

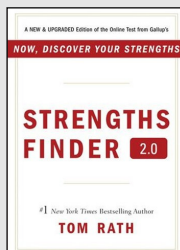
# StrengthsFinder 2.0 & Now, Discover Your Strengths

## Book Summary

Updated February 2012

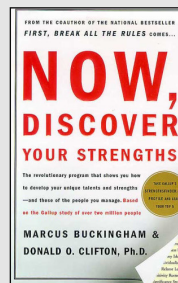
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**STRENGTHS** TEST



**StrengthsFinder 2.0**  
By Tom Rath

Hardcover: 183 pages  
Publisher: Gallup Press;  
1 edition (February 1, 2007)  
Language: English  
ISBN-10: 159562015X  
ISBN-13: 978-1595620156



**Now, Discover Your Strengths**  
By Marcus Buckingham and  
Donald Clifton

Hardcover: 272 pages  
Publisher: Free Press; 1 edition  
(January 29, 2001)  
Language: English  
ISBN-10: 0743201140  
ISBN-13: 978-0743201148

## STRENGTHSFINDER 2.0 & NOW, DISCOVER YOUR STRENGTHS BOOK SUMMARY:

### Key Takeaway:

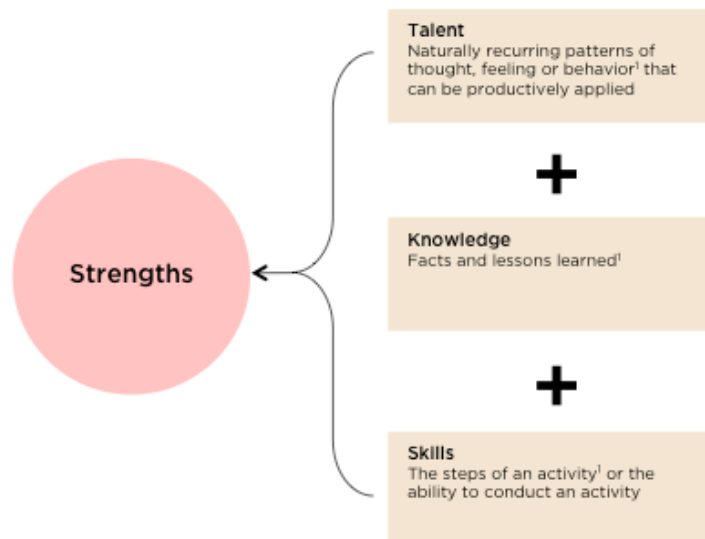
1. Each person's talents are enduring and unique.
2. Each person's greatest potential for growth is in the area of his or her greatest strength.
3. As an organization or as an individual I/we can:
  - a. Reach our maximum potential only by using our individual strengths
  - b. Match my/our strengths to our roles at work, home and in the community
  - c. Enjoy what we are doing because we are using our true talents

### Action Items:

1. Determine my individual strengths (and/or my team's strengths)
2. Analyze results
  - a. Identify strengths and match to role (example: "Communicators" are probably our best teachers)
  - b. Identify opportunities to use my/our strengths

### Key Concept:

Strengths are a combination of your talent, knowledge, and skills.



Source: 1) Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton, Now Discover Your Strengths (New York, NY: The Free Press, 2001) 29.  
Visual: Brad Pugh, The Fit Factors (Atlanta, GA: Strengths Publishing, 2012), 22.

### **Key statements from the book:**

"Most Americans do not know what their strengths are. When you ask them, they look at you with a blank stare, or they respond in terms of subject knowledge, which is the wrong answer."

— Peter Drucker

Unfortunately, most of us have little sense of our talents and strengths, much less the ability to build our lives around them. Instead, guided by our parents, by our teachers, by our managers, and by psychology's fascination with pathology, we become experts in our weaknesses and spend our lives trying to repair these flaws, while our strengths lie dormant and neglected.

What to do: Identify their talents, build them into strengths, and enjoy consistent, near-perfect performance.

When you exploit your natural abilities, you can't help but succeed. Of course, the converse is also true. Expect an uphill climb if you are always in "self-improvement" mode.

### **The Online Assessment / Test: Clifton StrengthsFinder**

The Gallup research has identified 34 dominant "themes" of talent with thousands of possible combinations. The online assessment shows someone taking the assessment what their top 5 themes are and provides additional information relevant to those themes.

