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strengthsfinder 2.0

Strengths Discovery and Action-Planning Guide



What makes *you* stand out?

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TERRY STORCH

Your Top 5 Themes

Command

Futuristic

Maximizer

Significance

Strategic

What's in This Guide?

- For each of your top five themes, you will find:
 - A brief Shared Theme Description
 - Your Personalized Strengths Insights, which describe what makes you stand out from others with the same theme in their top five
 - Some examples of what the theme "sounds like" — real quotes from people who also have the theme in their top five
 - 10 Ideas for Action
- A Strengths Discovery Activity to get you thinking about how your talents and your investment work together to build strengths that you can apply to your work and personal life
- A Strengths-Based Action Plan for review with a friend, manager, or colleague

COMMAND

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

By nature, you motivate your friends with your passion for moving ideas from the talking stage to the action stage. Your dedication to various projects rallies numerous individuals to work alongside you. Driven by your talents, you empower people with your air of certitude -- that is, confidence. Your very presence reassures them that they indeed are quite ready and capable of tackling assignments, spearheading projects, or playing key positions on a team. Because of your strengths, you may have vied for the top ranking in certain types of activities as a child. Reflecting on your youth, you probably remember being self-sufficient, assertive, and bold. Chances are good that you frequently throw newcomers or outsiders off balance by pressing them to talk with you. With some individuals, you intentionally do this. With others, you are unaware of how forceful you are. You are eager to get things moving and completed. Even so, you strive to temper your demanding style. You probably want people to like you as well as do what you tell them to do. It's very likely that you earnestly apply yourself to seeing things as they really are. You bring a practical, matter-of-fact, and unsentimental outlook to various discussions, projects, or planning meetings.

Command sounds like this:

Malcolm M., hospitality manager: "One reason I affect people is that I am so candid. Actually, people say that I intimidate them at first. After I work with them a year, we talk about that sometimes. They say, 'Boy, Malcolm, when I started working here, I was scared to death.' When I ask why, they say, 'I've never worked with anyone who just said it. Whatever it was, whatever needed to be said, you just said it.'"

Rick P., retail executive: "We have a wellness program whereby if you consume less than four alcoholic beverages a week, you get twenty-five dollars; if you don't smoke, you get twenty-five dollars a month. So one day I got word that one of my store managers was smoking again. This was not good. He was smoking in the store, setting a bad example for the employees, and claiming his twenty-five dollars. I just can't keep stuff like that inside. It wasn't comfortable, but I confronted him with it immediately and clearly: 'Stop doing that, or you are fired.' He's basically a good guy, but you can't let things like that slide."

Diane N., hospice worker: "I don't think of myself as assertive, but I do take charge. When you walk into a room with a dying person and his family, you have to take charge. They want you to take charge. They are a bit in shock, a bit frightened, a bit in denial. Basically, they're confused. They need someone to tell them what is going to happen next, what they can expect -- that it's not going to be fun but that in some important ways, it will be all right. They don't want mousy and soft. They want clarity and honesty. I provide it."

Ideas for Action:

- Your Command talents might compel you to wrestle for the reins of power because you love being in the driver's seat. But remember that even when you are not formally in charge, your presence can be an unseen yet powerfully felt force.

- Step up and break bottlenecks. Others count on your natural decisiveness to get things moving. When you remove roadblocks, you often create new momentum and success that would not have existed without you.
- Consider taking the lead on a committee. You have definite ideas about what you would like to see happen, and you can naturally influence a group to follow you. You might be comfortable spearheading new initiatives.
- Seek roles in which you will be asked to persuade others. Consider whether selling would be a good career for you.
- Find a cause you believe in and support it. You might discover yourself at your best when defending a cause in the face of resistance.
- You will always be ready to confront. Practice the words, the tone, and the techniques that will turn your ability to confront into real persuasiveness.
- In your relationships, seize opportunities to speak plainly and directly about sensitive subjects. Your unwillingness to hide from the truth can become a source of strength and constancy for your colleagues and friends. Strive to become known as a candid person.
- Ask people for their opinions. Sometimes your candor will be intimidating, causing others to tread lightly for fear of your reaction. Watch for this. If necessary, explain that you are upfront simply because it feels uncomfortable to keep things bottled up, not because you want to frighten other people into silence.
- Partner with someone with strong Woo or Empathy talents. Some obstacles do not need to be confronted; they can be circumvented. This person can help you avoid obstacles through relationships.
- Your "take charge" attitude steadies and reassures others in times of crisis. When faced with a particularly trying challenge, use your Command talents to assuage others' fears and convince them you have things under control.

