Creating our Best Selves
Through Strengths and Wellbeing

Discover, Develop and Apply Your Strengths
PART 1: DISCOVERING YOUR STRENGTHS

Activity: Think of a time you were at your best

**YEARNING**
What activities can you not wait to start?

**RAPID LEARNING**
What kinds of activities do you seem to pick up quickly?

**FLOW**
In what activities so you get “lost in the moment”?

**SATISFACTION**
What activities make you think, “When can I do that again?”

**GLIMPSES OF EXCELLENCE**
Moments when you thought, “How did I do that?”
Activity: Writing Challenge

1. ____________________________  1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________  2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________  3. ____________________________
4. ____________________________  4. ____________________________
5. ____________________________  5. ____________________________

DISCUSSION: The Truths
Truths that allow you to play to your strengths most of the time

• As you grow you become more of who you already are
• You grow and develop the most in your areas of strength
• What your team needs of you most of all is for you to bring your strengths deliberately

*Teach a person grammar and she will write a sentence,*
*Inspire her to channel her strengths and she will write poetry.*

-Marcus Buckingham
DISCUSSION: Clarifying the Language

**Talent:** A natural way of thinking, feeling, behaving.

- **Behavior** patterns that make you effective
- **Thought** patterns that make you efficient
- **Beliefs** that empower you to succeed
- **Attitudes** that sustain your efforts toward achievement and excellence
- **Motivations** that propel you to take action and maintain the energy needed to achieve
- You cannot not do it
- Talents are potential strengths!

**Theme:** A group of similar talents.

**Skill:** The capacity to perform the functional steps of an activity.

**Knowledge:** What you know, either factually or through awareness gained by experience.

**Strength:** Talents used productively

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**TALENT**

Natural ways of thinking, feeling or behaving

**INVESTMENT**

Time spent developing your talents, skills and knowledge

**STRENGTHS**

Talents used productively

*Teachers a person's grammar and she will write a sentence,*

*Inspire her to channel her strengths and she will write poetry.*

-Marcus Buckingham
What Gives You Energy?

“Despite the American myth, I cannot be or do whatever I desire – a truism, to be sure, but a truism we often defy.

Our created natures make us like organisms in an ecosystem: There are some roles and relationships in which we thrive and others in which we wither and die.”

-Parker Palmer, Let Your Life Speak
“We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are.”

-Anais Nin

Value Ladder
Learn to value others through strengths

Valuing
Appreciating
Respecting
Understanding
Judging
Activity: Your Greatest Talents

- What surprised you about your results?

- What new discovery have you made about yourself?

- Have you shared your “Top 5” with anyone? What was their reaction?

- Is there a theme in your “Top 5” you don’t think is you?

- Is there a theme you don’t quite understand?

“One should waste as little effort as possible on improving areas of low competence. It takes far more energy to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence.”

-Peter Drucker
Activity: Treasure Hunt

- Talk to others in the room that have at least one Signature Theme different than your own.
- Jot down the theme you discussed, and at least one benefit of that theme.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>One Benefit of the Theme</th>
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Which theme or themes did you gain a greater appreciation for as a result of this conversation?
What did you learn about yourself as a result of this activity?
Discussion: Weakness

A weakness is something that gets in your way or in the way of others.

- Is there a talent or lack of talent that is currently getting in your way or in the way of others?
- Is there something that you aren’t very good at that isn’t a weakness? Is it a non-strength?

Define a weakness:
- lack of skill or knowledge
- non-strength
- overused strength
- underused strength

Mitigating weakness
- Open Communication/Transparency
- Get the RIGHT training
- Leverage other talents
- Use support systems
- Form complementary partnerships
- Adjust/Change role

“A talent is like a precious jewel. It can be covered by dirt, yet it is unchanged by the dirt. Through the process of development, we bring the jewel into the light where it can shine.”
- Donald Clifton
DISCUSSION: Strengths Development Framework

RESOURCES: South Mountain Community College Strengths Web site
http://strengths.southmountaincc.edu/
Part 2: DEVELOPING AND APPLYING YOUR STRENGTHS

Discussion: What is employee engagement?
What does employee engagement look like to you?

Are you engaged?

Engaged
- These employees are loyal and productive. They are likely to stay with their company for at least a year. They are less likely to have accidents on the job and less likely to steal.

Not Engaged
- These employees may be productive, but are not psychologically connected to their company. They are more likely to miss work days and to leave.

Actively Disengaged
- These employees are physically present but psychologically absent. They are unhappy with their work situation and insist on sharing this unhappiness with colleagues.

