

## ENGAGEMENT : TRUST : CULTURE

# Study on 400 Executives

## (High-performing teams and blind spots)

Research shows that high-performing teams focus on three core dimensions – Performance, Capability and Capacity (Katzenbach, Clutterbuck, Champoux). Evidence suggests the following criteria consistently define high-performing teams:

- High level of Trust
- High level of respect
- Clear and common purpose
- Willingness to manage conflict
- Curiosity and appropriate challenge
- The right people in the right roles
- Supportive organisational context
- Alignment of authority and accountability
- Positive attitude towards change
- Focus on using participants strengths
- Secure, competent leader

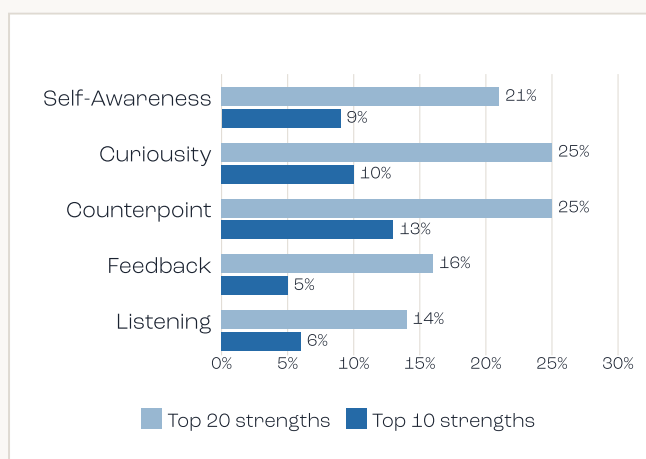
**Communication** underpins all of these criteria and is fundamental to building high-performing teams. However, a recent 3Qetc study of 400 executives across nine organisations (CEOs, GMs and senior leaders; 61% male, 39% female) identified significant gaps and blind spots in critical communication traits – most notably, poor listening and a lack of self-awareness among many executives surveyed.

This study was conducted by 3Qetc between 2022 and 2025, drawing on data collected through leadership programs, executive coaching engagements, and structured mentoring programs. Participants completed the Cappfinity Strengths Assessment – a validated assessment built on over 10 years of research and insights from more than 30,000 professionals. The assessment measures 60 strengths through 180 validated questions and categorises results across four dimensions: realised strengths, learned behaviours, weaknesses, and unrealised strengths. It also groups strengths into five core families – being, communicating, motivating, relating, and thinking – providing a practical framework for identifying strengths, potential blind spots, and development opportunities.

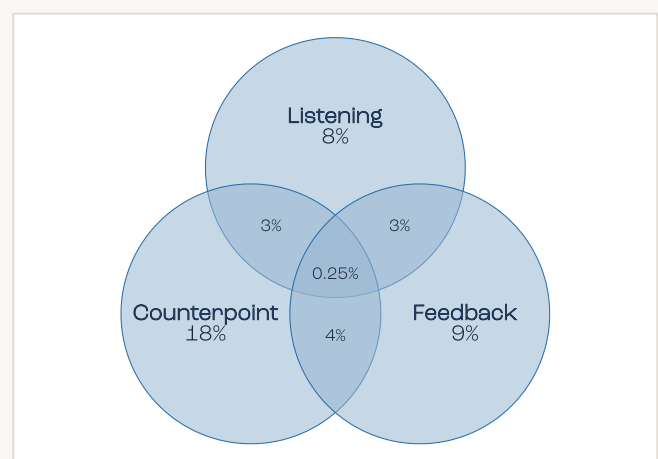
Our dataset focused on the core family of **communication** as a key enabler to the success of high-performing teams and effective leadership. Within the Cappfinity model, there are eight components of communication: listening, feedback, counterpoint (seeking a wider perspective), narrator, writer, spotlight, humour, and explainer.

We chose the underlined strengths above that fall within the communication family of strengths as they involve a more comprehensive systems approach, i.e., interaction with other stakeholders. These are critical to high-performing teams. In our analysis, we added “curiosity” and “self-awareness”, which we believe complement the communication family of traits by taking a broader perspective of self and others.

**% of Participants' traits in the top 10 or 20 listed strengths**



**% of Participants who had combination of communication traits in their top 20 strengths**



**Conclusion:** In an environment increasingly defined by complexity, AI, rapid change and cross-functional collaboration, the very communication traits most critical to high-performing teams – listening, feedback, curiosity, wider perspective and self-awareness – are alarmingly underdeveloped in senior leaders. Most concerning was the lack of self-awareness surrounding these blind spots. Many leaders significantly overestimated their communication effectiveness. At the same time, we observed a strong “Resolver” or “fix-it” bias, leaders defaulting to solving, directing and responding, rather than listening, exploring and understanding. **The standout for 3Qeto was that only 6% of leaders had listening in their top 10 strengths.**