Executive Summary

Most organizations have a performance problem they haven't fully identified. They invest heavily in developing senior leaders, building succession pipelines, and accelerating high-potential talent. Meanwhile, roughly eighty percent of their workforce—individual contributors—are left to navigate development largely on their own.

This gap is one of the most significant untapped opportunities in the modern workforce. Zenger Folkman introduces *Extraordinary You*—a research-based development experience designed specifically for individual contributors—as a practical, scalable solution.

The data is compelling. People are only half as accurate in assessing their own strengths as others are. Individual contributors with no identified profound strengths perform at the 39th percentile in overall effectiveness. When they develop even one profound strength, their effectiveness jumps to the 73rd percentile.

One profound strength. A 34-percentile jump in effectiveness. That is not marginal improvement. That is transformation.

Extraordinary You delivers structured, objective, strengths-based development at scale. It solves the performance gap hiding in plain sight in most organizations—and does so in a way that is practical, affordable, and designed for how people actually work.



SECTION 1: THE HIDDEN PERFORMANCE GAP

The Workforce Most Organizations Are Ignoring

Walk into almost any organization and ask where development resources are concentrated. The answer is almost always the same: at the top. Senior leaders receive coaching. High-potentials get accelerated development programs. Management teams attend off-site trainings and leadership academies.

These are worthwhile investments, but they leave out the largest segment of the workforce: individual contributors.

These are the people who execute strategy, serve customers, build products, and drive daily results. Yet for many, their development typically consists of an annual performance review and feedback they may receive along the way.

That feedback, more often than not, sounds like this:

“You’re doing great. Keep it up.”

It is encouraging but largely ineffective.

Vague feedback does not create focus or improvement. When people don’t know what to

prioritize or how to grow, progress stalls—and performance plateaus at both the individual level and across the organization.

The Self-Assessment Problem

This challenge is compounded by a well-documented bias: people are poor judges of their own performance.

Zenger Folkman research shows that individuals are only half as accurate at assessing their own strengths as others are. Without structured external input, development is guided by

incomplete and often distorted self-perception.

The result is predictable. People default to what feels comfortable rather than what would most improve their effectiveness. Development stalls, and the organization’s largest talent pool remains underdeveloped.

SECTION 2: THE RESEARCH THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING

One Profound Strength Makes the Difference

The research behind *Extraordinary You* reframes what development actually requires. Most organizations approach development as a remediation exercise—identify weaknesses, fix deficits, close gaps. It is a model deeply embedded in annual review processes, competency frameworks, and development

2x

more accurate
peer vs. self rating

80%

of employees
are individual
contributors

plans. It is also, according to the data, the wrong approach.

The question is not: what are this person’s weaknesses? The question is: what profound strengths, if developed, would have the greatest impact on their effectiveness?

The evidence is striking.

Individual contributors with no identified profound strengths are rated at the 39th percentile in overall effectiveness by their peers, managers, and direct reports. When they develop just one profound strength—not a comprehensive overhaul of their skills, not years of intensive development—their effectiveness rating jumps to the 73rd percentile.

That is a 34-percentile improvement achieved by focusing on a single strength. The implication is significant:

emerges: the highest-performing individuals are not those who have eliminated their weaknesses, but those who have developed at least one area of genuine strength.

However, weaknesses do matter when they are fatal flaws—behaviors that actively undermine effectiveness. In those cases, they must be addressed first. But outside of those situations, improving weaknesses tends to produce only incremental gains.

Strengths operate differently. The right investment in the

is clear: development needs to be more focused, more targeted, and grounded in what drives real impact. That is exactly what *Extraordinary You* was designed to deliver.

