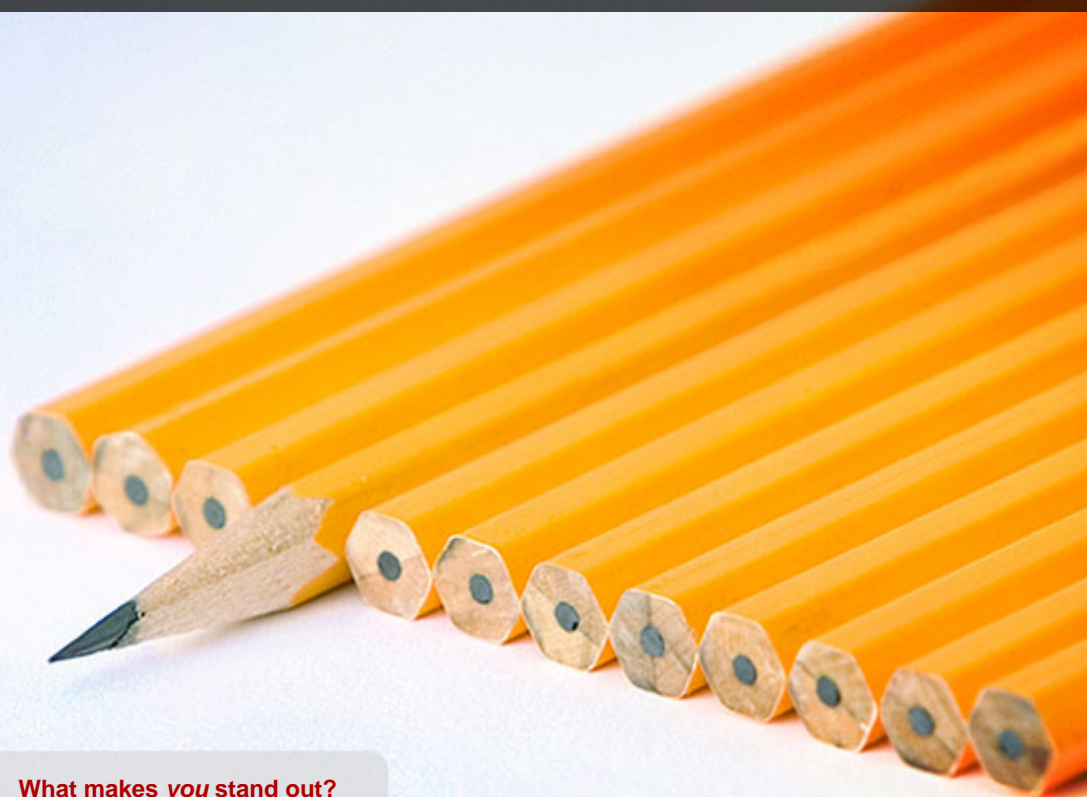


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Strengths Discovery and Action-Planning Guide



What makes *you* stand out?

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JIM MURPHY

Your Top 5 Themes

Command
Competition
Activator
Input
Self-Assurance

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?

Driven by your talents, you toughen and fortify individuals by telling them how much you value their contributions, talents, knowledge, and skills. By nature, you automatically vied for the top ranking in contests and games as a child. Reflecting on your youth, you might remember a few instances of being self-sufficient, assertive, or bold. Chances are good that you urge people to attain their goals by pressing ahead without stopping. Some people feel threatened by your forceful messages. You probably use this technique with individuals who are slow to start or who are inclined to quit before the work is finished. Because of your strengths, you purposely interject highly technical language into your conversations -- language that may be understood by a limited number of people. Your vocabulary, in and of itself, tends to alert listeners that your ideas and opinions carry extra weight. Simply put: Your air of authority causes individuals to take quite seriously whatever you tell them. It's very likely that you sometimes sense you are a bit overzealous making a name for yourself, advancing your career, or promoting your projects. Perhaps you question your sense of priority when work, studies, or some other activity consumes the majority of your time. Perhaps you wonder if your zeal distresses or displeases certain individuals.

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.

COMPETITION

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

It's very likely that you normally toil for hours to produce topnotch results. Being the very best at something is quite important to you. You have little, if any, tolerance for mediocrity, especially about the things that matter most to you. Chances are good that you probably register for the most difficult rather than the easiest classes. You likely take courses from teachers who have a reputation for being tough and demanding. You ordinarily have great faith in your ability to earn the top grade in these instructional situations. By nature, you traditionally practice using your skills and knowledge. You regularly expand your knowledge base in selected subjects. Not surprisingly, you aim to increase your chances of being the winner in a variety of contests. These rivalries can either be obvious to all involved or known only to you. Instinctively, you consistently aim to turn in the prize-winning performance. A second- or third-place finish can send you into an emotional tailspin. Your ability to pull out of it depends on your other talents. Driven by your talents, you normally imagine numerous ways of doing something when you know your results, scores, or performances are being compared to everyone else's. Your desire to be the champion probably stimulates your creative thinking.