Strengths Awareness → Confidence → Self Efficacy → Motivation to excel → Engagement

Apply strengths to areas needing improvement → Greater likelihood of success
**Activity: Talent Connection**
- Below, place your five Signature Themes in the first column.
- Then, think about what those Signature Themes allow you to do.
- Identify one specific example of when you have recently used each theme. An example is provided for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>What this allows me to do</th>
<th>When / Where I recently used this theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restorative</td>
<td>I listen well and can provide suggestions that help solve problems.</td>
<td>A co-worker was having a hard time finding a solution for a problem a student was having. I was able to understand the situation and offer the input on how the situation could be solved.</td>
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**Activity: Applying your Talents**
List your Signature Themes and three critical activities you will perform this week, and then identify the theme or themes that will help you meet this week’s critical activities.

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<tr>
<th>My Themes</th>
<th>My Critical Activities</th>
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- Which of your signature themes seem to have the strongest connection to your critical activities?

- Could you begin to use talents from one or more of your signature themes more consciously in your role? Which ones and how?

- Do some of your required critical activities seem unconnected to your signature themes?

- What overall strategies could you put in place to further capitalize on your signature themes in relation to your role?

*We are most successful and most engaged when we use who we naturally are to fulfill the requirements of our role.*
–Donald Clifton
Activity: Dynamic Themes

- Below, place two of your Signature Themes on the lines.
- Think back or review your Talent Connection activity on how you utilize each theme.
- Write a description of how the two themes you selected are best described together.
- Examples:

  Learner + Individualization = I love to learn about what makes people tick

  Focus + Maximizer = I need to focus on projects that I can help make excellent

Now you try:

_____ + Theme = How these themes work together.

Again:

_____ + Theme = How these themes work together.

One more time:

_____ + Theme = How these themes work together.

Write a strong statement, using the language in this exercise, that you would consider responding if asked, “What do you do at work?”

This language can now be used in a resume or cover letter or even in that dreaded job interview when they ask “What are your Strengths?”
Part 3: BUILDING TEAM AND RELATIONSHIPS

DISCUSSION: Value Ladder
Learn to value others through strengths

Valuing
Appreciating
Respecting
Understanding
Judging
ACTIVITY: Balconies and Basements

- Choose one of your Signature Themes and fill in the words that you have heard used to describe that theme.
- The Balcony descriptors are those that sound like compliments.
- The basement descriptors are the barrier labels – terms used when a talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed or understood as a weakness.

Balcony

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<th>Strengths Theme</th>
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Basement

- Share your thoughts with someone in your session.
  - What could you do to ensure that others know the balcony impact of your talents versus the basement moments?
  - Are there moments where the basement descriptions are accurate? If so, how could you manage that talent differently so that it is not viewed as a weakness?
ACTIVITY: Complementary Partnerships

Partnerships are forming all around us every day. They are formed for a variety of reasons. For example:

- To “**make up**” for a lesser talent
- To “**take over**” where one person leaves off
- To “**enhance**” what one person already possesses

- Partner with someone you work with
- Individually select one of your themes.
- Think back or review your Talent Connection activity on how you utilize each theme.
- Write a description of how the two themes selected could complement each other in a project

Examples:

- **Command** + **Harmony** = *We find just the right balance when communicating with others in difficult situations*

- **Ideation** + **Strategic** = *Together we create unique solutions and action steps necessary to implement them*

**Now you try:**

**Theme** + **Theme** = **How these themes work together.**

Again:

**Theme** + **Theme** = **How these themes work together.**
DISCUSSION: Strength Based Teams

What do strong teams have in common?
- Good leaders and managers pay attention to strengths when forming teams.
- Productive teams have a variety of strengths represented and a balance of strengths and weaknesses.
- Well-rounded teams are not made up of a bunch of well-rounded people.
- Conflict doesn’t destroy strong teams because strong teams focus on results.
- Strong teams prioritize what’s best for the organization and then move forward.
- Members of strong teams are as committed to their personal lives as they are to their work.
- Strong teams embrace diversity.
- Strong teams manage for talent.

ACTIVITY: What Energizes you Most when on a team?
ACTIVITY: Different Paths to the Same Destination

- Write the 3 themes you are assigned below the arrows.
- These 3 themes represent ONE employee.

A new member with the themes below joins your team; How can you help them be successful?

Thinking specifically of their themes:
- What would you tell them before the first meeting?
- What would you ask them to do before the first meeting?
- What would you give them to read or study before the first meeting?
- Is it difficult to help someone with themes quite different from yours?
- How does it help to understand themes in others?
DISCUSSION: Strength Domains

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<tr>
<th>EXECUTING</th>
<th>INFLUENCING</th>
<th>RELATIONSHIP BUILDING</th>
<th>STRATEGIC THINKING</th>
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<td>Achiever</td>
<td>Activator</td>
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<td>Woo</td>
<td>Positivity</td>
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<td>Restorative</td>
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**Executing**
- Knows how to make things happen
- Works tirelessly to get it done
- Has the ability to “catch” an idea and make it a reality
- May establish a quality process, work tirelessly toward a goal help determine the optimal configuration of people needed to complete a task.

