
STRENGTHS FINDER 2.0

TOM RATH

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*This book is dedicated to the Father of Strengths Psychology,
Dr. Donald O. Clifton (1924-2003),
from all of us at Gallup who have learned so much from
this trailblazing thinker and scientist.*

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STRENGTHSFINDER:

THE NEXT GENERATION

In 1998, I began working with a team of Gallup scientists led by the late Father of Strengths Psychology, Donald O. Clifton. Our goal was to start a global conversation about what's right with people.

We were tired of living in a world that revolved around fixing our weaknesses. Society's relentless focus on people's shortcomings had turned into a global obsession. What's more, we had discovered that people have several times more potential for growth when they invest energy in developing their strengths instead of correcting their deficiencies.

Based on Gallup's 40-year study of human strengths, we created a language of the 34 most common talents and developed the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment to help people discover and describe these talents. Then in 2001, we included the initial version of this assessment with the bestselling management book *Now, Discover Your Strengths*. The discussion quickly moved beyond the management audience of this book. It appears that the world was ready to have this conversation.

Over the past few years alone, millions of people have participated in StrengthsFinder and learned about their top five themes of talent—and *Now, Discover Your Strengths* has spent more than five years on the bestseller lists. The assessment has since been translated into more than 20 languages and is used by businesses, schools, and community groups in more than 100 nations around the world. Yet when it comes to creating strength-based families, communities, and workplaces, we still have a lot of work to do.

Over the past decade, Gallup has surveyed more than 10 million people worldwide on the topic of employee engagement (or how positive and productive people are at work), and only one-third “strongly agree” with the statement:

“At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.”

And for those who do *not* get to focus on what they do best—their strengths—the costs are staggering. In a recent poll of more than 1,000 people, among those who “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed” with this “what I do best” statement, *not one single person* was emotionally engaged on the job.

In stark contrast, our studies indicate that people who *do* have the opportunity to focus on their strengths every day are *six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs* and more than *three times as likely to report having an excellent quality of life in general*.

Fortunately, our research also suggests that having someone at work who regularly focuses on your strengths can make a dramatic difference. In 2005, we explored what happens when managers primarily focus on employees’ strengths, primarily focus on employees’ weaknesses, or ignore employees. What we found completely redefined my perspective about how easy it may be to decrease the active disengagement, or extreme negativity, that runs rampant in organizations.

If your manager primarily:	The chances of your being actively disengaged are:
Ignores you	40%
Focuses on your weaknesses	22%
Focuses on your strengths	1%

As you can see from these results, having a manager who ignores you is even more detrimental than having a manager who primarily focuses on your weaknesses. Perhaps most surprising is the degree to which having a manager who focuses on your strengths decreases the odds of your being miserable on the job. It appears that the epidemic of active disengagement we see in workplaces every day could be a curable disease...if we can help the people around us develop their strengths.

What’s New in StrengthsFinder 2.0?

Our research and knowledge base on the topic of human strengths have expanded dramatically over the past decade. StrengthsFinder 2.0 picks up where the first version left off, and it is designed to provide you with the latest discoveries and strategies for application. The language of 34 themes remains the same, but the assessment is faster and even more reliable. And,

the results yield a much more in-depth analysis of your strengths.

Once you have completed the online assessment, you will receive a comprehensive *Strengths Discovery and Action-Planning Guide* that is based on your StrengthsFinder 2.0 results. This guide features an in-depth dive into the nuances of what makes you unique, using more than 5,000 new personalized Strengths Insights that we have discovered in recent years.

Going far beyond StrengthsFinder 1.0's shared theme descriptions, which can be found in Part II of this book, these highly customized Strengths Insights will help you understand how each of your top five themes plays out in your life on a much more personal level. For example, even though you and a friend may both have the same theme in your top five, the way this theme is manifested will not be the same. Therefore, each of you would receive entirely different, personalized descriptions of how that theme operates in your lives. These new Strengths Insights describe *what makes you stand out* when compared to the millions of people we have studied.

You will also receive 10 "Ideas for Action" for each of your top five themes. So, you will have 50 specific actions you can take—ideas we culled from thousands of best-practice suggestions—that are customized to your top five themes. In addition, the guide will help you build a strengths-based development plan by exploring how your greatest natural talents interact with your skills, knowledge, and experience. And the new website includes a strengths discussion forum, an online action-planning system, group discussion guides, and several other resources.

While learning about your strengths may be an interesting experience, it offers little benefit in isolation. This new book, assessment, website, and development guide are all about application. If you want to improve your life and the lives of those around you, you must take action. Use the personalized development guide to align your job and goals with your natural talents. Share this plan with your coworkers, boss, or closest friends. Then help the people around you—at work and at home—develop their strengths. If you do, chances are you will find yourself in a much more positive and productive environment.

PART I:

FINDING YOUR STRENGTHS—AN INTRODUCTION

THE PATH OF *MOST* RESISTANCE

At its fundamentally flawed core, the aim of almost any learning program is to help us become who we are *not*. If you don't have natural talent with numbers, you're still forced to spend time in that area to attain a degree. If you're not very empathic, you get sent to a course designed to infuse empathy into your personality. From the cradle to the cubicle, we devote more time to our shortcomings than to our strengths.

This is quite apparent in the way we create icons out of people who struggle to overcome a lack of natural talent. Consider the true story of Rudy Ruettiger, the 23-year-old groundskeeper at Notre Dame's stadium, who was the protagonist of the 1993 movie *Rudy*. At just 5'6" and 165 pounds, this young man clearly didn't possess the physical ability to play big-time college football, but he had ample "heart."

Rudy worked tirelessly to gain admission to Notre Dame so he could play football there. Eventually, after being rejected three times, he was accepted at Notre Dame and soon thereafter earned a spot on the football team's practice squad.

For two years, Rudy took a beating in daily practices, but he was never allowed to join his team on the sidelines. Then, after trying as hard as he could for two seasons, Rudy was finally invited to suit up for the final game of his senior year. In the last moments of this game, with a Notre Dame victory safely in hand, Rudy's teammates lobbied their coach to put him in the game. In the final seconds, the coach sent Rudy in for a single play—and he tackled the opposing team's quarterback.

It was a dramatic moment and, of course, Rudy became an instant hero. Fans chanted his name and carried him off the field. Ruettiger was later invited to the White House, where he met President Bill Clinton, Colin Powell, and football legend Joe Montana. While Rudy's perseverance is admirable, in the end, he played a few seconds of college football and made a