

# Strengths Development Framework

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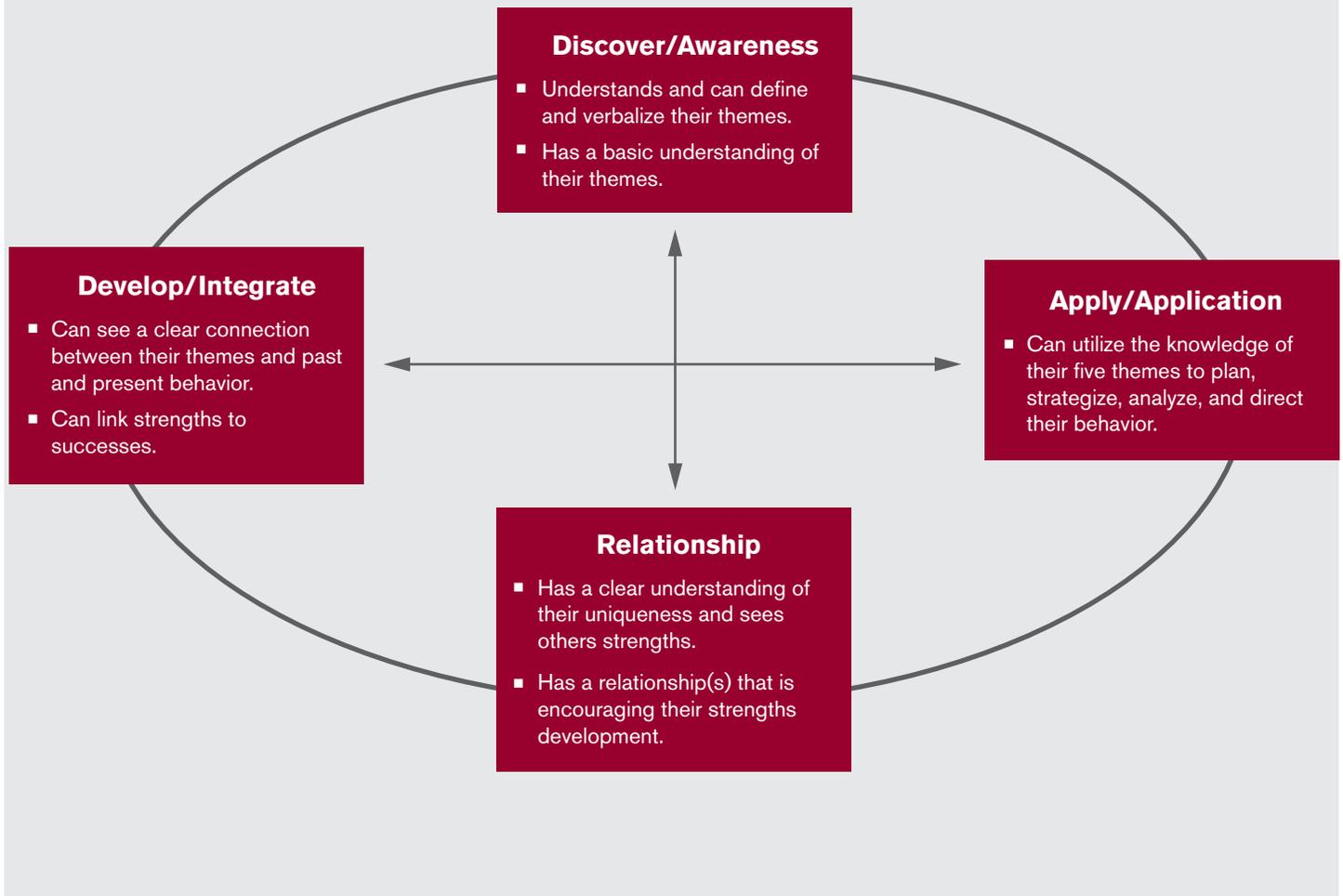
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## Strengths Development

### Strengths Development Framework



## Strengths Development

### Strengths Development Framework Programming

#### Discover/Awareness

Activities and sessions that include:

- Defining individual themes
- Small group discussion
- Getting feedback from people who know them well
- Ice Breakers
- Writing or journaling activities
- Activities that encourage them think about past behavior

Q: How can you create a high level of awareness of the philosophy and the recognition of themes in your program?