FUTURISTIC

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Instinctively, you frequently share your vision about the coming years or decades with other forward-looking thinkers. You cannot refrain from talking about all the things human beings can create or accomplish in the future. Because of your strengths, you have a capacity for envisioning what the coming months, years, or decades could, should, or will be like. Frequently you are prompted to transform your ideas into things you can touch, taste, see, smell, or hear. By nature, you are innovative, inventive, original, and resourceful. Your mind allows you to venture beyond the commonplace, the familiar, or the obvious. You entertain ideas about the best ways to reach a goal, increase productivity, or solve a problem. First, you think of alternatives. Then you choose the best option. Driven by your talents, you occasionally work seriously at something when you have defined the specific objective you want to reach in the near term or the long term. Remember, your other talents might influence how far into the future you can push certain goals and still give them your undivided attention. Chances are good that you prefer to spend time with visionaries. Why? You probably enjoy listening to them describe innovative products, labor-saving devices, medical possibilities, or new ways of governing. Thinking about only the present usually bores you.

Futuristic sounds like this:

Dan F., school administrator: "In any situation, I am the guy who says, 'Did you ever think about . . . ? I wonder if we could . . . I don't believe it can't be done. It's just that nobody has done it yet. Let's figure out how we can.' I am always looking for options, for ways not to be mired by the status quo. In fact, there is no such thing as the status quo. You are either moving forward, or you are moving backward. That's the reality of life, at least from my perspective. And right now, I believe that my profession is moving backward. State schools are being out-serviced by private schools, charter schools, home schools, Internet schools. We need to free ourselves from our traditions and create a new future."

Jan K., internist: "Here at the Mayo Clinic, we are launching a group called the Hospitalists. Rather than having patients handed off from one doctor to another during their stay in the hospital, I envision a family of providers. I envision fifteen to twenty MDs, of various genders and races, with twenty to twenty-five nurse practitioners. There will be four to five new hospital services, most of which will work with surgeons and will provide para-operative care as well as care for the hospitalized elderly. We are redefining the model of care here. We don't just take care of the patients when they are in the hospital. If a patient comes in for a knee replacement, a member of the Hospitalist team would see him before the surgery, follow him from the day of surgery through the days of hospitalization, and then see him when he comes in six weeks later for his postoperative check. We will provide patients with a complete episode of care so that they don't get lost in the handoffs. And to get the funding, I just saw the detailed picture in my head and kept describing this picture to the department chair. I guess I made it seem so real that they had no choice but to grant me the funds."

Ideas for Action:

- Choose roles in which you can contribute your ideas about the future. For example, you might excel in entrepreneurial or start-up situations.
- Take time to think about the future. The more time you spend considering your ideas about the future, the more vivid your ideas will become. The more vivid your ideas, the more persuasive you will be.
- Seek audiences who appreciate your ideas for the future. They will expect you to make these ideas a reality, and these expectations will motivate you.
- Find a friend or colleague who also has powerful Futuristic talents. Set aside an hour each month for "future" discussions. You can push each other to greater heights of creativity and vividness.
- Partner with someone with strong Activator talents. This person can remind you that you do not discover the future, you create it with the actions you take today.
- You inspire others with your images of the future, yet your thinking may be too expansive for them to comprehend. When you articulate your vision, be sure to describe the future in detail with vivid words and metaphors. Make your ideas and strategies more concrete via sketches, step-by-step action plans, or mock-up models so that others can readily grasp your intent.
- Surround yourself with people who are eager to put your vision into motion. They will feel exhilarated by your Futuristic talents, and you can harness their energy to propel the vision toward reality.
- Be prepared to provide logical support for your futuristic thinking. Your exciting visions of future success will be best received when rooted in real possibility.
- Your Futuristic talents could equip you to be a guide or coach for others. Unlike you, they might not be able to easily see over the horizon. If you catch a vision of what someone could be or do, don't assume that he or she is aware of that potential. Share what you see as vividly as you can. In doing so, you may inspire someone to move forward.
- Musing about the future comes naturally to you. Read articles about technology, science, and research to gain knowledge that will fuel your imagination.

