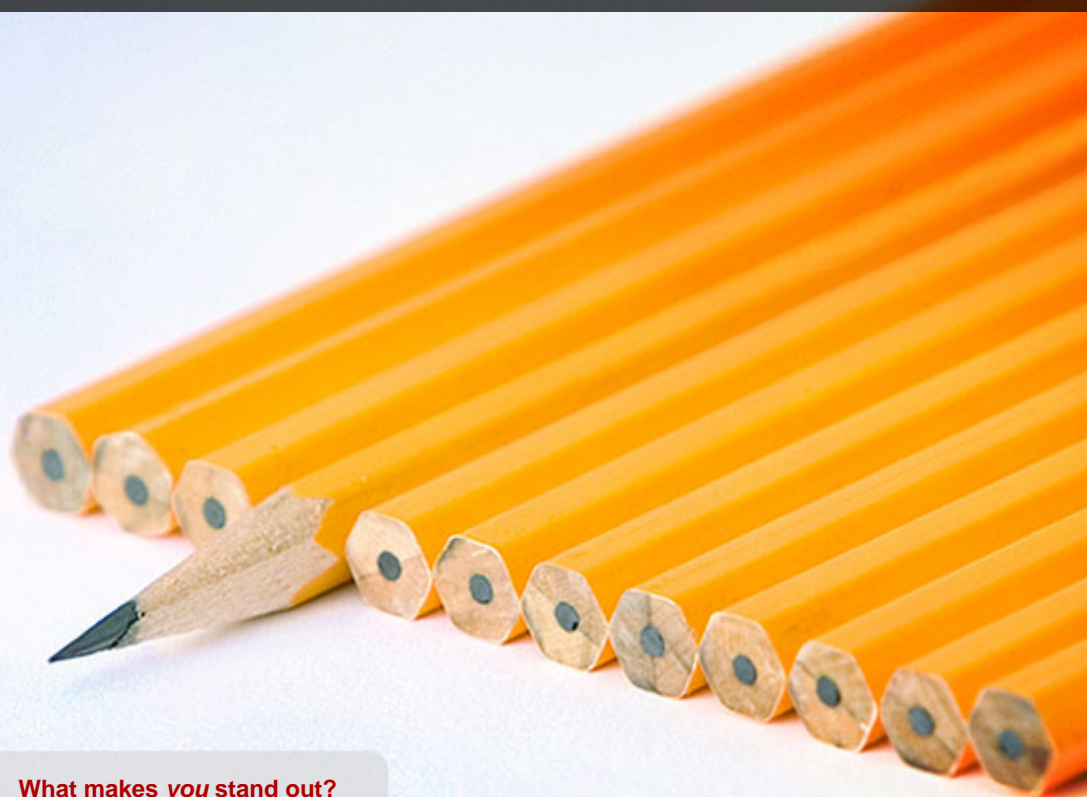


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strengthsfinder 2.0

Strengths Discovery and Action-Planning Guide



What makes *you* stand out?

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TREVOR BRAMBLE

Your Top 5 Themes

Learner
Ideation
Intellection
Analytical
Restorative

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

LEARNER

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Because of your strengths, you may prefer to read, write, and ponder philosophies, theories, or concepts that interest you. You might prefer to be alone with your thoughts rather than engage people in small talk at a social event. Driven by your talents, you sometimes investigate topics or explore issues to become more knowledgeable. Through ongoing practice, you may acquire additional skills or perfect specific techniques. Maybe few things please you as much as having mastered a subject that interests you. Chances are good that you frequently promise yourself to do something better than you did it the last time. As you examine the consequences of your words and deeds, you usually recognize ways you could perform a similar task or problem the next time with a higher degree of knowledge or skill. Simply put: You are determined to gain insights from your mistakes so you do not repeat them. By nature, you long to know more so you remain on the cutting edge of your field or areas of interest. Your inventive mind usually generates more possibilities than you can handle or fund. Nonetheless, you are committed to acquiring knowledge and/or skills. You study everything involved in a situation and conceive entirely new ways of seeing or doing things. What you already know prompts you to ask questions and delve even deeper into a subject or problem.

Learner sounds like this:

Annie M., managing editor: "I get antsy when I am not learning something. Last year, although I was enjoying my work, I didn't feel as though I was learning enough. So I took up tap dancing. It sounds strange, doesn't it? I know I am never going to perform or anything, but I enjoy focusing on the technical skill of tapping, getting a little better each week, and moving up from the beginners' class to the intermediate class. That was a kick."