Competition sounds like this:

Mark L., sales executive: "I've played sports my entire life, and I don't just play to have fun -- let me put it that way. I like to engage in sports I am going to win and not ones I am going to lose, because if I lose, I am outwardly gracious but inwardly infuriated."

Harry D., general manager: "I'm not a big sailor, but I love the America's Cup. Both boats are

supposed to be exactly the same, and both crews have top-notch athletes. But you always get a winner. One of them had some secret up their sleeves that tipped the balance and enabled them to win more often than lose. And that's what I am looking for -- that secret, that tiny edge."

Sumner Redstone, chairman of Viacom (now known as CBS Corporation), on his efforts to acquire that company: "I relished every minute of it because Viacom was a company worth fighting for and I enjoyed a contest. If you get involved in a major competitive struggle, and the stress that inevitably comes with it, you'd better derive some real sense of satisfaction and enjoyment from the ultimate victory. Wrestling control of a company like Viacom was warfare. I believe the real lesson it taught me was that it is not about money, it's about the will to win."

Ideas for Action:

- Select work environments in which you can measure your achievements. You might not be able to discover how good you can be without competing.
- List the performance scores that help you know where you stand every day. What scores should you pay attention to?
- Identify a high-achieving person against whom you can measure your own achievement. If there is more than one, list all the people with whom you currently compete. Without measurement, how will you know if you won?
- Try to turn ordinary tasks into competitive games. You will get more done this way.
- When you win, take the time to investigate why you won. You can learn a great deal more from a victory than from a loss.
- Let people know that being competitive does not equate with putting others down. Explain that you derive satisfaction from pitting yourself against good, strong competitors and winning.
- Develop a "balanced metric" -- a measurement system that will monitor all aspects of your performance. Even if you are competing against your own previous numbers, this measurement will help you give proper attention to all aspects of your performance.
- When competing with others, create development opportunities by choosing to compare yourself to someone who is slightly above your current level of expertise. Your competition will push you to refine your skills and knowledge to exceed those of that person. Look one or two levels above you for a role model who will push you to improve.
- Take the time to celebrate your wins. In your world, there is no victory without celebration.
- Design some mental strategies that can help you deal with a loss. Armed with these strategies, you will be able to move on to the next challenge much more quickly.

ACTIVATOR

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

It's very likely that you might derive much satisfaction from initiating conversations with outsiders or newcomers. You routinely make a game of getting strangers to tell you about themselves and their interests. Instinctively, you typically are described as a "what you see is what you get" person. There is very little mystery about who you are. You usually make a point of talking with strangers. You are apt to tell them about yourself without their having to ask you any questions. Your forthright approach encourages many individuals to be as open with you as you are with them. Because of your

strengths, you typically take the lead. You seldom wait for orders or directions from people in positions of authority. You probably operate on the premise that it is better to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission. Using this approach, you have delivered impressive results and reached important goals. Chances are good that you might feel good about the quality of your life when you can compel your friends to produce results. Maybe you motivate them with compliments. Maybe you simply say, "Let's start working." Maybe you issue direct orders when the need arises. Driven by your talents, you notice that people heed your demands. What you say and how you say it can even frighten and threaten people. You probably have used this effect to influence individuals to do what you want.

Activator sounds like this:

Jane C., Benedictine nun: "When I was prioress in the 1970s, we were hit by the energy shortage, and costs skyrocketed. We had a hundred and forty acres, and I walked the acreage every day pondering what we should do about this energy shortage. Suddenly I decided that if we had that much land, we should be drilling our own gas well, and so we did. We spent one hundred thousand dollars to drill a gas well. If you have never drilled a gas well, you probably don't realize what I didn't realize: namely, that you have to spend seventy thousand dollars just to drill to see if you have any gas on your property at all. So they dug down with some kind of vibratory camera thing, and they told me that I had a gas pool. But they didn't know how large the pool was, and they didn't know if there was enough pressure to bring it up. 'If you pay another thirty thousand dollars, we will try to release the well,' they said. 'If you don't want us to, we'll just cap the well, take your seventy thousand, and go home.' So I gave them the final thirty thousand and, fortunately, up it came. That was twenty years ago, and it is still pumping."