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Driven by your talents, you can engage newcomers or strangers in conversation. You intentionally seek out these individuals. Making new acquaintances delights you. Your outgoing and personable style causes many of them to want to spend more time with you. By nature, you are an effective mentor and/or trainer. You realize this is your forte -- that is, strength. Chances are good that you know you can simultaneously handle numerous assignments. You probably do better work when you have multiple tasks to perform. Being ordered to give all your mental and physical energy to a single activity day after day can erode the quality of your results. Maybe it saps your enthusiasm for what you are doing. Because of your strengths, you exhibit an awareness about what you do and do not do well. You trust your instincts in this regard. Over time, you have progressed faster and moved further by relying on your talents. You simply refuse to risk losing confidence in yourself by tackling assignments for which you lack the talent, even when you may possess some relevant knowledge, skills, or experience. It's very likely that you might say your life is enjoyable when individuals recognize your strengths. Maybe they encourage you to use your talents, knowledge, and/or skills. Perhaps you prefer to spend time with these upbeat people. Why? Maybe they point out your best qualities rather than your weaknesses.

Maximizer sounds like this:

Gavin T., flight attendant: "I taught aerobics for ten years, and I made a point of asking people to focus on what they liked about themselves. We all have parts of our body that we would like to change or that we would like to see differently, but to focus on that can be so destructive. It becomes a vicious cycle. So I would say, 'Look, you don't need to be doing that. Instead, let's focus on the attribute you like about yourself, and then we'll all feel better about expending all of this energy.'"

Amy T., magazine editor: "There is nothing I hate more than having to fix a poorly written piece. If I have given the writer a clear focus and she comes back with a piece that is completely off the mark, I almost can't bring myself to write comments on it. I'm more inclined to just hand it back to her and say, 'Just please start again.' On the other hand, what I love to do is take a piece that is so close and then refine it to make it perfect. You know, just the right word here, a little cut there, and suddenly it's a brilliant piece."

Marshall G., marketing executive: "I am really good at setting a focus for people and then building a sense of team spirit as we all march forward. But I am not so good at strategic thinking. Fortunately, I have a boss who understands that about me. We have been working together for quite a few years. He has found people who play the strategic role, and at the same time, stretches me to be even better at the focus and team-building role. I'm so lucky to have a boss who thinks this way. It's made me more secure and made me charge ahead much faster, knowing that my boss knows what I am good at and what I'm not good at; he doesn't bother me with the latter."

Ideas for Action:

- Once you have identified your own greatest talents, stay focused on them. Refine your skills. Acquire new knowledge. Practice. Keep working toward strength in a few areas.
- Develop a plan to use your most powerful talents outside of work. In doing so, consider how your talents relate to the mission in your life and how they might benefit your family or the community.

- Problem solving might drain your energy and enthusiasm. Look for a restorative partner who can be your chief troubleshooter and problem solver. Let that person know how important your partnership is to your success.
- Study success. Deliberately spend time with people who have discovered their strengths. The more you understand how marshaling strengths leads to success, the more likely you will be to create success in your own life.
- Explain to others why you spend more time building on great talent rather than fixing weaknesses. Initially, they might confuse what you are doing with complacency.
- Don't let your Maximizer talents be stifled by conventional wisdom, which says you should find what is broken and fix it. Identify and invest in the parts of your organization or community that are working. Make sure that most of your resources are spent in the build-up and build-out of these pockets of excellence.
- Keep your focus on long-term relationships and goals. Many make a career out of picking the low-hanging fruit of short-term success, but your Maximizer talents will be most energized and effective as you turn top potential into true and lasting greatness.
- See if you can make some of your weaknesses irrelevant. For example, find a partner, devise a support system, or use one of your stronger talents to compensate for one of your weaker ones.
- Seek roles in which you are helping people succeed. In coaching, managing, mentoring, or teaching roles, your focus on strengths will prove particularly beneficial to others. Because most people find it difficult to describe what they do best, start by arming them with vivid descriptions.
- Devise ways to measure your performance and the performance of others. These measures will help you spot strengths, because the best way to identify a strength is to look for sustained levels of excellent performance.

SIGNIFICANCE

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Instinctively, you may exhibit an awareness of how specific people see you. From time to time, you might enjoy being surrounded by some of your admirers. It's very likely that you sometimes derive satisfaction from helping people recognize they have reached their desired goals. If they have not met all their objectives, perhaps you emphasize the progress they have made up to this point. Driven by your talents, you sometimes enjoy verbalizing your thoughts. You may want certain individuals to acknowledge your ideas and honor your feelings. Perhaps gaining and maintaining specific people's attention pleases you. Chances are good that you might choose to surround yourself with productive people. Why? Maybe they are not afraid of hard work or long hours. Because of your strengths, you might enjoy speaking when you sense your audience is open-minded enough to consider your ideas.