Miles A., operations manager: "When I was seven years old, my teachers would tell my parents, 'Miles isn't the most intelligent boy in the school, but he's a sponge for learning, and he'll probably go really far because he will push himself and continually be grasping new things.' Right now, I am just starting a course in business-travel Spanish. I know it is probably too ambitious to think I could learn conversational Spanish and become totally proficient in that language, but I at least want to be able to travel there and know the language."

Tim S., coach for executives: "One of my clients is so inquisitive that it drives him crazy because he can't do everything he wants to. I'm different. I am not curious in that broad sense. I prefer to go into greater depth with things so that I can become competent in them and then use them at work. For example, recently one of my clients wanted me to travel with him to Nice, France, for a business engagement. So I started reading up on the region, buying books, and checking the Internet. It was all interesting and I enjoyed the study, but I wouldn't have done any of it if I wasn't going to be traveling there for work."

Ideas for Action:

- Refine how you learn. For example, you might learn best by teaching; if so, seek out opportunities to present to others. You might learn best through quiet reflection; if so, find this quiet time.

- Develop ways to track the progress of your learning. If there are distinct levels or stages of learning within a discipline or skill, take a moment to celebrate your progression from one level to the next. If no such levels exist, create them for yourself (e.g., reading five books on the subject or making three presentations on the subject).
- Be a catalyst for change. Others might be intimidated by new rules, new skills, or new circumstances. Your willingness to soak up this newness can calm their fears and spur them to action. Take this responsibility seriously.
- Seek roles that require some form of technical competence. You will enjoy the process of acquiring and maintaining this expertise.
- As far as possible, shift your career toward a field with constantly changing technologies or regulations. You will be energized by the challenge of keeping up.
- Because you are not threatened by unfamiliar information, you might excel in a consulting role (either internal or external) in which you are paid to go into new situations and pick up new competencies or languages quickly.
- Research supports the link between learning and performance. When people have the opportunity to learn and grow, they are more productive and loyal. Look for ways to measure the degree to which you and others feel that your learning needs are being met, to create individualized learning milestones, and to reward achievements in learning.
- At work, take advantage of programs that subsidize your learning. Your organization may be willing to pay for part or all of your instructional coursework or for certifications. Ask your manager for information about scholarships and other educational opportunities.
- Honor your desire to learn. Take advantage of adult educational opportunities in your community. Discipline yourself to sign up for at least one new academic or adult learning course each year.
- Time disappears and your attention intensifies when you are immersed in studying or learning. Allow yourself to "follow the trail" by scheduling learning sessions during periods of time that will not be interrupted by pressing engagements.

IDEATION

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Because of your strengths, you might be proficient -- that is, have a high degree of ability -- at devising different ways to do certain tasks. Perhaps you provide the creative intelligence for original undertakings of a personal or a professional nature. It's very likely that you are sometimes aware of the opinions people have of you. Maybe you know when individuals approve or disapprove of your contributions, accomplishments, talents, shortcomings, words, or deeds. By nature, you sometimes are aware of the views specific people have of you. This partially explains why you keep expanding your vocabulary to include elaborate terminology and complicated words. You might argue that your use of language causes certain individuals to think well of you. Instinctively, you occasionally generate novel ideas for campaigns, business ventures, initiatives, or special events.

Ideation sounds like this:

Mark B., writer: "My mind works by finding connections between things. When I was hunting down the Mona Lisa in the Louvre museum, I turned a corner and was blinded by the flashing of a thousand cameras snapping the tiny picture. For some reason, I stored that visual image away. Then I noticed a 'No Flash Photography' sign, and I stored that away too. I thought it was odd because I remembered reading that flash photography can harm paintings. Then about six months later, I read that the Mona Lisa has been stolen at least twice in this century. And suddenly I put it all together. The only explanation for all these facts is that the real Mona Lisa is not on display in the Louvre. The

real Mona Lisa has been stolen, and the museum, afraid to admit their carelessness, has installed a fake. I don't know if it's true, of course, but what a great story."

