

Using your natural talents – and stop focusing on your weaknesses

Find out where your talents lie and spend time turning them into strengths. In areas where you are weak, stand back and let others do the work where they excel. When educational psychologist Donald Clifton began asking, "What would happen if we studied what is right with people?" a strengths philosophy emerged. Its assertion is that individuals can gain far more when they expend effort to build on their greatest talents than when they spend a comparable amount of effort to remediate their weaknesses (Clifton & Harter, 2003).

The **Clifton StrengthsFinder (CSF)** is grounded in more than three decades of studying success across a wide variety of functions in the workplace. I would recommend that you invest your hard-earned money in performing the test. However, in my humble opinion, they still do not have it quite right.

I have designed a simplistic test, based on the CSF and modified to include some missing talents (which are in italics). I have also reworded some of the talent explanations to make it clearer.

A simplistic talent scorecard

Scoring system for your connection to either the positive or negative trait.

-3	Total aligned to the negative traits
-2	Most alignment to the negative traits, some small alignment to the positive traits
-1	More alignment to the negative traits
0	Neutral to statement
+1	More alignment to the positive traits
+2	Most alignment to the positive, some small alignment to the negative traits
+3	Total alignment to the positive, no alignment to the negative traits

For each talent theme you need to score yourself by first working out which trait is more like you and then working out to what extent, e.g., You are very good in a crisis , so you give yourself a +2 or +3 score.

A simplistic talent scorecard				
Category Heading	Talent themes* ¹	Positive traits	Negative traits	Score (-3 to +3)
Ability to excel in a crisis	Ability to excel in a crisis	<i>Ability to maintain a sense of humour in the face of adversity. Welcomes the crisis as a challenge not a threat.</i>	<i>Tend to flap in a crisis. Often paralysed by fear.</i>	
Abundance of positive energy	Achiever *	Have a great deal of stamina and a strong work ethic. They lead by example and are a go-getter. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.	Overcommit, can't say no, burns the candle at both ends, too concentrated on work.	
	Activator *	Make things happen by being a self-starter and an energy source. They are often fearless.	Loose cannons, rushing into new ideas without thinking it through. They often speak before thinking.	
	Positivity *	They are optimistic, energetic, light-hearted, and can get	An excessively cheerful and optimistic person who is	

¹ * from the Clifton StrengthFactors

		others excited about what they are going to do.	naïvely thinking that every initiative is going to be a winner.	
Champion of innovation and excellence	Ideation *	They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena. Learns quickly, has an agile mind and is a well of ideas.	Runs off in tangents creating more work for others as they have a lack of follow-through.	
	Adaptability *	Flexible and comfortable in times of change. They are easy to get along with.	Prefer to "go with the flow" and follow others. Directionless and indecisive.	
	Technology adapter	<i>Embraces new technology with excitement. Likes to learn how it works largely through trial and error.</i>	<i>Will wait till the training occurs. A reluctant learner. Often retaining the old tried and tested methods.</i>	
	Maximizer *	They seek to transform something strong into something superb. Seeks mastery and excellence and people who do the same.	Perfectionist, picky, nothing is ever good enough, always reworking whatever they are doing.	
Coaching	Developing others *	Recognizes and cultivates the potential in others. Enjoys helping others succeed.	Potential is all you see. Each individual is a work in progress. Not selective. Can waste time on low-potential people.	
Communicating and influencing	Communicator *	Finds it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists, storytellers and entertaining presenters.	Blabbermouth, not engaging their brain before speaking. Often a poor listener because they are self-absorbed.	
Competitiveness	Competitive *	Like to measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to be number one and revel in contests. A driven winner.	A sore loser who is not a team player. Self-centred and confrontational.	
Decision making and risk taking	Commander *	Have charisma, are inspirational, take control of a situation and make decisions. Easy to follow as they are clear and concise.	Can be bossy, know-it-all, domineering and rude. Often strong-willed, inflexible, and stubborn.	
	Deliberative *	Identifies risks, anticipates the obstacles, and plans for the unexpected before making solid decisions.	Cautious, slow as they are afraid to act.	
	Self-Assurance *	Self-confident with a strong inner compass that gives them fortitude that their decisions are right. Able to take risks.	Arrogant, self-righteous, overconfident and an utter refusal to accept where they are wrong.	
Discipline	Disciplined *	You instinctively impose structure on your world. You set up routines. You focus on timelines and deadlines.	Rigid, mechanized, and can't handle change. Have an impatience with errors.	
	Focused *	Identifies important areas quickly with laser-like precision and will follow through. Is disciplined, purposeful, and is a goal-setter and goal-getter.	Over absorbed in work and finds it tough to relax. Often gets tense and stressed.	
Embracing abandonment	<i>Embraces abandonment</i>	<i>Knows when to cut the losses, throw out broken procedures and admit they made an error of judgment and move on.</i>	<i>Hold on to past decisions hoping they will be proved right over time.</i>	
Empathy	Empathetic *	Senses the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in their situations. Knows intuitively just what to say and do.	Gets over-involved with others' issues. Can use them as a distraction from the work at hand.	
	Harmony *	Don't enjoy conflict as they would rather look for	Have difficulty making decisions that affect staff	