Significance sounds like this:

Mary P., healthcare executive: "Women are told almost from day one, 'Don't be too proud. Don't stand tall.' That kind of thing. But I've learned that it's okay to have power, it's okay to have pride, and it's okay to have a big ego -- and also that I need to manage it and drive it in the right directions."

Kathie J., partner in a law firm: "Ever since I can remember, I have had the feeling that I was special,

that I could take charge and make things happen. Back in the '60s, I was the first woman partner in my firm, and I can still recall walking into boardroom after boardroom and being the only woman. It's strange, thinking back. It was tough, but I actually think I enjoyed the pressure of standing out. I enjoyed being the 'woman' partner. Why? Because I knew that I would be very hard to forget. I knew everyone would notice me and pay attention to me."

John L., physician: "All through my life, I felt that I was onstage. I am always aware of an audience. If I am sitting with a patient, I want the patient to see me as the best doctor he or she has ever had. If I am teaching medical students, I want to stand out as the best medical educator they have ever had. I want to win the Educator of the Year award. My boss is a big audience for me. Disappointing her would kill me. It's scary to think that part of my self-esteem is in other people's hands, but then again, it keeps me on my toes."

Ideas for Action:

- Choose jobs or positions in which you can determine your own tasks and actions. You will enjoy the exposure that comes with independence.
- Your reputation is important to you, so decide what it should be and tend to it in the smallest detail. For example, identify and earn a designation that will add to your credibility, write an article that will give you visibility, or volunteer to speak in front of a group who will admire your achievements.
- Share your dreams and goals with your family or closest friends and colleagues. Their expectations will keep you reaching.
- Stay focused on performance. Your Significance talents will drive you to claim outstanding goals. Your performance had better match those goals, or others might label you as a big talker.
- You will perform best when your performance is visible. Look for opportunities that put you on center stage. Stay away from roles that hide you behind the scenes.
- Leading crucial teams or significant projects brings out your best. Your greatest motivation may come when the stakes are at their highest. Let others know that when the game is on the line, you want the ball.
- Make a list of the goals, achievements, and qualifications you crave, and post them where you will see them every day. Use this list to inspire yourself.
- Identify your best moment of recognition or praise. What was it for? Who gave it to you? Who was the audience? What do you have to do to recreate that moment?
- Unless you also possess dominant Self-Assurance talents, accept that you might fear failure. Don't let this fear prevent you from staking claims to excellence. Instead, use it to focus on ensuring that your performance matches your claims.
- You might have a natural awareness of what other people think of you. You may have a specific audience that you want to like you, and you will do whatever it takes to win their approval and applause. Be aware that while reliance on the approval of others could be problematic, there is nothing wrong with wanting to be liked or admired by the key people in your life.

STRATEGIC

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

It's very likely that you may feel good about yourself and life in general when you know the exact words to express an idea or a feeling. Perhaps language has fascinated you since childhood. Occasionally your ever-expanding vocabulary earns you compliments. By nature, you invent original ideas of your own. Your imagination is typically stimulated when you collaborate -- that is, team up -- with future-oriented thinkers. Because of your strengths, you trust your ability to be an innovative thinker. You routinely invent many ways you can reach a single goal. Only then do you start narrowing down your options to the best one. You probably take into consideration prevailing circumstances, available resources, budgetary constraints, or pressing deadlines. Chances are good that you may notice that multiple solutions to nagging problems just pop into your mind. Sometimes you study each option from many different angles. Perhaps you carefully evaluate the entire situation, then choose the alternative that makes the most sense. Why? Maybe you aim to outscore or outperform your rivals. Driven by your talents, you may pay attention to some of the things going on around you. Perhaps you listen, quiz people, read, or take notes. As you accumulate information, you might disregard what is unrelated, and pay heed to what seems important. Sometimes the more you reflect on what you know, certain problems reveal themselves, and eventually some solutions start taking shape in your mind. Then you try to select the best plan from your list of options.

Strategic sounds like this:

Liam C., manufacturing plant manager: "It seems as if I can always see the consequences before anyone else can. I have to say to people, 'Lift up your eyes; look down the road a ways. Let's talk about where we are going to be next year so that when we get to this time next year, we don't have the same problems.' It seems obvious to me, but some people are just too focused on this month's numbers, and everything is driven by that."