Each copy of the book New Discover Your Strengths and StrengthsFinder 2.0 contains a unique access code to take the online assessment. Alternatively, you can buy an access code at [www.strengthstest.com](http://www.strengthstest.com)

Full Book Summary: “Now, Discover Your Strengths” by Marcus Buckingham and Donald O. Clifton

*Summary written by Bob Andros (<http://onbobsmind.com/2008/06/12/now-discover-your-strengths/> & [http://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=dgjsx2tmq\\_1fs2nqb&hl=en](http://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=dgjsx2tmq_1fs2nqb&hl=en))*

### Premise

- We spend too much time focusing on our weaknesses and trying to make them stronger, rather than recognizing our strengths and trying to capitalize on them.
- Companies make 2 incorrect assumptions:
  1. That a person can become competent at anything if they are trained properly; thus they spend a lot of time training their workforce.
  2. That the greatest areas of “opportunity” or growth are in an employee’s area of greatest weakness. Thus the individual development plan for an employee will often focus on these areas of weakness or work to minimize them.
- Instead, these assumptions should be made:
  1. Each person’s talents are enduring and unique (i.e. they were born with them and will always have them)
  2. Each person’s greatest room for growth is in their area of greatest strength
- Using data collected over the last 30 years (over 2 million completed surveys), the authors created 34 “themes of human talent”, or strengths (See Appendix A).

### Goal

- *This book seeks to help readers identify their “unique” strengths and then use those strengths to improve yourself and those you manage.*

### Book Notes

- Definition of Strength: Consistent near perfect performance in an activity
  1. For something to be a strength, you must be able to do it consistently and predictably
  2. People excel by maximizing strengths, not by fixing their weaknesses.
    - One exception is that “fatal” weaknesses must be addressed. Can also learn to manage around your weaknesses. An example would be a manager hiring someone who has great attention to detail, since they know that is something they lack that is needed for the team they manage.
  3. Strength = Talent + Knowledge + Skills
    - Talent – naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling or behavior that can be productively applied
      - Usually talents come so easily to us that we don’t recognize them as talents. We assume everyone can do the same things.
    - Knowledge – facts and lessons learned
      - Factual knowledge – knowing product features or protocols, etc.
      - Experiential knowledge – learned through experience
    - Skills – the steps of an activity
      - Skills bring structure to experiential knowledge.

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- Skills will help you perform but not necessarily excel. For example, you may learn some of the basic steps of public speaking and even become a better public speaker than you were before. But without the natural talent, you will never be great at it.
- A person cannot have a strength without having the requisite talent. You may develop the knowledge and skills to get by, but without the talent you won't be able to achieve consistent, near perfect performance.
- The key to building a strength is to first identify your dominant talents, then refine them with knowledge and skills.
- Example: If you sign up for classes on leadership or empathy or assertiveness or public speaking, you will not see dramatic improvement unless you have the natural talent for one of these. This is diverting your energy toward damage control (fixing weaknesses) and not toward real development.
- Every day there are hundreds of small decisions to make. We are unable to intellectualize every little decision, so we react instinctively. This means our brain takes the quickest path to making the decision, which results in using your natural talents to make these smaller decisions. These smaller decisions ultimately add up to a person's performance for the day, then the week, then the year.
- Even skills training classes that are followed up with ongoing support after the training, will not be fruitful without a person having the natural talent.
- Talents not only come naturally to us, but are also accompanied by an "it feels good" quality. So it not only feels natural to use them, it also feels *good* to use them, thus constantly pushing us towards using our talents again and again.

How do I discover my talents?

1. Monitor your spontaneous, top-of-mind reactions to the situations you encounter.
2. Also monitor these 3 things:
  - Yearnings – activities you are drawn to naturally, particularly at a young age. You may not heed the desire to cultivate them because you are busy doing other things, but they will keep "calling out" to you.
  - Rapid Learning – An ability to rapidly learn a new skill will give us clues to a talent's presence.
  - Satisfaction – Since it "feels good" to use a talent, if doing something makes you feel really good or satisfied, it may be a natural talent. This shouldn't be confused with the idea that "if it feels good, do it". Obviously this applies to productive behaviors only, as the definition of talent implies.
- The best way to pinpoint talents is to monitor your behavior and feelings over an extended period of time. Or, you can take a StrengthsFinder test (Online test. Code comes with purchase of book) that helps identify these natural talents. The StrengthsFinder test identifies 34 different areas of talent and tells you your top 5 areas (See Appendix A for the complete list of the 34 areas of talent).

### Obstacles to Building One's Strengths

- **Fear of weakness** – Inherent in our upbringing. If a child comes home with 5 A's and 1 F, what grade gets the most attention? While it may be necessary to manage around our weaknesses if they interfere with our strengths, focusing only on weaknesses will only help us prevent failure. It will not help us reach excellence. Excellence is reached only by understanding and cultivating strengths.