		consensus. As a negotiator and facilitator, they can see both sides of a situation	adversely. Likes to avoid conflict.	
	Includer *	They show awareness of those who feel left out and make an effort to include them. Caring, and sensitive to others' needs.	Indiscriminate supporter. Often excessively generous in both time and money to all.	
	Individualization awareness *	Sees and appreciates the uniqueness in all individuals. Have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.	Unable to synthesize when it comes to people. Have difficulty placing the group above the individual.	
Engaging others	Consistency *	Keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. Seeks a just world. Likes to set up clear rules and set policy so this is achieved.	Likes everything to be done "by the book". Is inflexible and unwilling to customize.	
	Relates to others*	Enjoy close relationships with others. Obtains a deep satisfaction in working with colleagues to achieve a goal. A caring, trusting, forgiving person to others.	Enjoy close relationships with members of their cliques. Has an inner circle and assigns tasks to their favourites.	
	Wooing others *	Love the challenge of meeting new people, breaking the ice, making a connection and winning them over. Outgoing, people-oriented, rapport-builders.	Can focus on being liked too much, when maybe it just wasn't meant to be. Can make exaggerations to impress.	
Finisher	Finisher	<i>Limits the number of projects on the go at any point in time. Have a relentless focus on completion.</i>	<i>Relentless in their pursuit often at the expense of others. Sets unrealistic goals.</i>	
Going where angels fear to tread	Going where angels fear to tread	<i>Make big calls and trusts in their judgement on matters that affect your life.</i>	<i>A fear of the unknown stops them from making big decisions like emigrating, getting married, changing careers, moving cities.</i>	
Integrity and honesty	Belief *	Have core values that are unchanging. Are passionate, steadfast, altruistic, family-oriented and ethically responsible.	Stubborn, set in their ways, unaccepting of other ideas.	
	Responsibility *	Committed to complete what they say they will do. They are trustworthy, conscientious, honest and loyal.	A micromanager who can't say "no". Takes on too much which they cannot complete.	
Learning agility	Collector *	Collector of information, ideas, history, or even relationships. Are knowledgeable, have an excellent memory, and are an interesting conversationalist.	Suffers from a cluttered office, car, house and of course a cluttered mind. Knows a lot of worthless information that they have to share.	
	Intellectual *	Excellent thinker who is capable of deep and philosophical thought. They are able to work alone, are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.	A loner, who is slow to act or wastes time thinking too much on dead ends. Often doesn't work well with others.	
	Learner *	Have a great desire to learn, catch on quickly and are interested in many things. It is the process of learning, rather than the outcome that excites them.	A know-it-all, lacks focus on results, learns a lot but utilises very little of this knowledge.	
Legacy	Significance, seeking recognition *	Want to be very significant in the eyes of other people and leave a lasting legacy. You feel a need to be admired as credible, professional, and	Recognition-hungry and self-focused. Often crave qualifications that might not lead to enhancement.	

		successful. Your life is filled with goals and achievements.		
Love thy neighbour as thyself	"Love thy neighbour as thyself"	<i>Love for the "common man," hostmanship, and humility all form the building materials for this trait.</i>	<i>Thinks of others needs to the detriment of themselves.</i>	
Organizing	Arranger, organizer *	They align and realign all of the pieces and resources for maximum productivity. They enjoy the figuring out, the juggling, the conducting.	Can lack structure and vision leading to a constant change in priorities.	
Problem solving	Analytical *	Search for reasons and causes. Deep and thorough logical thinkers. Often comfortable with numbers, figures, and charts.	Can be abrupt, tough to work with. Never satisfied with the answer.	
	Connectedness *	Look for links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.	Can be too idealistic and wishy-washy see connections in everything.	
	Context *	They seek lessons from the past to solve problems of today. Have a robust historical frame of reference,	Slow to move and react to change as they live in the past.	
	Restorative, problem solver *	Loves fixing things that have broken down. Enjoys solving complex issues.	Focuses on the weaknesses and can be punitive. Is negative and critical.	
Seeing future opportunities	Futuristic *	Is inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their prophetic visions of the future.	A dreamer who cannot separate fantasy from pragmatic realism.	
Self-awareness and self-regulation	Self-awareness and self-regulation *	The ability to understand and manage your own emotions and control your own addictions.	Too busy 'looking into the mirror'. Self-absorbed.	
Strategic thinking	Strategic *	Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns, issues and alternative ways to proceed.	Overthinking issues because you are cautious. Often slow to implement.	