## Facilitation Notes: Verifying My Signature Themes

### Learning Outcome:

- Discuss their themes of talents with significant others.

⌚ Approximately 30 minutes

### Activity Description:

This activity helps students examine how their Signature Themes are manifested in their daily activities and how their Signature Themes are seen through the eyes of others.

Alternatively, you can ask students to use the journaling function of the StrengthsQuest website to complete this activity. Click **Journal** on the home page, and follow the directions to add, sort, print, or make an entry.

Upon returning to class, you can ask them to turn in their responses and/or facilitate a discussion regarding their reactions to this activity. Consider using the following questions to facilitate discussion:

- How did it feel to ask others about your talents?
- Did some people see your themes differently than you did? How so?
- Were you surprised by anything that the other person said?
- What did you learn as a result of completing this exercise?

## Verifying My Signature Themes

Share your Signature Themes Report with someone close to you (e.g., a parent, sibling, spouse, boyfriend/girlfriend, or friend). Ask them to read the report, and then ask them the following questions. Record his/her answers.

Which parts of the report really describe me?

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What surprises you?

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Which of the five themes have you noticed in me the most?

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Give me an example of when and how you've seen this theme or these themes in me?

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### Things to Reflect Upon

*How did it feel to ask others about your talents?*

*Did some people see your themes differently than you did? How so?*

*Were you surprised by anything that the other person said?*

*Describe one thing you learned as a result of completing this exercise.*

## Facilitation Notes: Exploring My Signature Themes

### Learning Outcome:

- Validate and affirm the students' Signature Themes.

⊕ Approximately 30 minutes

### Activity Description:

This activity is designed to help students gain a greater understanding of their individual talents, providing a basis as students continue their StrengthsQuest. Students are asked to define each of their Signature Themes using their own words and phrases, and then share these definitions in small groups.

Encourage students to highlight the words, sentences, and phrases from their Signature Theme Report that best fit them. Then ask them to identify one short phrase or a sentence that is the essence of the theme for them. So, someone with Context might write, "The blueprints from the past guide the future." Someone with Learner might write, "I am energized by the journey from ignorance to competence." And someone with Strategic might write, "What if? That says it all for me!"

Then ask students to write a few notes about a time when this theme was put into action.

A vital part of this activity is the small-group discussion. Ask students to share what they have written within groups of three or four, or ask them to move around the room and connect with three other people to share what they have written.

This is a good reminder for individuals as to their unique talents, and it will help them begin to think about how they can use these talents during their college life.

To facilitate additional discussion, you may want to ask your students the following questions after they have completed this activity:

- Who met someone who had one of the same Signature Themes?
- How were your stories similar or different in terms of how you apply your talent within college life?
- Share one new discovery you made about someone in the class.

Alternatively, you can ask students to use the journaling function of the StrengthsQuest website to complete this activity. Click **Journal** on the home page, and follow the directions to add, sort, print, and make an entry.

## Exploring My Signature Themes

In the spaces provided below, identify each of your themes and write what each of your themes means to you at this point in your StrengthsQuest.

SIGNATURE THEME	DEFINITION OF THE THEME IN YOUR OWN WORDS

In a small group, share your themes and the definitions you created. Discuss how that theme might help someone excel in college life.

## Strengths Development

### Strengths Development Framework Programming

#### Develop/Integrate

Activities and sessions that include:

- Analyzing successes
- Integrating multiple themes
- Analyzing behavior
- Processing interaction with others

**Q:** What types of things can you do with individuals and groups to recognize their themes in past and current behaviors?

**Idea:** Don't forget recognition. How can you set up opportunities for people to get recognition or feedback on their themes and successes.

## Facilitation Notes: The Challenge of Affirming My Talents

### Learning Outcome:

- Identify the difficulties associated with affirming one's themes of talent.
- ⊕ Approximately 20 minutes

### Activity Description:

This activity not only helps students affirm their Signature Themes, but it also asks them to examine some of the challenges we all face when attempting to affirm our natural selves. There are challenges. These challenges require intentional thought and action to overcome. Otherwise, we can be caught in the trap of focusing on our weaknesses rather than building our natural strengths.