Andrea H., interior designer: "I have the kind of mind where everything has to fit together or I start to feel very odd. For me, every piece of furniture represents an idea. It serves a discrete function both independently and in concert with every other piece. The 'idea' of each piece is so powerful in my mind, it must be obeyed. If I am sitting in a room where the chairs are somehow not fulfilling their discrete function -- they're the wrong kind of chairs or they're facing the wrong way or they're pushed up too close to the coffee table -- I find myself getting physically uncomfortable and mentally distracted. Later, I won't be able to get it out of my mind. I'll find myself awake at 3:00 a.m., and I walk through the person's house in my mind's eye, rearranging the furniture and repainting the walls. This started happening when I was very young, say seven years old."

Ideas for Action:

- Seek a career in which you will be given credit for and paid for your ideas, such as marketing, advertising, journalism, design, or new product development.
- You are likely to get bored quickly, so make some small changes in your work or home life. Experiment. Play mental games with yourself. All of these will help keep you stimulated.
- Finish your thoughts and ideas before communicating them. Lacking your Ideation talents, others might not be able to "join the dots" of an interesting but incomplete idea and thus might dismiss it.
- Not all your ideas will be equally practical or serviceable. Learn to edit your ideas, or find a trusted friend or colleague who can "proof" your ideas and identify potential pitfalls.
- Understand the fuel for your Ideation talents: When do you get your best ideas? When you're talking with people? When you're reading? When you're simply listening or observing? Take note of the circumstances that seem to produce your best ideas, and recreate them.
- Schedule time to read, because the ideas and experiences of others can become your raw material for new ideas. Schedule time to think, because thinking energizes you.
- You are a natural fit with research and development; you appreciate the mindset of visionaries and dreamers. Spend time with imaginative peers, and sit in on their brainstorming sessions.
- Partner with someone with strong Analytical talents. This person will question you and challenge you, therefore strengthening your ideas.
- Sometimes you lose others' interest because they cannot follow your abstract and conceptual thinking style. Make your ideas more concrete by drawing pictures, using analogies or metaphors, or simply explaining your concepts step by step.
- Feed your Ideation talents by gathering knowledge. Study fields and industries different from your own. Apply ideas from outside, and link disparate ideas to generate new ones.

INTELLECTION

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Because of your strengths, you occasionally choose to spend your time thinking rather than engage in strenuous activity. Maybe you enjoy inventing, planning, theorizing, conceptualizing, or philosophizing. It's very likely that you occasionally wade into the middle of certain thought-provoking

conversations. Perhaps you speak theoretically -- that is, talk about things that have not been invented, proved, produced, or put into practice. Parts of your vocabulary may be as complicated as your thinking. This might explain why you consider at length specific insights, concepts, or philosophies. Maybe you prefer talking with individuals who instantly grasp the meaning of your sophisticated words. Instinctively, you may set aside about five hours a week to ponder what you have read, seen, or heard. Perhaps you set aside one-hour blocks of time to think. Perhaps you use smaller blocks of time to your advantage. For example, you might reflect on certain ideas as you walk, bicycle, drive, or otherwise commute to and from your job or classes. By nature, you may work your way onto teams whose members exchange intelligent ideas or discuss sophisticated philosophies. Perhaps you enjoy the companionship of individuals who collect information from a variety of sources.

Intellection sounds like this:

Lauren H., project manager: "I suppose that most people who meet me in passing presume that I am a flaming extrovert. I do not deny the fact that I love people, but they would be amazed to know how much time alone, how much solitude, I need in order to function in public. I really love my own company. I love solitude because it gives me a chance to allow my diffused focus to simmer with something else. That's where my best ideas come from. My ideas need to simmer and 'perk.' I used this phrase even when I was younger: 'I have put my ideas in, and now I have to wait for them to perk.'"

Michael P., marketing executive: "It's strange, but I find that I need to have noise around me or I can't concentrate. I need to have parts of my brain occupied; otherwise, it goes so fast in so many directions that I don't get anything done. If I can occupy my brain with the TV or my kids running around, then I find I concentrate even better."

Jorge H., factory manager and former political prisoner: "We used to get put into solitary confinement as a punishment, but I never hated it as much as the others did. You might think that you would get lonely, but I never did. I used the time to reflect on my life and sort out the kind of man I was and what was really important to me: my family, my values. In a weird way, solitary actually calmed me down and made me stronger."