Jim L., entrepreneur: "Some people see my impatience as not wanting to listen to the traps, the potential roadblocks. What I keep repeating is, 'I want to know when I am going to hit the wall, and I need you to tell me how much it is going to hurt. But if I choose to bump into the wall anyway, then don't worry -- you've done your job. I just had to experience it for myself.'"

Ideas for Action:

- Seek work in which you can make your own decisions and act on them. In particular, look for start-up or turnaround situations.
- At work, make sure that your manager judges you on measurable outcomes rather than your process. Your process is not always pretty.
- You can transform innovative ideas into immediate action. Look for creative and original thinkers, and help them move their ideas from conceptual theory to concrete practice.
- Look for areas that are bogged down by discussion or blocked by barriers. End the stalemate by creating a plan to get things moving and spur others into action.
- You learn more from real experience than from theoretical discussions. To grow, consciously expose yourself to challenging experiences that will test your talents, skills, and knowledge.
- Remember that although your tenacity is powerful, it may intimidate some. Your Activator talents will be most effective when you have first earned others' trust and loyalty.
- Identify the most influential decision makers in your organization. Make it a point to have lunch with each of them at least once a quarter to share your ideas. They can support you in your activation and provide critical resources to make your ideas happen.
- You can easily energize the plans and ideas of others. Consider partnering with focused, futuristic, strategic, or analytical people who will lend their direction and planning to your activation, thereby creating an opportunity to build consensus and get others behind the plan. By doing this, you complement each other.
- Give the reasons why your requests for action must be granted. Otherwise, others might dismiss you as impatient and label you a 'ready, fire, aim' person.
- You possess an ability to create motion and momentum in others. Be strategic and wise in the use of your Activator talents. When is the best time, where is the best place, and who are the best people with whom to leverage your valuable influence?

INPUT

Shared Theme Description

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

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Chances are good that you may thirst for new ideas and knowledge. Sometimes you dive into your reading with abandon. Other times you lose yourself in a book. Maybe you pore over the thoughts contained in its pages for long stretches of time. Why? You might want to absorb as much information as you can. By nature, you might have a particular desire for knowledge. Perhaps you feel it makes little sense to skim through a book and read only the highlights. You might want to delve more deeply into intriguing subjects than most people. Maybe you love to gather all kinds of information. It's very likely that you read to stimulate your mind, to broaden your perspective, and to explore familiar as well as unfamiliar subjects. Reading is a solitary activity, which is one of the reasons why you like it so much. You are quite comfortable being alone with your books and your thoughts. Driven by your talents, you are likely to recount -- that is, tell in detail -- the stories you have read in newspapers, books, magazines, research reports, correspondence, or public records. Actually, the more you satisfy your desire to read, the more tales you have to tell. Few activities delight you as much as evoking images in your listeners' minds that bring forth laughter and tears. Instinctively, you link your passion for reading to your work. Characteristically the printed materials and Internet sites you scan for information expand your knowledge base as a professional. Your definition of "recreational reading" probably differs from that of many people.

Input sounds like this:

Ellen K., writer: "Even as a child, I found myself wanting to know everything. I would make a game of my questions. 'What is my question today?' I would think up these outrageous questions, and then I would go looking for the books that would answer them. I often got in way over my head, deep into books that I didn't have a clue about, but I read them because they had my answer someplace. My questions became my tool for leading me from one piece of information to another."

John F., human resources executive: "I'm one of those people who thinks that the Internet is the greatest thing since sliced bread. I used to feel so frustrated, but now if I want to know what the stock market is doing in a certain area or the rules of a certain game or what the GNP of Spain is or other different things, I just go to the computer, start looking, and eventually find it."

Kevin F., salesperson: "I'm amazed at some of the garbage that collects in my mind, and I love playing Jeopardy and Trivial Pursuit and anything like that. I don't mind throwing things away as long as they're material things, but I hate wasting knowledge or accumulated knowledge or not being able to read something fully if I enjoy it."

Ideas for Action:

- Look for jobs in which you are charged with acquiring new information each day, such as teaching, research, or journalism.
- Devise a system to store and easily locate information. This can be as simple as a file for all the articles you have clipped or as sophisticated as a computer database.
- Partner with someone with dominant Focus or Discipline talents. This person will help you stay on track when your inquisitiveness leads you down intriguing but distracting avenues.