Ask students to complete the following exercise. First, read each challenge. If you have experienced this feeling before, record the theme or themes associated with those feelings in the second column of the table. Then, briefly describe the situation. You may not fill in every box. An example is provided for you.

[Note: It may be helpful in this exercise to provide examples from your own experience about times when you had difficulty affirming your own talents.]

Debrief this exercise by asking students to share some of their findings. Then, facilitate a brief discussion on the necessity for intentional development of our natural talents. To facilitate this discussion, you may want to use the following questions:

- Can you think of other challenges or roadblocks we face when attempting to affirm our talents?
- Do our strengths take care of them?
- Do your talents need development?
- How do you think we develop our talents?
- How do we exercise our talents?

Alternatively, you can ask students to use the journaling function of the StrengthsQuest website to complete this activity. Click **Journal** on the home page, and follow the directions to add, sort, print, or make an entry.

## The Challenge of Affirming My Talents

A quick look around shows us that there are a lot of things that challenge our ability to affirm our natural talents. Listed below are a few of the difficulties we encounter when attempting to affirm our natural talents. Read each one. If you have experienced this feeling before, record the theme or themes associated with those feelings, and briefly describe the situation. You may not fill in every box. An example is provided for you.

Difficulty	Theme	Situation
I was blind to my talents.	Example: Adaptability	Example: I have always been adaptable and never considered it to be special. I took for granted my ability to move from one task to another.
My talents threatened others.		
I was in a position or role that didn't fit my talents.		
I was fearful of being proud or arrogant.		
I didn't see how my talents would help me reach my goals.		

## Facilitation Notes: Modeling Theme Dynamics

### Learning Outcome:

- Describe how their themes of talent work together.

⊕ Variable

### Activity Description:

This activity expands upon the previous exercise by asking students to consider how all five of their Signature Themes interact and work together.

Direct your students to build a visual model of the dynamic relationship of their top five talent themes. Tell your students to:

- Be creative.
- Consider using visual metaphors to represent the interrelationship of your talents.
- You can use any media you wish to build your model. Some ideas or suggestions:
  - Draw or sketch.
  - Build a sculpture from clay, Tinkertoy, or Lego sets.
  - You might consider using a Microsoft PowerPoint or Adobe Flash presentation of a three-dimensional model.
- Be prepared to share your visualization with your classmates.

Debrief this activity by asking students to share their models with a small group. As with so many others, the positive effect of this activity can be enhanced by having students discuss their work in small groups and/or report to the entire class.

Select a few students to present their model to the entire class.

### Supplemental Activity: Personal Statement of Strengths

An alternative to this exercise is to have students create a verbal statement of strengths. Ask students to think about their five Signature Themes and write a paragraph, poem, story, or statement that reflects their perception of their talents and how they work together — what role they play in their lives.

Example:

Signature Themes: Input, Achiever, Learner, Intellection, Ideation

Talk to me. I like to listen. I can learn so much from what you say. What are you thinking? Making lists is only a runner-up to reading and acquiring new pieces of information. I have listened, I've read, but I am not yet ready to act — I need to think a little longer. Give me time to process and absorb everything I am taking in. Let me think through it in new ways and mull it around in my head. When I have time to think, it gives me the chance to let lightning strike me. Then, BAM! It comes together. I am now ready to act — to do something, make lists, and share all of my connections with others. Now, I need to do something concrete with the information in my head.

## Facilitation Notes: Group Dynamics and Talent Themes

### Learning Outcome:

- Recognize the role of talent and strength in the behavior of others.
- ⌚ Approximately 20 minutes

### Activity Description:

Break students into small groups. Ask them to first individually, then as a group, rank what they believe to be the order in which the industries were viewed as reported by a Gallup poll conducted in August 2006. Allow the students 15 minutes to complete this activity.

As groups finish this activity, ask them to consider how they came to the final group ranking, in light of their Signature Themes of talent.

Before presenting the actual results, debrief this activity by facilitating a brief discussion about the small group dynamic and how they came to the group ranking. To facilitate this discussion, you may want to ask the following questions:

- How did your themes influence your work in the group?
- How did you see others' talents displayed?
- Were there themes of talent you wish you had represented in the group?

