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Strengths Insight and Action-Planning Guide

SURVEY COMPLETION DATE: 08-26-2008



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YOUR TOP 5 THEMES

1. Activator
2. Communication
3. Restorative
4. Adaptability
5. Ideation

What's in This Guide?

SECTION I: AWARENESS

A brief Shared Theme Description for each of your top five themes

Your Personalized Strengths Insights, which describe what makes you stand out from others with the same theme in their top five

Questions for you to answer to increase your awareness of your talents

SECTION II: APPLICATION

10 Ideas for Action for each of your top five themes

Questions for you to answer to help you apply your talents

SECTION III: ACHIEVEMENT

Examples of what each of your top five themes "sounds like" -- real quotes from people who also have the theme in their top five

Steps for you to take to help you leverage your talents for achievement

Section I: Awareness

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 are comfortable telling others stories about your personal habits, qualities, experiences, or background. Your forthcoming nature probably enables others to share their thoughts and feelings with you. Chances are good that you might be the human spark plug on your team. That is, you may inspire or energize people to dedicate themselves to a task. Once a course of action is chosen, perhaps you are the person who says, "We've talked long enough. Let's get started right now. Why wait? Let's just do it!" Driven by your talents, you may be the member of the team who sometimes launches projects, starts meetings, or begins processes. Perhaps you reach a point where you tire of planning. This may be when you need to get busy and make something happen. Instinctively, 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. By nature, you might derive some satisfaction from leading conversations with outsiders and/or newcomers. Perhaps you make a game of getting strangers to tell you about themselves or their interests.

QUESTIONS

1. As you read your personalized strengths insights, what words, phrases, or lines stand out to you?
2. Out of all the talents in this insight, what would you like for others to see most in you?

Depending on the order of your themes and how you responded to the assessment, some of your themes may share identical insight statements. If this occurs, the lower ranked theme will not display insight statements to avoid duplication on your report.

Communication

SHARED THEME DESCRIPTION

People who are especially talented in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.

YOUR PERSONALIZED STRENGTHS INSIGHTS

What makes you stand out?

By nature, you sometimes welcome opportunities to speak about topics directly related to your particular areas of mastery. Depending on your other talents, you might feel comfortable discussing ideas with one or two other specialists. On the other hand, you might look forward to addressing a larger audience of experts. It's very likely that you occasionally like to speak with newcomers to put them at ease. Perhaps your need to make verbal contact intensifies when outsiders first arrive on the scene. Maybe you derive satisfaction from involving them in discussions already in progress or engaging them in casual chitchat. Chances are good that you communicate with others easily. You might even enjoy opportunities to debate with others. Because of your strengths, you may feel complete when you are surrounded by people who like you. Perhaps you long to be with friends you have not seen for a while. When they are not with you, you might feel a bit empty. Driven by your talents, you engage others in conversation about the meaning of life. You discuss subjects beyond the understanding of the average mind. You afford individuals an opportunity to be creative, study, reflect, speculate, or tell stories. These activities stimulate your thinking. Undoubtedly, you prefer to spend time with intelligent people who can understand what you are saying.

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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?

Instinctively, you regularly study your mistakes. You want to understand what you must do differently in the future to succeed. By nature, you frequently put your talents, knowledge, and skills to the test by comparing your scores, results, or rankings with those of your rivals. You naturally look for opportunities to enhance your chances of victory. It's very likely that you typically decide what is to be done. You are as comfortable issuing orders as you are making demands. Your bold and confident style allows you to gain and maintain control over people, circumstances, timetables, plans, or material resources. Driven by your talents, you see yourself as a fine trainer and instructor. You naturally seek new and better ways to broaden the knowledge base and skills of those you educate. You tend to help your students — the young and the not-so-young — conquer their weaknesses and overcome their failures. Chances are good that you sometimes question how well you are doing in certain aspects of your life. You might aspire to higher levels of excellence. Maybe you sense that your greatest accomplishments lie ahead. This partially explains why you spend time and energy addressing some of your shortcomings. Perhaps you think you jeopardize your chances of future success when you ignore certain deficiencies.

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Adaptability

SHARED THEME DESCRIPTION

People who are 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.

YOUR PERSONALIZED STRENGTHS INSIGHTS

What makes you stand out?