Ideas for Action:

- Consider beginning or continuing your studies in philosophy, literature, or psychology. You will always enjoy subjects that stimulate your thinking.
- List your ideas in a log or diary. These ideas will serve as grist for your mental mill, and they might yield valuable insights.
- Deliberately build relationships with people you consider to be "big thinkers." Their example will inspire you to focus your own thinking.
- People may think you are aloof or disengaged when you close your door or spend time alone. Help them understand that this is simply a reflection of your thinking style, and that it results not from a disregard for relationships, but from a desire to bring the most you can to those relationships.
- You are at your best when you have the time to follow an intellectual trail and see where it leads. Get involved on the front end of projects and initiatives, rather than jumping in at the execution stage. If you join in the latter stages, you may derail what has already been decided, and your insights may come too late.
- Engaging people in intellectual and philosophical debate is one way that you make sense of things. This is not the case for everyone. Be sure to channel your provocative questions to those who similarly enjoy the give and take of debate.
- Schedule time for thinking; it can be energizing for you. Use these occasions to muse and reflect.
- Take time to write. Writing might be the best way for you to crystallize and integrate your thoughts.
- Find people who like to talk about the same issues you do. Organize a discussion group that addresses your subjects of interest.

- Encourage people around you to use their full intellectual capital by reframing questions for them and by engaging them in dialogue. At the same time, realize that there will be some who find this intimidating and who need time to reflect before being put on the spot.

ANALYTICAL

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

It's very likely that you try to collect pertinent and precise data. You may refuse to stop searching until you find accurate facts. You might collect information that is relevant to your life, your work, or your studies. Driven by your talents, you sometimes take time to reflect on what people say, reaching conclusions only after thoughtfully weighing the information, rather than reacting to the moment. Your practicality might have a sobering effect on certain types of discussions. Now and then, you intensify your own or other people's capacity to consider "the bigger picture." Instinctively, you may be earnest, solemn, or businesslike when circumstances require socially correct behavior. Perhaps you thoroughly study certain things before making decisions, designing plans, or taking action. By nature, you consistently weigh the pros and cons before you make a decision. As a result, you avoid rushing headlong into action without giving adequate forethought to the consequences and benefits of what you plan to do or say. Your need to perform ethically, accurately, and properly forces you to consider all aspects of a project, idea, or activity before you do anything.

Analytical sounds like this:

Jose G., school system administrator: "I have an innate ability to see structures, formats, and patterns before they exist. For instance, when people are talking about writing a grant proposal, while I'm listening to them, my brain instinctively processes the type of grants that are available and how the discussion fits into the eligibility, right down to the format of how the information can fit on the grant form in a clear and convincing way."

Jack T., human resources executive: "If I make a claim, I need to know that I can back it up with facts and logical thinking. For example, if someone says that our company is not paying as much as other companies, I always ask, 'Why do you say that?' If they say, 'Well, I saw an ad in the paper that offers graduates in mechanical engineering five grand more than we are paying,' I'll reply by asking, 'But where are these graduates going to work? Is their salary based on geography? What types of companies are they going for? Are they manufacturing companies like ours? And how many people are in their sample? Is it three people, and one of them got a really good deal, thus driving the overall average up?' There are many questions I need to ask to ensure that their claim is indeed a fact and not based on one misleading data point."

Leslie J., school principal: "Many times, there are inconsistencies in the performance of the same group of students from one year to the next. It's the same group of kids, but their scores are different year to year. How can this be? Which building are the kids in? How many of the kids have been enrolled for a full academic year? Which teachers were they assigned to, and what teaching styles were used by those teachers? I just love asking questions like these to understand what is truly happening."

Ideas for Action:

- Choose work in which you are paid to analyze data, find patterns, or organize ideas. For example, you might excel in marketing, financial, or medical research or in database management, editing, or risk management.
- Whatever your role, identify credible sources on which you can rely. You are at your best when you have well-researched sources of information and numbers to support your logic. For example, determine the most helpful books, websites, or publications that can serve as references.
- Your mind is constantly working and producing insightful analysis. Are others aware of that? Find the best way of expressing your thoughts: writing, one-on-one conversations, group discussions, perhaps lectures or presentations. Put value to your thoughts by communicating them.
- Make sure that your accumulation and analysis of information always leads to its application and implementation. If you don't do this naturally, find a partner who pushes you from theory to practice, from thinking to doing. This person will help ensure that your analysis doesn't turn into paralysis.
- Take an academic course that will expand your Analytical talents. Specifically, study people whose logic you admire.
- Volunteer your Analytical talents. You can be particularly helpful to those who are struggling to organize large quantities of data or having a hard time bringing structure to their ideas.
- Partner with someone with strong Activator talents. This person's impatience will move you more quickly through the analytical phase into the action phase.
- You may remain skeptical until you see solid proof. Your skepticism ensures validity, but others may take it personally. Help others realize that your skepticism is primarily about data, not people.
- Look for patterns in data. See if you can discern a motif, precedent, or relationship in scores or numbers. By connecting the dots in the data and inferring a causal link, you may be able to help others see these patterns.
- Help others understand that your analytical approach will often require data and other information to logically back up new ideas that they might suggest.