SECTION 3: INTRODUCING EXTRAORDINARY YOU

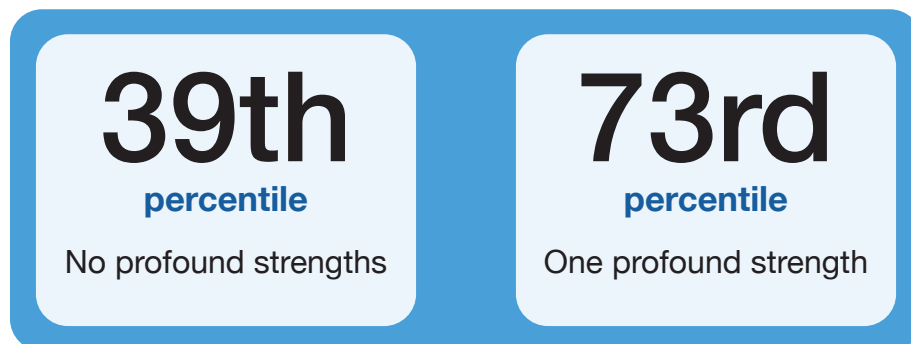
The Development Experience Built for This Moment

Extraordinary You is a strengths-based development experience designed specifically for individual contributors. It is not a leadership program adapted for a broader audience. It is not a generic coaching tool. It was built, from the ground up, for the population that represents the largest untapped performance opportunity in most organizations.

The experience moves individuals through a structured, focused progression:

01 Assessment

A structured 180-degree assessment focused on a targeted set of differentiating critical behaviors. Managers and participants provide input in approximately fifteen minutes.



most organizations are designing development programs to move people incrementally, while the research proves that a focused, strengths-based investment can create step-change improvement.

Why Strengths, Not Weaknesses

Across more than two million assessments, a consistent pattern

right strength produces disproportionate impact. For individual contributors who rarely receive focused, strengths-based development, this represents a significant opportunity. Most organizations aren't underinvesting in development overall—they are underinvesting in the approach that drives the greatest return. The implication

02 Insights

A clear, objective report shows how individuals are perceived, grounded in comparative, research-based data.

03 Strengths Focus

The experience identifies one or two skills—the specific behaviors that, if developed deliberately into profound strengths, will have the greatest impact on the individual's effectiveness.

04 Development Plan

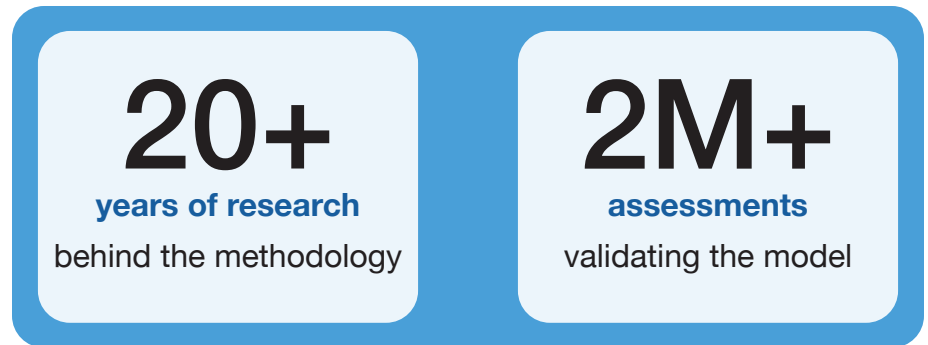
Individuals leave with a concrete, focused development plan—not ten things to work on, not generic goals, but a specific path forward. It is tied directly to building the strengths that will most positively impact their contribution to the team and the organization.

05 Applied Growth

Development is applied in the context of real work. This is not a classroom exercise. It is a practical framework integrated into how individuals already operate.

What Makes It Different

The development landscape is crowded. What distinguishes *Extraordinary You* is not a feature list. It is the foundation beneath it: **20+ years of research**, more than two million assessments,



and a rigorously validated model of what actually drives individual effectiveness.

Most development tools rely on theory or best practice. *Extraordinary You* is built on data—specifically, on a deep empirical understanding of the behaviors that differentiate good performers from exceptional ones. The assessment, competency model, development guidance, and strengths framework are all grounded in this research.