Chances are good that you occasionally rely on your intuition to make the right decisions as events unfold. To some degree, the present — not the future and the past — captures your attention. Perhaps you monitor and adjust what you are doing or how you are doing it as circumstances change, people join and leave the group, problems arise, or new resources become available. Instinctively, you might choose to deal with events, people, or facts as they present themselves. Perhaps changing your plans as the situation changes suits your style. Maybe you intentionally avoid inflexible people or situations. It's very likely that you might concentrate on living in the present. Perhaps you have an ability to savor the good things in life as they unfold. Sometimes people comment on your cheerful, easygoing, or hopeful attitude. Driven by your talents, you might have an ability to accept and deal with each day as it unfolds. You may be flexible enough to handle unexpected discoveries and situations. By nature, you can be flexible about how a game is played. Having a good experience is much more important to you than winning. Many people marvel at your ability to calmly move on to something else after you have met with defeat.

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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?

By nature, you might be the member of the team who suggests creative ways to do things. Perhaps you propose more innovative ideas than some others in your group. Chances are good that you sometimes feel comfortable sharing your original ideas with groups. Perhaps they welcome your innovations. Maybe they realize you suggest novel ways of doing things they would never have considered. Instinctively, you are highly sensitive to what others think of you. This sensitivity continually motivates you to do things better than you have in the past. Because of your strengths, you may have more innovative concepts to suggest to the group than some of your teammates. Perhaps you use methodical reasoning to explain your proposals and present your ideas. Maybe people take seriously what you say if your forethought and preparation are apparent. Now and then, your ideas have such importance that they can influence or impress particular individuals. It's very likely that you now and then take advantage of opportunities that allow you to generate original ideas.

QUESTIONS

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Questions

1. How does this information help you better understand your unique talents?
2. How can you use this understanding to add value to your role?
3. How can you apply this knowledge to add value to your team, workgroup, department, or division?
4. How will this understanding help you add value to your organization?
5. What will you do differently tomorrow as a result of this report?

Section II: Application

Activator

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?

QUESTIONS

1. Which of these action items speak to you? Highlight the actions that you are most likely to take.

2. How will you commit to taking action? Write your own personalized action item that you will take in the next 30 days.

Communication

IDEAS FOR ACTION:

You will always do well in roles that require you to capture people's attention. Think about a career in teaching, sales, marketing, ministry, or the media. Your Communication talents are likely to flourish in these areas.

Start a collection of stories or phrases that resonate with you. For example, cut out magazine articles that move you, or write down powerful word combinations. Practice telling these stories or saying these words out loud, by yourself. Listen to yourself actually saying the words. Refine.

When you are presenting, pay close attention to your audience. Watch their reactions to each part of your presentation. You will notice that some parts are especially engaging. Afterwards, take time to identify the moments that particularly caught the audience's attention. Draft your next presentation around these highlights.

Practice. Improvisation has a certain appeal, but in general, an audience will respond best to a presenter who knows where he or she is headed. Counterintuitively, the more prepared you are, the more natural your improvisations will appear.

Identify your most beneficial sounding boards and audiences — the listeners who seem to bring out your best communication. Examine these individuals or groups to learn why you are so good when you speak with them or to them, and look for the same qualities in potential partners and audiences.

Keep getting smarter about the words you use. They are a critical currency. Spend them wisely, and monitor their impact.

Your Communication talents can be highly effective when your message has substance. Don't rely on your talents alone; take your communication to the level of strength by developing your knowledge and expertise in specific areas.

You are gifted in fostering dialogue among peers and colleagues. Use your Communication talents to summarize the various points in a meeting and to build consensus by helping others see what they have in common.

If you enjoy writing, consider publishing your work. If you enjoy public speaking, make a presentation at a professional meeting or convention. In either case, your Communication talents will serve to assist you in finding just the right way to frame your ideas and state your purpose. You delight in sharing your thoughts with others, so find the medium that best fits your voice and message.

Volunteer for opportunities to present. You can become known as someone who helps people express their thoughts and ambitions in a captivating way.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of these action items speak to you? Highlight the actions that you are most likely to take.
2. How will you commit to taking action? Write your own personalized action item that you will take in the next 30 days.

Restorative

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.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of these action items speak to you? Highlight the actions that you are most likely to take.
2. How will you commit to taking action? Write your own personalized action item that you will take in the next 30 days.

Adaptability

IDEAS FOR ACTION:

Cultivate your reputation as a calm and reassuring person when others become upset by daily events.

Avoid roles that demand structure and predictability. These roles will quickly frustrate you, make you feel inadequate, and stifle your independence.

When the pressure is on, help your hesitant friends, colleagues, and clients find ways to collect themselves and take control of the situation. Explain that adaptability is about more than simply rolling with the punches; it is about calmly, intelligently, and readily responding to circumstances.

Don't let others abuse your inherent flexibility. Though your Adaptability talents serve you well, don't compromise your long-term success by bending to every whim, desire, and demand of others. Use smart guidelines to help you decide when to flex and when to stand firm.