### Actual Gallup Poll Results

Industry	Actual Ranking
Healthcare	13
Law	14
Airline Industry	9
Restaurant Industry	1
Education	8
Banking	5
Advertising	11
Real Estate	6

Industry	Actual Ranking
Oil and Gas Industry	16
Computer Industry	2
Federal Government	15
Retail Industry	3
Farming and Agriculture	4
Automobile Industry	7
Movie Industry	10
Pharmaceutical Industry	12

## Group Dynamics and Talent Themes

In August 2006, Gallup surveyed Americans about their overall perceptions of the industries listed below. First individually, then as a group, rank what you believe is the order in which the following industries are viewed, 1 being viewed the most positively and 16 the least positively.

INDUSTRY	INDIVIDUAL	GROUP
Healthcare		
Law		
Airline Industry		
Restaurant Industry		
Education		
Banking		
Advertising		
Real Estate		
Oil and Gas Industry		
Computer Industry		
Federal Government		
Retail Industry		
Farming and Agriculture		
Automobile Industry		
Movie Industry		
Pharmaceutical Industry		

## Strengths Development

### Strengths Development Framework Programming

#### Apply/Application

Activities and sessions that include:

- Utilizing action items in StrengthsQuest
- Putting strengths in a context, i.e., job, leadership position, career
- Analyze future opportunities based on strengths

- Q: What outcomes would you like to see come about in using strengths with: individuals, programs, or the entire organization?
- Q: What types of activities, programming, etc., will move individuals into applying their strengths differently?
- Q: How can they use strengths to analyze situations to apply their strengths in new ways?

## Facilitation Notes: Talent-Based Studying

### Learning Outcome:

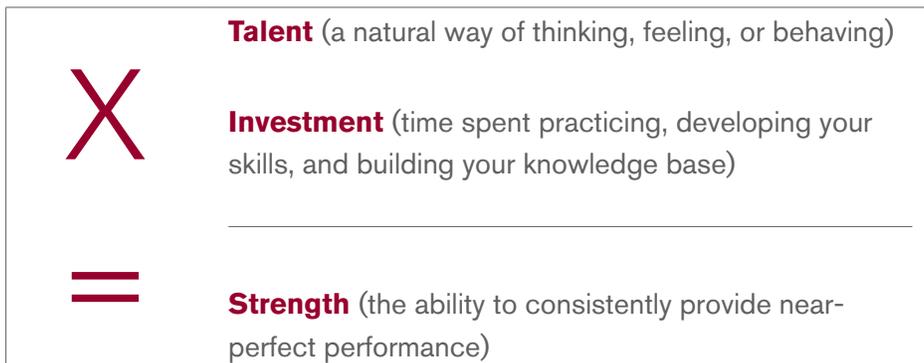
- Apply theme-specific strategies to achieve academic success.
  - Appreciate the role their talents and strengths play in making them their own best educator and learner.
- 🕒 Approximately 20-30 minutes

### Activity Description:

- In this activity, students continue to move from reflection and evaluation to application.
- Walk your students through the exercise as it is laid out on the Talent-Based Studying Worksheet.
- Alternatively, you can ask students to use the journaling function of the StrengthsQuest website to complete this activity. Click **Journal** on the home page, and follow the directions to add, sort, print, or make an entry.

### Supplemental Activity: Learning Portfolio

As is reinforced in the text, talents and strengths are just one part of what makes an individual successful. Knowledge, skills, and practice are also important parts of the strengths equation.



Ask your students to create a learning portfolio, the goal of which is to give them a full picture of themselves. In addition to their Clifton StrengthsFinder results, have students include a personalized action items checklist created from the StrengthsQuest website. Require students to take other assessments, including a VARK Learning Preference Inventory, Kolb Learning Style Inventory, Goleman's assessment of Emotional Intelligence, or informal assessment of Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. (There is no official assessment associated with Multiple Intelligences.) In addition to the results, students should include academic success strategies specific to each style or type. As well, ask student to write an academic autobiography in which they detail their history as a learner. Ask students to identify past learning experiences, both positive and negative; the people, places, and things that have and will continue to shape them as learners; and their attitudes and beliefs associated with learning. The portfolio could also include copies of their academic transcripts, a student educational plan, academic goals, a statement of values, etc.