RESTORATIVE

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Driven by your talents, you routinely concentrate your time, effort, energy, or money on things you want to do better. Perhaps you work hard to develop in your areas of weakness. When you are successful, you may increase your chances of being the best or declared "number one." Sometimes you are motivated when your results are compared to those of others. Chances are good that you intentionally think of better ways to initiate serious discussions or engage in small talk. You are likely to enhance your talents as a conversationalist by taking classes, listening to speakers, or reading books. You probably observe individuals who have a knack for saying the right thing at the right time to the right person. By nature, you normally experience disappointment in yourself when you cannot reach a desired goal. Sensations of regret force you to think about the things you should perfect or do better in the future. It's very likely that you are restless until you can pinpoint the exact reasons why you fell short of a goal or failed to produce excellent results. Armed with these insights, you can discover ways to do things more completely or perfectly the next time.

Restorative sounds like this:

Nigel L., software designer: "I have these vivid memories of my childhood woodworking bench with hammers and nails and wood. I used to love fixing things and putting things together and making

everything just so. And now with computer programs, it's the same thing. You write the program, and if it doesn't work, you have to go back and redo it and fix it until it works."

Jan K., internist: "This theme plays in my life in so many ways. For example, my first love was surgery. I love trauma, love being in the OR, love sewing. I just love fixing things in the OR. Then again, some of my best moments have been sitting at the bedside of a dying patient, just talking together. It is incredibly rewarding to watch someone make the transition from anger to acceptance about grief, to tie up loose ends with family members, and to pass with dignity. And then with my kids, this theme fires every day. When I see my three-year-old buttoning her sweater for the first time and she buttons it crooked, I feel this powerful urge to walk up and rebutton the sweater. I have to resist, of course, because she has to learn, but, boy, it's really hard."

Marie T., television producer: "Producing a morning TV program is a fundamentally clumsy process. If I didn't like solving problems, this job would drive me up the wall. Every day, something serious goes wrong, and I have to find the problem, fix it, and move on to the next one. If I can do that well, I feel rejuvenated. On the other hand, if I go home and a problem remains unsolved, then I feel the opposite. I feel defeated."

Ideas for Action:

- Seek roles in which you are paid to solve problems or in which your success depends on your ability to restore and resolve. You might particularly enjoy roles in medicine, consulting, computer programming, or customer service.
- Don't be afraid to let others know that you enjoy fixing problems. It comes naturally to you, but many people shy away from problems. You can help.
- Give yourself a break. Your Restorative talents might lead you to be overly self-critical. Try to redirect this either toward things about yourself that can be fixed, such as knowledge or skill deficits, or toward external, tangible problems.
- Let other people solve their own problems. You might want to rush in and solve things for them, but by doing that, you might hinder their learning. Watch out for this, particularly if you are in a manager, coach, teacher, or parent role.
- Turnaround situations activate your natural forté. Use your Restorative talents to devise a plan of attack to revitalize a flagging project, organization, business, or team.
- Leverage your Restorative talents not only to tackle existing problems, but also to anticipate and prevent problems before they occur. Share your foresight and your solutions with others, and you will prove yourself a valuable partner.
- Study your chosen subject closely to become adept at identifying what causes certain problems to recur. This sort of expertise will lead you to the solution that much faster.
- Think about ways you can improve your skills and knowledge. Identify any gaps you have and the courses you can take to fill them.
- Constant improvement is one of your hallmarks. Seek opportunities to enhance your abilities through a demanding field, activity, or endeavor that requires exceptional skill and/or knowledge.
- Use your Restorative talents to think of ways to "problem proof" your work. Identify existing and potential issues, and design systems or processes to prevent errors in the future.

Strengths Discovery Activity

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

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

Here is an example:

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

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

Do your own Strengths Discovery Interview:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{X} \quad \text{Your Talent is:} \quad \underline{\hspace{15em}} \\ \text{Your Investment is:} \quad \underline{\hspace{15em}} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \quad \text{Your Strength is:} \quad \underline{\hspace{15em}} \end{array}$$

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: _____