Seek roles in which success depends on responding to constantly changing circumstances. Consider career areas such as journalism, live television production, emergency healthcare, and customer service. In these roles, the best react the fastest and stay levelheaded.

Fine-tune your responsiveness. For example, if your job demands unanticipated travel, learn how to pack and leave in 30 minutes. If your work pressure comes in unpredictable spurts, practice the first three moves you will always make when the pressure hits.

Look to others for planning. People who have strong Focus, Strategic, or Belief talents can help you shape your long-term goals, leaving you to excel at dealing with the day-to-day variations.

Your Adaptability talents give you an even-keel mindset that lets you ride the ups and downs without becoming an emotional volcano. Your “don’t cry over spilled milk” approach will help you quickly recover from setbacks. Recognize this aspect of your nature, and help your friends and colleagues understand that it is productive flexibility rather than an “I don’t care” attitude.

Avoid tasks that are too structured and stifle your need for variety. If given a list of tasks to complete, try to indulge your desire for flexibility by making a game of that list. See if you can be creative or make the tasks more fun in some way.

Openly use your reassuring demeanor to soothe disgruntled friends or coworkers. Think about the approach you used, and remember to apply it again when the situation presents itself.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of these action items speak to you? Highlight the actions that you are most likely to take.
2. How will you commit to taking action? Write your own personalized action item that you will take in the next 30 days.

Ideation

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.

QUESTIONS

1. Which of these action items speak to you? Highlight the actions that you are most likely to take.
2. How will you commit to taking action? Write your own personalized action item that you will take in the next 30 days.

Section III: Achievement

Look for signs of achievement as you read these real quotes from people who share your top five themes.

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.’”

COMMUNICATION SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Sheila K., general manager of a theme park: “Stories are the best way to make my point. Yesterday I wanted to show my executive committee the impact we can have on our guests, so I shared this story with them: One of our employees brought her father to the flag-raising ceremony we have for Veterans Day here at the theme park. He was disabled during World War II, and he now has a rare form of cancer and has had a lot of surgery. He’s dying. At the start of the ceremony, one of our employees said to the group, ‘This man is a World War II veteran. Can we give him a hand?’ Everybody cheered, and his daughter started crying. Her dad took off his hat. He never takes off his hat because of the scars on his head from the war and the cancer surgery, but when the national anthem started, he took off his hat and bowed his head. His daughter told me later that it was the best day he’s had in years.”

Tom P., banking executive: “My most recent client thought that the flow of capital toward Internet stocks was just a passing phase. I tried using a rational argument to change his mind, but he couldn’t

or wouldn't be convinced. In the end, as I often do when faced with a client in denial, I resorted to imagery. I told him that he was like a person sitting on a beach with his back to the sea. The Internet was like a fast-rising tide. No matter how comfortable he felt right now, the tide was rising with each crashing wave, and very soon, one of those waves would come crashing down over his head and engulf him. He got the point."

Margret D., marketing director: "I once read a book about giving speeches that gave two suggestions: Talk only about things you're really passionate about, and always use personal examples. I immediately started doing that, and I found lots of stories because I have kids and grandkids and a husband. I build my stories around my personal experiences because everyone can relate to them."

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."

ADAPTABILITY SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Marie T., television producer: "I love live TV because you never know what is going to happen. One minute, I might be putting together a segment on the best teenage holiday gifts, and the next, I will be doing the pre-interview for a presidential candidate. I guess I have always been this way. I live in the moment. If someone asks me, 'What are you doing tomorrow?' my answer is always, 'I don't know. Depends what I'm in the mood for.' I drive my boyfriend crazy because he'll plan for us to go to the antique market on Sunday afternoon, and then right at the last minute, I'll change my mind and say,

'Nah, let's go home and read the Sunday papers.' Annoying, right? Yeah, but on the positive side, it does mean that I'm up for anything."

Linda G., project manager: "Where I work, I am the calmest person I know. When someone comes in and says, 'We didn't plan right. We need this turned around by tomorrow,' my colleagues seem to tense up and freeze. Somehow that doesn't happen to me. I like that pressure, that need for instant response. It makes me feel alive."

Peter F., corporate trainer: "I think I deal with life better than most people. Last week, I found that my car window had been smashed and the stereo stolen. I was annoyed, of course, but it didn't throw me off my day one bit. I just cleared it, mentally moved on, and went right on with the other things I had to get done that day."

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."

QUESTIONS

1. Talk to friends or coworkers to hear how they have used their talents to achieve.
2. How will you use your talents to achieve?