## Talent-Based Studying

To help you determine how you can best apply your talents to achieve academic success, read the action items for “Applying Your Talents in Academics” for each of your five Signature Themes in your *StrengthsQuest* textbook. Specifically, look at the second category: “Study Techniques.” Identify one strategy you can use on a specific assignment that you have due in the next week or two.

- Which theme did you choose to focus on?
- What was the strategy that you chose to use and on what assignment?
- What specifically do you plan to do to enact this suggestion?

*Before you complete the assignment, talk to your instructor. Show him or her the plan you have created by answering the questions above. Describe your Signature Theme to him or her, and ask if he or she has any additional suggestions or direction to help you successfully complete the assignment.*

*What did your instructor say? Did he or she provide additional suggestions on how you could apply your talents to successfully complete the assignment?*

Now, complete the assignment. When you have completed it and received feedback from your instructor, answer the following questions.

What was the result of having completed this assignment using this strategy?

How would the result have been different had you not used this strategy?

## Facilitation Notes: One Key Question

### Learning Outcome:

- Describe the concept of person-environment fit/calling as it pertains to career planning.
- ⊕ Approximately 25 minutes

### Activity Description:

A strengths-based approach to career planning and development starts with self-knowledge and awareness. This means understanding what we do best and what we want most in the place where we work.

#### Part One: What I Do Best

Ask students to go through the list of “What I Do Best” items on the worksheet. Ask them to identify the five statements that would best describe the tasks they would like to spend most of their time doing in a job or a career.

#### Tip

You may want to suggest that students start by selecting 10, and then narrowing their choice to 5. To expand on this activity, you may want to facilitate a discussion about how students narrowed their choices from 10 to 5.

#### Part Two: What I Want Most

When developing a career plan, it is not only important to consider talent alignment to role and tasks, but it is also important for students to consider how their natural talents and strengths align to the culture or an organization or manager. Important considerations might include questions such as:

- How do they measure success?
- How do they attempt to solve problems?
- What are their business strategies?
- What are their people strategies?
- How do employees gain executive sponsorship?
- Do the answers to these questions align well with your natural talents?

*This activity is continued ...*

# One Key Question

## Part One: What I Do Best

Read the following list of “What I Do Best” tasks or activities, and identify five statements that would best describe the tasks or activities you would like to spend most of your time doing in a job or career.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> volunteer for causes I believe in                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> inspire people about what could be                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> collect and archive all kinds of information                         | <input type="checkbox"/> examine the unique qualities of each person                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> talk with those going through difficult situations                   | <input type="checkbox"/> be in the “public eye”   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> establish routines and processes                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> feel connected with all of life                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> think and study  | <input type="checkbox"/> compare my performance to others                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> create order and safety in my life                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> act according to my beliefs                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> control my life  | <input type="checkbox"/> include people who feel left out                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> check people out carefully before revealing confidential information | <input type="checkbox"/> let others know, without words, that I know how they feel        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> associate with people who appreciate my strengths                    | <input type="checkbox"/> coach  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work hard  | <input type="checkbox"/> discuss history and its lessons                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> do things right  | <input type="checkbox"/> help others explain their thoughts                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> live for the present   | <input type="checkbox"/> meet new people  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> help people solve their problems                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> use history to explain my position                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> be busy all the time   | <input type="checkbox"/> treat all people the same  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> find a new way to do things  | <input type="checkbox"/> concentrate until the job gets done                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> learn as much as I can about the people I meet                       | <input type="checkbox"/> do what is expected of me each day                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> follow up on the details   | <input type="checkbox"/> discover patterns of data  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> take on challenges   | <input type="checkbox"/> be persuasive  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> follow through on my commitments                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> keep track of several things at one time                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> participate in intellectual and philosophical discussions            | <input type="checkbox"/> figure out how different people can work together productively   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> give praise  | <input type="checkbox"/> plan new programs  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> have clear rules that everyone follows                               | <input type="checkbox"/> discover new information   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> prove myself successful  | <input type="checkbox"/> create future pictures and plans                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> overcome obstacles   | <input type="checkbox"/> take on significant goals and challenges                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> win the approval of others   | <input type="checkbox"/> search for the reasons and causes                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> strive to know more  | <input type="checkbox"/> tell stories   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> envision the things I want and desire                                | <input type="checkbox"/> push things to action  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> selectively distribute praise and recognition                        | <input type="checkbox"/> accept people as they are  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> organize a big event or celebration                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> teach people   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> join brainstorming sessions  | <input type="checkbox"/> find experts to help   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> get people committed   | <input type="checkbox"/> stay in contact with my friends                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> help others see their strengths                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> choose the best alternatives                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> make work fun  | <input type="checkbox"/> build bridges between people of different cultures or experience |