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- **Fear of failure** – some failures are easy to handle (when it's not something we are good at), but when we fail while doing something that plays to our strengths, that can be difficult to handle. The process of “act, learn, refine, act, learn, refine...” is the essence of strong living.
  1. Delusion, or not realizing you are failing, is one danger. Denial, or finding reasons why your failures have nothing to do with you, is another danger. Delusion and denial together are a lethal combination.
- **Fear of one's true self** – You are so used to having and using your strengths that they seem very common to you and you don't feel like you have anything that makes you unique. You may assume that “everyone does things this way”. Or you may suspect that your accomplishments are a result of circumstance or luck, and not your strengths. This is not the case. Your instinctive reactions are unique and set you apart.

### Why am I different from other people with similar themes?

- There are 33 million combinations of the top 5 themes, so it is unlikely you will meet anyone with the same themes in the same order.
- Each of your top 5 themes is so interwoven with the others that it is modified by association.
- Try not to examine themes in isolation, but examine how each one modifies the others, and what the combination effect is.

### How do I manage around my weaknesses?

- **Weakness** – anything that gets in the way of excellent performance
- The absence of any of these themes is not a weakness if you do not need that theme to be successful in work or life. It becomes a weakness only when you find yourself in a role that requires you to play to one of your non-talents.
- First, identify if the weakness is a skills weakness, a knowledge weakness or a talent weakness. If it's hard to figure this out, go acquire the skills and knowledge you need in a certain area, and if your performance is still subpar, then you probably lack the talent.
- Five other strategies for dealing with weakness:
  1. Get a little better at it – for basic things (communicating, listening, organization), you need some level of ability or they will undermine your real strengths.
  2. Design a support system – it might involve getting a Palm Pilot if you are disorganized, or organizing short meetings if you have a short attention span.
  3. Use one of your strengths to overwhelm your weakness
  4. Find a partner – Find someone with complementary themes of talent. For example, an entrepreneur with no knack for numbers might team up with a skilled accountant to fill that weakness. Requires a person to be able to *admit* a weakness in themselves.
  5. Just stop doing it – Last resort strategy, but effective if needed. If you stop doing something you're not good at it's possible nobody will notice or care. It's possible you earn more respect. And it's possible you'll feel better about yourself. For example, one manager who lacked the talent of empathy finally told her employees that she lacked this talent and was failing at trying to fake it. So she told her employees this and asked that they just tell her how they feel if they wanted her to know. Her employees felt like she became more “authentic”, even if flawed, and more trustworthy.
- Themes have little to say about what field you should be in, and only offer some directional guidance on what role you should play within your chosen field.

- To excel as a manager and to be able to turn your employee's talents into productive strengths, you will need to use *Individualization*. This means you may set slightly different expectations for each person and your moves as a manager will need to be tailored to each individual employee.
  1. Basically you will need to recognize, and then learn to capitalize on, each person's unique strengths. This will keep your employees productive, energized, and satisfied.

Special thanks to **Mr. Bob Andros** for this summary.

Read more of Mr. Andros's thoughts on his blog at: <http://onbobsmind.com>

## Appendix A:

### *Summary of the 34 "Themes" by Bob Andros (adapted from Gallup's descriptions)*

Note: In the back of the Gallup books or upon completing the StrengthsFinder online assessment, you'll be able to view detailed descriptions of your talent themes from Gallup. (View a summary of the themes at [www.strengthstest.com](http://www.strengthstest.com))

- **Achiever** – driven; constant need for achievement;
- **Activator** – Impatient for action; “When can we start?”; Must act as soon as decisions are made.
- **Adaptability** – Live in the moment; expect and respond well to new demands; flexible
- **Analytical** – “Prove it”; Insist on sound ideas; objective; Like data and patterns;
- **Arranger** – Like to be a “conductor”; enjoy managing variables and realigning them to find the perfect configuration; can change mind at last minute if new idea comes up
- **Belief** – Enduring core values; Often family-oriented, spiritual, value high ethics; Success more important than money and prestige
- **Command** – Take charge; easy to impose views on others; Fine with confrontation; Like things to be clear and up-front; May be labeled as intimidating or opinionated
- **Communication** – Like to explain, describe, host, speak in public and write; Take dry ideas and give them life; use examples, stories, metaphors; People like to listen to you
- **Competition** – Always comparing your performance to others; Like to win; May avoid contests where winning is unlikely
- **Connectedness** – Believe things happen for a reason; Believe everything is connected in some larger sense; Considerate, caring and sensitive; Faith in something greater
- **Context** – look at past to understand present; Like to understand backgrounds on people and ideas
- **Deliberative** – Careful; vigilant; private; Identify risks and mitigate them; Not effusive with praise
- **Developer** – See potential in others; Like to see people develop and grow;
- **Discipline** – Want things to be predictable, ordered, planned; You impose structure in your life by setting up routines and working on timelines; Detail oriented;
- **Empathy** – Sense emotions of others; feel what they feel; anticipate others needs; Good at expressing feelings
- **Fairness** – Balance is important; treat people the same, regardless of their situation; Don't believe others should have an advantage because of their connections or background
- **Focus** – Need a clear destination; goal driven; stay on task; impatient with delays or tangents;
- **Futuristic** – “Wouldn't it be great if...?”; Dreamer; Energized by what the future may hold; People may look to you for hope
- **Harmony** – Look for areas of agreement; dislike conflict and friction; Peacemaker; Believe productivity is enhanced by looking for common ground rather than forcing views on others
- **Ideation** – Fascinated by ideas; like finding connections between seemingly disparate phenomena
- **Inclusiveness** – Like to include people and make them feel a part of the group; Not prejudiced; No one should be ignored
- **Individualization** – Don't like generalizations about people since everyone is different; Recognize people's unique qualities and strengths; Good at building teams
- **Input** – Inquisitive; like to collect things; Find many things interesting;

