
StrengthsFinder

Often our natural talents go untapped. From the classroom to the workplace, we seem to devote more time to our weakness than to developing our strengths.

With this in mind, Gallup, an American research-based, global performance-management consulting company, introduced the first version of its online assessment, StrengthsFinder in the 2001 management book ***Now, Discover Your Strengths***. The book spent more than five years on the bestseller list and gained a global reputation of helping millions to discover their top five talents.

The authors claim that by identifying the individual strengths of the organization, its members can be utilized in more suitable positions and then developing the required skills easily, helping to reduce turnover, improve employee morale and the organization's overall performance.

StrengthsFinder is a tool that identifies internal strengths in people who often do not see these strengths in themselves. The utility of the assessment quickly moved beyond organizational management to personal development and is used by many coaches in many niches.

Talent Themes

StrengthsFinder is a web-based assessment of normal personality from the perspective of Positive Psychology. It is the first instrument of this type developed expressly for the internet by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton.

StrengthsFinder measures the presence of 34 talent themes. Talents are people's naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behaviour that can be productively applied. The more dominant a theme is in a person, the greater the theme's impact on that person's behaviour and performance.

These talent themes, taken together, reveal an individual's tendency to develop certain skills more easily and excel in certain fields while unable to sustain success or high levels of effectiveness in other fields.

The StrengthsFinder survey involves:

- 177 pairs of “potential” self-descriptors. ex: “I dream about the future” versus “People are my greatest ally.” or “I read instructions carefully” versus “I like to jump right into things.”
- The descriptors are placed as if anchoring polar ends of a continuum.
- You choose the descriptor that best describes you and the extent to which it describes you.
- You only get 20 seconds before moving on to the next item pair. If you miss too many questions, it will start over. This avoids overthinking a response.

Once you’ve completed it, results are immediate – providing your top 5 signature themes in rank order. This also includes a packet of info specifically geared to your unique theme print.

Coaching Application

In coaching, we believe each of us has a unique combination of talents, knowledge, and skills or strengths that we use in our daily lives to successfully achieve goals and interact with others.

Gallup’s findings align with that of the coaching process - that is, when people understand and apply their strengths, the effect on their lives and work is transformational. According to StrengthsFinder, people who use their strengths every day are “six times more likely to be engaged in their work and three times more likely to say they have an excellent quality of life.”

Yet, many people don't know what their strengths are or have had the opportunity to use them to their advantage. In fact, many people tend to focus on fixing their weaknesses rather than playing to their strengths.

Here are several ways coaches are using the StrengthsFinder assessment:

With Individuals:

1. Understand their Clifton StrengthsFinder talent theme reports
2. Focus on dominant talent themes
3. Gain awareness and appreciation of their talents
4. Invest in developing their talents
5. Create an Individual Development Plan

With Managers:

1. Gain awareness and appreciation of their talents within the context of their role as people leaders
2. Understand how the StrengthsFinder themes manifest themselves in the workplace
3. Gain an understanding of and appreciation for each team member's unique and powerful talents
4. Gain an understanding of and appreciation for the team's collective strengths, potential talent gaps and vulnerabilities
5. Use strengths-based development techniques to address specific team-related issues and challenges

With Groups/Teams:

1. To start to understand their individual Talent Themes
2. Understand the power of Strengths-based partnerships and helping the team to build them
3. Gain awareness and appreciation of its collective talents
4. Begin to harness their individual and collective talents and intentionally bring them to life daily
5. Use their talent to address business challenges
6. Discover, develop, and use their unique talents for greater team engagement and productivity

Coaching offers an opportunity to explore the ways we naturally think, feel, and behave and this can be supported with assessment such as the information provided by StrengthsFinders. Then working with a coach, we can identify and build on the areas where we have infinite potential to grow and succeed.

Knowing and Articulating Your Strengths

Have you ever heard a client struggle to tell you about what they are good at? Maybe he or she is a “people person”, but can’t describe it beyond that and as a result, their confidence is compromised. Or perhaps a client takes great care when making decisions, but this frustrates others who see this as unnecessarily delaying the decision-making process.

The StrengthsFinder assessment can help your clients better understand how to articulate their unique value in a way that goes deeper than the stereotypical phrases often used to describe ourselves.

StrengthsFinder Activity

This activity can work for you and/or your clients whether or not the StrengthsFinder assessment has been taken. It gives you an idea of how identifying strengths can be useful in supporting, motivating and encouraging our clients.

If you’ve completed and analyzed the StrengthsFinder start from there. If not, work from what you already know about your strengths.

Write down five to ten recent examples of engaging your strengths (themes). This can be difficult for people as we are often our own worst critics. It can be challenging to think about our own examples of “brilliance”.

Here are three prompts that may help get past this obstacle and find examples.

Answer the questions, ***How do you...***

- **Communicate?** How do you see your strengths come out when you communicate a message? What is your desired outcome in how you share information with others?
- **Making Decisions?** How do you see your strengths at work when making decisions? Do you make them quick or slow? With lots of information, or as little as possible?
- **Think about time?** How do your strengths come out in relation to time? Are you long term or short term focused? Inspired by today, tomorrow or yesterday?
- **Relate to Others?** Who were the last five people you interacted with? However brief, can you see how your strengths (or themes) played out in those interactions? How?

By engaging others from a strengths-based perspective especially as a coach we can help them find new meaning and purpose regarding their goals.

Strengths development is a life long process. The more you look for examples, the more you will find ways to use your strengths. Whether or not you choose to take or use the assessment, sharing your strengths with confidence and acceptance with others and focusing your efforts on playing to them can be an extraordinary way to live.

Resource

Gallup Strengths Center

Take StrengthsFinder 2.0