*This activity is continued ...*

## Facilitation Notes: One Key Question *(continued)*

Ask your students to read the list of workplace attributes, and identify five statements that best describe the attributes that they would like to find in a workplace. Tell students that they can add additional attributes to the list if there are additional considerations that may be important to them when considering a place of employment.

Then, ask your students to rank their choices in order of importance.

Debrief this activity by asking students to share their responses with a small group. As with so many others, the positive effect of this activity can be enhanced by having students discuss their work in small groups and/or report to the entire class.

Gallup's research has identified 12 items that measure employee engagement and link powerfully to relevant business outcomes, including retention, productivity, profitability, customer engagement, shrinkage, absenteeism, and safety. These items — the Q<sup>12</sup> — measure dimensions that leaders, managers, and employees can influence.

Gallup set out to identify factors that were common to higher performing units or workgroups. To identify these common factors, Gallup posed thousands of different questions to more than 1 million people.

The third element, “At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day,” emerged from the ability of a straightforward statement to predict the performance of a given worker and entire teams: With a front-row seat on their own thoughts and feelings, workers have no trouble assessing this element in their own work lives. But the simplicity of the statement belies the complexity within it. The reasons why this element is so powerful go to the heart of the most recent discoveries about human nature and touch on debates about individuality that stretch back for centuries.

What makes someone succeed where others fail? Is it something innate, something she learned, or is she just trying harder? Can excellence in a certain role be learned? How fast and how much can people change? Can a job candidate be molded to fit the needs of the position, or is what you see during that first interview what you get?

To get the most from her job or career, each employee should mold his job around the way he works most naturally, maximizing the frequency of optimal experiences in which he loses himself in the work, is internally motivated, and finds himself naturally gifted. Acknowledging one's greatest natural talents and weaknesses does not mean accepting a narrow set of career possibilities. Rather, it means each employee will succeed in a relatively unique way, applying his own style to the accomplishment. What is important is identifying organizations where those opportunities exist.

*This activity is continued ...*

## One Key Question *(continued)*

### Part Two: What I Want Most

Now, read the following list of “What I Want Most in the Place I Work” needs or attributes, and identify five statements that would best describe the attributes that you would like to find in the place you work. Feel free to add additional attributes that may be important to you when considering a place of employment.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> step-by-step training at work                    | <input type="checkbox"/> family-friendly environment   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> work either on virtual teams or with few people  | <input type="checkbox"/> have strong work relationships  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> have a supervisor or manager who cares about me  | <input type="checkbox"/> working in a company with a large number of people I deal with each day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> recognized for work I do well                    | <input type="checkbox"/> clear career path within the organization                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> have a set schedule                              | <input type="checkbox"/> there is someone always guiding my work                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> flexible environment that allows me some freedom | <input type="checkbox"/> have the opportunity to always be working with people                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> be my own boss                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> work alone most of the time   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my opinion counts                                | <input type="checkbox"/> on-call position  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> have to figure out things on my own              | <input type="checkbox"/> have a place where I believe in the mission of the company              |
| <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>   |

Now, rank your choices in order of importance, starting with the most important and continuing to the least important.

#### What I Do Best

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

#### What I Want Most in a Place I Work

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Facilitation Notes: Themes in Professions

### Learning Outcome:

- Relate talent themes to specific occupations.

⌚ Approximately 30 minutes

### Activity Description:

Have students choose three to five occupations from the following list (or add other occupations to the list; they may want to specify occupations in their particular field of study).

In small groups, ask students to discuss each of the professions. Ask them to consider what combination of themes they think would be most beneficial to an individual preparing for work in that field?