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- **Intellection** – Like to think; like mental exercise; Introspective; may spend time alone thinking of questions and coming up with possible answers
- **Learner** – Love to learn as well as the process of learning; Energized by journey from ignorance to competence; Might take classes such as yoga or piano;
- **Maximizer** – Like to take something good and make it great. Don't like taking something bad and making it good; fascinated by strengths – your own and others; Focus on strengths
- **Positivity** – Generous with praise, quick to smile; always looking for the positive; Might be viewed as lighthearted; Full of energy and optimism
- **Relator** – Like to spend time with people you know; Selective with relationships since you would rather deepen your existing relationships than create superficial new ones
- **Responsibility** – Feel emotionally bound to complete commitments, or will try to make it up to someone if you don't complete it; Excuses and rationalizations are unacceptable; Looked at as completely dependable;
- **Restorative** – Love to solve problems; Enjoy the challenge of analyzing symptoms, identifying what is wrong, and finding a solution
- **Self-Assurance** – You have faith in your strengths; Confidence in your abilities and judgment; Always seem to know the right decisions; not easily swayed by other's opinions
- **Significance** – Want to be viewed as significant in the eyes of others; like recognition; Want to be heard and stand out; Independent; Like to do things your way;
- **Strategic** – Able to sort through clutter to find best route; See patterns; Ask "What if"; able to foresee potential obstacles in advance and select the right path;
- **Woo** – Stands for "Winning Others Over"; Enjoy challenge of meeting people and getting them to like you; Drawn to strangers; Make connections, then move on to meet new people

## Official Clifton StrengthsFinder™ Themes and Descriptions

The Clifton StrengthsFinder measures the presence of 34 talent themes. Talents are people's naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied. The more dominant a theme is in a person, the greater the theme's impact on that person's behavior and performance.

<b>Achiever®</b>	People strong in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.
<b>Activator®</b>	People strong in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.
<b>Adaptability®</b>	People strong 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.
<b>Analytical®</b>	People strong in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.
<b>Arranger™</b>	People strong 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.
<b>Belief®</b>	People strong in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.
<b>Command®</b>	People strong in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.
<b>Communication®</b>	People strong in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.
<b>Competition®</b>	People strong in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.
<b>Connectedness®</b>	People strong 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.
<b>Consistency®</b>	People strong in the Fairness theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world fairly by setting up clear rules and adhering to them.
<b>Context®</b>	People strong in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.
<b>Deliberative®</b>	People strong in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.
<b>Developer®</b>	People strong 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.

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<b>Discipline™</b>	People strong in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.
<b>Fairness™ / Empathy™</b>	People strong in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others' lives or others' situations.
<b>Focus™</b>	People strong in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.
<b>Futuristic®</b>	People strong in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.
<b>Harmony®</b>	People strong in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don't enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.
<b>Ideation®</b>	People strong in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.
<b>Inclusiveness® / Includer®</b>	People strong in the Inclusiveness theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.
<b>Individualization®</b>	People strong 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.
<b>Input®</b>	People strong in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.
<b>Intellection®</b>	People strong in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.
<b>Learner®</b>	People strong 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.
<b>Maximizer®</b>	People strong in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.
<b>Positivity®</b>	People strong 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.
<b>Relator®</b>	People who are strong in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.
<b>Responsibility®</b>	People strong 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.
<b>Restorative®</b>	People strong in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.
<b>Self-Assurance®</b>	People strong 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.

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<b>Significance®</b>	People strong in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.
<b>Strategic™</b>	People strong in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.
<b>Woo®</b>	People strong 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.

Useful Links:

- [www.strengthstest.com](http://www.strengthstest.com)
- [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com)
- [www.strengthsfinder.com](http://www.strengthsfinder.com)
- [www.thefitfactors.com](http://www.thefitfactors.com)