The result is a development experience that does not ask individuals to guess at what matters. It tells them—clearly, objectively, and in the context of their own specific strengths profile. The real test, of course, is what this approach delivers in practice.

SECTION 4: IMPACT ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION

Three Levels of Impact

For Individuals: Clarity Drives Performance

For the individual contributor, *Extraordinary You* changes the fundamental experience of development. Instead of guessing what matters, they receive a clear, objective picture of how they are perceived by the person who works with them most closely—their manager. Instead of vague encouragement, they receive structured insights into which behaviors are already working in their favor—and which represent their greatest opportunity for growth.

Individuals leave the experience with three things that most development programs fail to provide:

- Clarity about how they are perceived by their manager.
- Focus on developing the one or two strengths that will have the greatest impact on their effectiveness.



- A concrete plan that translates insight into action using Zenger Folkman's unique **Strength Builder development process**.

The research is clear about what this produces: higher engagement, stronger performance, and a measurable sense of progress. People who understand their strengths and have a clear path forward are more motivated, more effective, and more committed to their organizations.

For Managers: Better Conversations, Less Burden

Most managers want to develop their people, but they struggle to do it well. The barriers are real: time constraints, discomfort with feedback conversations, uncertainty about what to say, and a lack of tools designed to make the process manageable.

Extraordinary You addresses all of these barriers directly.

Managers provide structured input in approximately fifteen minutes, which feeds directly into the individual's development profile.

With data, a strengths focus, and a clear plan, development conversations become

straightforward and productive — not open-ended or uncertain.

Extraordinary You reduces the friction that often leads managers to avoid development conversations. With clarity and structure in place, those conversations become easier and more effective.

For Organizations: Scalable Development That Builds Talent

The strategic case for *Extraordinary You* is straightforward: most organizations have two choices when it comes to talent. They can try to buy it—competing in an increasingly tight market for external hires who arrive with established strengths. Or they can build it—investing in the development of the people they already have.

Building talent is more effective, more sustainable, and far more scalable. And it begins earlier—at the individual contributor level, before people reach management roles, before performance gaps become entrenched, and before high-potential employees leave in search of development they couldn't find.

Extraordinary You is designed to

make this possible at scale.

- It is structured for practical deployment across large populations.
- It is time-efficient for both individuals and managers.
- And it is priced to reach the workforce segment that has historically been excluded

Simple input.
Structured
insight. Better
conversations.
Approximately
fifteen minutes
of manager
input, thirty
minutes of
focused
conversation,
and a clear
development
plan.



from formal development investment.

The outcomes organizations consistently observe include higher individual engagement, stronger team performance, and improved retention—particularly among high-potential contributors who are most likely to leave when they do not see a clear path forward. Taken together, these outcomes point to a larger shift in how organizations approach about performance.

CONCLUSION

Performance Comes from Everyone

Most organizations still operate on an implicit belief that performance is primarily driven by leadership. As a result, investment flows to the top, while individual contributors are left out. And the cost—in unrealized performance, disengagement, and preventable attrition—is substantial.

The successful organizations that will outperform in the coming decade are those who understand performance as a whole-workforce phenomenon and invest accordingly. They are the ones developing talent earlier, more deliberately, and at scale. They are the ones giving

their individual contributors the insight, focus, and development infrastructure that leaders typically have.

Extraordinary performance comes from the contribution of the entire workforce.

Extraordinary You is built on this principle. It is backed by the most rigorous research in the field. And it is designed to be deployed at the scale the opportunity demands.

The performance gap is real, and the solution is proven. [Let Zenger Folkman help your organization unlock its full potential.](#)

About Us

Zenger Folkman relentlessly seeks to rise above the inconsistent and sometimes misleading nature of popular philosophies and beliefs brought on by opinion. The discipline of people development and those who pursue it deserve better. Our most valuable asset is the expertise of combining hard data and statistical analysis with logical explanations and actionable applications that help individuals and leaders thrive and organizations succeed.

www.zengerfolkman.com