Pharmacist	Firefighter	Stockbroker	Graphic designer	Hotel front desk clerk
Critical care nurse	Disc jockey	Hair stylist	Accountant	Landscape architect
Medical equipment sales	Administrative assistant	Retail sales manager	Construction worker	Chef
Real estate agent	Air traffic controller	Physical therapist	Personal trainer	Orchestra conductor
Journalist	Kindergarten teacher	Small business entrepreneur	Youth minister	Concert promoter
Computer programmer	Court reporter	Auto mechanic	Telephone customer service representative	Football coach

Debrief this activity by asking each group to share their responses. To facilitate discussion, you may want to ask the following questions: Were the themes identified the same or different than those of other groups? What might account for the similarities and differences? Do you think there are optimal themes for each occupation? Why or why not?

### Supplemental Activity: Chapter XI Activities

Chapter XI in the *StrengthsQuest* text includes activities that can be completed in class or assigned as homework for students. Some of these exercises would be appropriate for journalizing. These include:

- Sentence completion exercises on pages 281-282.
- Identify and establish a relationship with a mentor. Have students report on who they would like to have mentor them and what steps they have taken to establish a relationship with that person.
- Values exercise on pages 282-283. This exercise asks students to consider their values when choosing a career. Any career choice that causes them to miss their “target” of important values will produce “value conflicts.” This should be a consideration or a part of their decision rule when selecting a career.
- Personifying two themes exercise on pages 283-285.
- Examining greatest success questions on page 286.

## Themes in Professions

**Occupation 1**

**Occupation 2**

**Occupation 3**

**Occupation 4**

**Occupation 5**

## Strengths Development

### Strengths Development Framework Programming

#### Relationship

Activities and sessions that include:

- Group projects
- Analyzing relationships, i.e., roommate disagreements
- Showing the differences in themes
- Understanding how themes are different
- Diversity in relationships to strengths
- Highlights and challenges with personal relationships

Q: What types of activities or programming will help to build relationships and create an understanding of others' uniqueness?

Q: How can your strengths build a culture that accepts and celebrates unique talents and encourages their development?

## Facilitation Notes: Complementary Partner

### Learning Outcome:

- Work effectively by partnering with others with complementary themes of talent.

🕒 20 minutes

### Activity Description:

Partnerships are forming all around us every day. They are formed for a variety of reasons. Some of these reasons include:

1. To “make up” for a lesser talent. For instance, if a person has a lesser pattern in the Strategic theme, he or she may want to partner with someone with intense talent in this area when it comes time to create a strategy for achieving a specific objective on a short timeline. In this way, one person leverages the talents of another to accomplish the objective.
2. To “take over” where one person leaves off. For instance, in a car dealership, one person might help you decide which car to buy, and another person will write up the purchase agreement. Both people contribute something unique and important to the purchase of your car.
3. To “enhance” what one person already possesses. For example, a person high in Focus might partner with someone high in Achiever when it is crunch time on a specific project. In doing so, both people bring the best of who they are and the results can be extraordinary.

In short, one of the main reasons we form partnerships is to achieve something greater together that we could not achieve apart.

Ask your students if they have ever thought about why people seek them out to form a complementary partnership? Ask them: With whom are you a partner? What do you contribute? What makes the partnership valuable to you and to each other?

Walk your students through the instructions. Debrief this activity by asking students to share their examples with the class.

### Be Creative and Expand This Activity.

Use your own creativity to make this activity engaging. One option might be to have students create posters using art materials or magazine clippings to create their complementary partners. Have them present their work in class, allowing them to see who would benefit from connecting with one another. It is highly unlikely there will be one student in the class with all five themes each student identifies, but help students make connections on the basis of one or more themes.

## Complementary Partners

Complementary partnerships are formed when two or more people come together to achieve something greater than what they could have achieved apart. Some of the best partnerships are formed when we consciously think about our talents and the talents that may complement our own.

Think about the talents you might want or need in a collaboration partner. Write your Signature Themes on the figure on the left. An example is provided. Then, identify five talent themes you would most like to have in a collaboration partner. Place these themes on the figure to the right.

**Activity 5.3: Complementary Partner**

The diagram consists of three stick figures arranged horizontally. The middle figure is filled with the word "WOO" in a circle at the top. From the center of its torso, five diagonal lines extend outwards, labeled "ACHIEVER", "INPUT", "HARMONY", and "CONTEXT". The left and right figures are empty templates for the user to write their own signature themes.