**Influencing**
- Helps team reach a much broader audience
- Sells the team’s ideas inside and outside the organization
- Speaks up and makes sure your group is heard
- May win followers with confidence or helping individuals feel comfortable and connected to the issue at hand.

**Relationship Building**
- The essential glue that holds a team together
- Has the unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts
- May keep the team’s collective energy high and people involved while pushing others toward bigger and better achievements.

**Strategic Thinking**
- Absorbs and analyzes information to help the team make better decisions
- Continually stretches thinking for the future
- May help understand how past events influenced present circumstances or navigate the best route for future possibilities analyzing countless opportunities and information collected.
ACTIVITY: Strengths Theme Matrix

After viewing the actual team matrix below, when will the team likely perform best and when will they find themselves in need of support?

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<td>Achiever</td>
<td>Adapter</td>
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Create a team matrix with the colleagues in your group:

What are the strengths and weaknesses of this team?

WHY CAN’T THIS LAST FOREVER?
Live Your Strengths!

- Know your top 5
- Be proud of your top 5
- Post your top 5
- Develop your top 5
- Build relationship with your top 5
- Donate your top 5! Donate them every day!

Commitments:

- One of my Signature Themes that I want to learn more about and consciously apply more often:

- One of my Signature Themes I will donate to my work more often than I do now:

- One thing I will do differently starting tomorrow:

How to get a code for someone else?
http://gallupstrengthscenter.com

Scott Geddis

scottgeddis@gmail.com
Appendix

Resources and activities that will support your discovery, development and application of your Strengths and Talents.
## Strengths Themes

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<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Achiever</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activator</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Adaptability theme prefer to “go with the flow.” They tend to be “now” people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analytical</td>
<td>People 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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arranger</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to figure out how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belief</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.</td>
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<td>Command</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.</td>
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<td>Communication</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.</td>
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<td>Competition</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.</td>
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<td>Connectedness</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.</td>
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<td>Consistency</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world with consistency by setting up clear rules and adhering to them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliberative</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>People especially talented in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others' lives or others' situations.</td>
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</table>
FOCUS People especially talented in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.

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

HARMONY People especially talented in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don’t enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.

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

INCLUDER People especially talented in the Includer theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.

INDIVIDUALIZATION People especially talented in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.

INPUT People especially talented in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

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

LEARNER People 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.

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

POSITIVITY People especially talented in the Positivity theme have an enthusiasm that is contagious. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.

RELATOR People who are especially talented in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.

RESPONSIBILITY People especially talented in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

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

SELF-ASSURANCE People especially talented in the Self-Assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.

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

STRATEGIC People 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.

WOO People especially talented in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with another person.
RESOURCE: How unique are you?

1 in over 33 million!!
Activity: Develop and Apply your Talents

Review your Signature Themes and ask yourself how you-

1. Form relationships?

2. Process thoughts/learn?

3. Influence others?

4. Get motivated?

5. Get work done/work style?

• Are the ways you currently accomplish these outcomes giving you energy?

• If not can you utilize your signature themes/talents as strengths in those areas to create personal energy?

Activity: My Greatest Success
• Think of a great success in your life. Think of 3 themes that seemed to have contributed to this success.

• Review the “talents” you underlined in your signature theme reports and list those that strongly supported your success.
**Activity: Challenge, Goal or Project**

Think of a goal you have set or a challenge you are facing in your life. Think of 3 themes that may support your efforts.

- Review the “talents” you underlined in your signature theme reports and list those that could help you accomplish your goal or overcome your challenge.

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal or Challenge**
**Activity: Developing Talents to Strengths**

Pick one theme you would like to develop. List a series of common situations in your life at work and home. Describe a specific way you can use and develop this theme in each situation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Actions to Develop Talents into Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learner</td>
<td>Interaction with co-workers</td>
<td>I will have a conversation with others in my department with the intent to learn something about them. (Learner)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Some possible life situations:**
- Community Service
- Meetings
- Teaching
- Social Media
- Sports and Recreation
- Church
- Interactions with family (children, spouse, partner, etc)
Learning Objectives:
After completing this session, participants will be able to:

- Define talent, theme, and strength.
- Discuss the role that talent and strengths play in the success of top achievers.
- Identify and define, in basic terms, their own themes of talent.
- Discuss their themes of talent with significant others.
- Define, in basic terms, the 34 themes of talent.
- Recognize the unique, but different, talents of others.
- Describe their themes of talent.
- Recognize the role of their themes of talent in their behavior.
- Identify how their themes of talent have contributed to past success.
- Describe how their themes of talent work together.
- Value their themes of talent and the role they play in their lives.
- Identify knowledge and skills useful in transforming their talents into strengths.
- Identify and demonstrate ways in which their talents can help them achieve success.
- Build relationships with others mindful of their own talents and strengths and the talents and strengths of others.
- Communicate more effectively with others in light of their own talents and the talents of others.
- Work more effectively by partnering with others with complementary themes of talent.
RESOURCES: References and Resources