- Your mind is open and absorbent. You naturally soak up information in the same way that a sponge soaks up water. But just as the primary purpose of the sponge is not to permanently contain what it absorbs, neither should your mind simply store information. Input without output can lead to stagnation. As you gather and absorb information, be aware of the individuals and groups that can most benefit from your knowledge, and be intentional about sharing with them.
- You might naturally be an exceptional repository of facts, data, and ideas. If that's the case, don't be afraid to position yourself as an expert. By simply following your Input talents, you could become known as the authority in your field.
- Remember that you must be more than just a collector of information. At some point, you'll need to leverage this knowledge and turn it into action. Make a point of identifying the facts and data that would be most valuable to others, and use this information to their advantage.
- Identify your areas of specialization, and actively seek more information about them.
- Schedule time to read books and articles that stimulate you.
- Deliberately increase your vocabulary. Collect new words, and learn the meaning of each of them.
- Identify situations in which you can share the information you have collected with other people. Also make sure to let your friends and colleagues know that you enjoy answering their questions.

SELF-ASSURANCE

Shared Theme Description

People who are 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.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

It's very likely that you intentionally seek out what is new and different. Unexplored territory appeals to your adventurous spirit. You like to test your limits as a human being in travel, work, sports, or thinking. Even when others worry about your well-being, you trust you can take care of yourself. Because of your strengths, you are attracted to volunteer projects, academic courses, or careers that challenge your intellect, skills, talents, and stamina. You trust yourself completely. This explains why you move toward rather than away from important, difficult, or meaningful endeavors. Driven by your talents, you routinely engage in exciting and adventurous activities. You refuse to settle for a boring existence. You probably sense that you have much to offer individuals and groups. Purposeful challenges combined with your realized potential impel you to take risks others avoid. Chances are good that you habitually put in very long hours. Some call you a workaholic. You disregard this label and declare, "I love my job. I really enjoy what I'm doing. I know I'm good at this. It gives me great pleasure." Instinctively, you forge ahead to build the life you envision. You reach your goals by finding as many opportunities as possible to use your unique abilities and natural gifts.

Self-Assurance sounds like this:

James K., salesman: "I never second-guess myself. Whether I am buying a birthday present or a house, when I make my decision, it feels to me as if I had no choice. There was only one decision to make, and I made it. It's easy for me to sleep at night. My gut is final, loud, and very persuasive."

Pam D., public service executive: "I was raised on a remote farm in Idaho, and I attended a small rural school. One day, I returned home from school and announced to my mother that I was changing schools. Earlier in the day, my teacher had explained that our school had too many kids and that three kids would have to move to a different school. I thought about it for a moment, liked the idea of meeting new people, and decided I would be one of them -- even though it meant getting up half an

hour earlier and traveling farther on the bus. I was five years old."

Deborah C., ER nurse: "If we have a death in the ER, people call on me to deal with the family because of my confidence. Just yesterday, we had a problem with a young psychotic girl who was screaming that the devil was inside her. The other nurses were afraid, but I knew what to do. I went in and said, 'Kate, come on, lie back. Let's say the Baruch. It's a Jewish prayer. It goes like this: Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam.' She responded, 'Say it slowly so that I can say it back to you.' I did, and then she said it back to me slowly. She wasn't Jewish, but this calm came over her. She dropped back against her pillow and said, 'Thank you. That's all I needed.'"

Ideas for Action:

- Look for start-up situations for which no rulebook exists. You will be at your best when you are asked to make many decisions.
- Seek roles in which you convince people to see your point of view. Your Self-Assurance talents (especially when combined with Command or Activator talents) can be extremely persuasive. Leadership, sales, legal, or entrepreneurial roles might suit you.
- Let your self-confidence show. It can be contagious and will help the people around you grow.
- Realize that sometimes you will find it hard to put your certainty or intuition into words, possibly leading others to see you as self-righteous. Explain that your confidence does not mean that they should withhold their opinions. It might not seem like it to them, but you do want to hear their ideas. Your conviction doesn't mean that you are unwilling to listen to them.
- Your independent streak can leave you standing alone. If this happens, make sure you are out in front, or partner with someone who can help others see how they can benefit from following you.
- Partner with someone with strong Strategic, Deliberative, or Futuristic talents. This person can help you assess the goals to which you commit. You need this help because once you set your sights on a goal, you are likely to stay with it until you achieve it.
- Your exceptionally hard work and long hours are natural products of the passion and confidence you feel about your work. Don't assume that others are similarly wired.
- You can be decisive, even when things get dynamic and distracting. When there is chaos around you, intentionally display and share the calm and certainty within you. This will give others comfort and security.
- Set ambitious goals. Don't hesitate to reach for what others see as impractical and impossible, but what you see as merely bold and exciting -- and most importantly -- achievable with some heroics and a little luck. Your Self-Assurance talents can lead to achievements that you may not have otherwise even imagined.
- You don't have a great need for direction and support from others. This could make you particularly effective in situations that require independent thinking and action. Recognize and actively contribute the value of your Self-Assurance talents when confidence and self-control are crucial.

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: _____