**Why did you choose these five themes?**

## Facilitation Notes: Barrier Labels

### Learning Outcome:

- Analyze common labels that lead people to discount talents and the potential strength of others.
- Work effectively by partnering with others with complementary themes of talent.

⌚ 20 minutes

### Activity Description:

In the previous activity, students were asked to consider the implications to the application of talents in a negative way. In this activity, students are asked to consider if they discount talents and the potential strengths of others.

Introduce the concept of barrier labels. Ask students to consider the following vital points:

- Great talents are often hidden behind negative labels.
  - Have you ever mistaken a powerful talent for a weakness?
  - Has anyone used unflattering terms to describe the ways in which you most naturally think, feel, and behave — your greatest talents?
- A weakness-seeking mindset or simple unfamiliarity can easily lead a person to misidentify and undervalue exceptional talents.
  - Think about it: We all have known a person with great Learning talents who was brushed off by some as “just a bookworm.” It is also likely that we have all known a person with tremendous Positivity talents who was discounted as “naïve.”
  - Those are barrier labels — terms used when talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed as weakness.
- These barrier labels can be a clue to great talent. Ask your students to complete the Barrier Labels Matching Activity.
- Debrief as a class.
  - If we want to maximize the effectiveness in our partnerships, it is important for us to appreciate the talents each of us bring to the partnership. When we don't see each other for who we really are and our talents for the value they offer, we create barrier labels, and we lose opportunities to contribute and develop our most valuable talents.

### Answer Key:

1. d/ii      2. e/iii      3. c/iv      4. b/i      5. a/v

## Barrier Labels

**barrier label** (bäriēr läbel) n. a term used when talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed as weakness

Match each of the following barrier labels (middle column) with the corresponding Signature Theme (left) and the positive contribution that could be missed if the label is allowed to be a barrier rather than a clue to talent (right).

Talent Theme	Common Barrier Label	Clue to Talent
a. Communication	1. Bossy	i. Is an optimistic, uplifting presence who finds the positive aspects in any situation.
b. Positivity	2. Pushover	ii. Is confident and a powerful advocate on behalf of others.
c. Achiever	3. Workaholic	iii. Invites the differing views of others and finds common ground.
d. Command	4. Unrealistic	iv. Is an exceptional producer who inspires others by setting high expectations.
e. Harmony	5. Chatterbox	v. Brings new ideas to life by telling stories that are energizing and vivid.

## Facilitation Notes: Moving Beyond Barrier Labels

### Learning Outcome:

- Analyze common labels that lead people to discount talents and the potential strengths of others.
- Work effectively by partnering with others with complementary themes of talent.

⌚ 30–45 minutes

### Activity Description:

This activity is designed to help students think about how they can maximize the positive nature of talents by managing the barrier labels that people often place upon talents.

Introduce the activity. Students are asked to identify the barrier labels they or others might use to describe an individual with each talent theme. Then, they should identify alternative words or phrases that they could use to describe a person that honors that talent theme.

Ask your students to complete this activity in small groups. Ask each group to consider the following questions:

- What are the talents that make up each talent theme?
- What are some common misperceptions that may cloud recognition of the valuable talents this person has to offer?
- Can you think of anything that might be difficult about working with someone who has powerful talents in this theme?
- What might drive you crazy if you worked with that person?

Then, they should consider the positive presentation of each talent theme:

- What are the positive traits that a person who is especially talented in this theme might add to a partnership or team?
- What are some words or phrases that characterize the positive nature and potential of the talents that comprise this theme?
- What would be beneficial about working with someone who has powerful talents in this theme?

Debrief by bringing the whole group back together and asking: How do we sometimes create barriers that hide the value of our talents? How can we manage our talents so that they don't become a barrier? How can we create opportunities to use our greatest talents by presenting them in a positive way?

Note: Some potential answers are presented on the next few pages.

## Moving Beyond Barrier Labels

Identify the barrier labels you or others might use to describe an individual with each talent theme. Then, identify alternative words or phrases that you could use to describe a person that honors that talent theme.

Theme	Barrier Label: Instead of saying this . . .	Talent Enabler: Say this . . .
Achiever		
Activator		
Adaptability		
Analytical		
Arranger		
Belief		
Command		
Communication		