Vivian T., television producer: "I used to love logic problems when I was a kid -- you know, the ones where 'if A implies B, and B equals C, does A equal C?' Still today, I am always playing out repercussions, seeing where things lead. I think it makes me a great interviewer. I know that nothing is an accident; every sign, every word, every tone of voice has significance. So I watch for these clues and play them out in my head, see where they lead, and then plan my questions to take advantage of what I have seen in my head."

Simon T., human resources executive: "We really needed to take the union on at some stage, and I saw an opportunity -- a very good issue to take them on. I could see that they were going in a direction that would lead them into all kinds of trouble if they continued following it. Lo and behold, they did continue following it, and when they arrived, there I was, ready and waiting. I suppose it just comes naturally to me to predict what someone else is going to do. And then when that person reacts, I can respond immediately because I have sat down and said, 'Okay, if they do this, we'll do this. If they do that, then we'll do this other thing.' It's like when you tack in a sailboat. You head in one direction, but you jinx one way, then another, planning and reacting, planning and reacting."

Ideas for Action:

- Take the time to fully reflect or muse about a goal that you want to achieve until the related patterns and issues emerge for you. Remember that this musing time is essential to strategic thinking.
- You can see repercussions more clearly than others can. Take advantage of this ability by planning your range of responses in detail. There is little point in knowing where events will lead if you are not ready when you get there.
- Find a group that you think does important work, and contribute your strategic thinking. You can be a leader with your ideas.
- Your strategic thinking will be necessary to keep a vivid vision from deteriorating into an ordinary pipe dream. Fully consider all possible paths toward making the vision a reality. Wise forethought can remove obstacles before they appear.

- Make yourself known as a resource for consultation with those who are stumped by a particular problem or hindered by a particular obstacle or barrier. By naturally seeing a way when others are convinced there is no way, you will lead them to success.
- You are likely to anticipate potential issues more easily than others. Though your awareness of possible danger might be viewed as negativity by some, you must share your insights if you are going to avoid these pitfalls. To prevent misperception of your intent, point out not only the future obstacle, but also a way to prevent or overcome it. Trust your insights, and use them to ensure the success of your efforts.
- Help others understand that your strategic thinking is not an attempt to belittle their ideas, but is instead a natural propensity to consider all the facets of a plan objectively. Rather than being a naysayer, you are actually trying to examine ways to ensure that the goal is accomplished, come what may. Your talents will allow you to consider others' perspectives while keeping your end goal in sight.
- Trust your intuitive insights as often as possible. Even though you might not be able to explain them rationally, your intuitions are created by a brain that instinctively anticipates and projects. Have confidence in these perceptions.
- Partner with someone with strong Activator talents. With this person's need for action and your need for anticipation, you can forge a powerful partnership.
- Make sure that you are involved in the front end of new initiatives or enterprises. Your innovative yet procedural approach will be critical to the genesis of a new venture because it will keep its creators from developing deadly tunnel vision.

Strengths Discovery Activity

As you begin to think about your talents, consider this equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Talent} \text{ (a natural way of thinking, feeling, or behaving)} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Investment} \text{ (time spent practicing, developing your skills, and building} \\ \text{your knowledge base)} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Strength} \text{ (the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance)} \end{array}$$

Here is an example:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Talent is:} \text{ Truly listening to your customers' wants and needs} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Investment is:} \text{ Researching products and keeping up-to-date on the industry} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Strength is:} \text{ Consistently providing near-perfect customer service} \end{array}$$

Now, think about what *you* naturally do best. How can you invest in that talent to build strength?

Do your own Strengths Discovery Interview:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Your Talent is:} \text{ _____} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Your Investment is:} \text{ _____} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Your Strength is:} \text{ _____} \end{array}$$

My Strengths-Based Action Plan

Now that you have discovered your top five themes and considered action items for development, choose 1-3 themes that describe you best, and list them below. Talk to people who know you well, and ask them to describe how you embody these themes. Ask them for specific examples of times when they have seen you using each theme in action or how each theme manifests itself in you.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Now, write down some specific actions that you could take in the next week, month, and year to build and apply your strengths. Refer to your Personalized Strengths Insights and Ideas for Action if you need help.

In the next week, I will:

In the next month, I will:

In the next year, I will:

Next, list the name of at least one person who you will meet with to review this plan. Be sure to choose someone who can help you to keep these goals "top of mind" and who will help you leverage your talents to build strengths.

Name: _____ Date reviewed: _____

Name: _____ Date reviewed: _____