
Donald Clifton

Strengths Insight and Action-Planning Guide

SURVEY COMPLETION DATE: 12-30-1999



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YOUR TOP 5 THEMES

1. Significance
2. Futuristic
3. Individualization
4. Focus
5. Maximizer

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

Significance

SHARED THEME DESCRIPTION

People exceptionally talented in the Significance theme want to make a big impact. They are independent and prioritize projects based on how much influence they will have on their organization or people around them.

YOUR PERSONALIZED STRENGTHS INSIGHTS

What makes you stand out?

Because of your strengths, you probably work diligently, persevering to the very end. You are gratified when people tell others you are a competent, trustworthy, and accomplished individual. Driven by your talents, you are determined to be in charge of your own destiny. This is your life. You intend to be the ultimate decision maker regarding personal and professional matters. It's very likely that you live your life at center stage. It is risky at times. However, it is the only way you will ever know how much people appreciate and love you. Being a person of prominence and achievement comes naturally to you. You easily capture the attention of others. You sense that you are most alive when you hear thunderous applause or receive accolades from those who realize you are important. Chances are good that you contend that what you have to say is very important. You probably tell individuals or groups they would be wise to stop what they are doing and give you their undivided attention. By nature, you seek to be held in high regard and admired as a person of worth. You are delighted when people want to spend time with you.

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.

Futuristic

SHARED THEME DESCRIPTION

People exceptionally talented in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They energize others with their visions of the future.

YOUR PERSONALIZED STRENGTHS INSIGHTS

What makes you stand out?

Instinctively, you like being an individual performer. Why? Working alone permits you to concentrate all your energy on what you want to accomplish in the coming months, years, or decades. By nature, you sharpen your ideas about the future by spending time with possibility thinkers. These individuals regularly talk about inventions, medicines, designs, technologies, or food supplies that no one else has even considered. Because of your strengths, you invest considerable time creating the future of your own choosing. You frequently share your ideas about what will be possible in the coming months, years, and decades. You probably capture people's attention whenever you describe in vivid detail what you imagine. Chances are good that you crave moments alone with your thoughts. You consider whatever arouses your intellectual curiosity. Setting aside time each week to explore your ideas is not only a pleasurable but a necessary activity for you. It's very likely that you sense you have an ability to create word pictures that describe the future. You can inspire people with your images of what can be. The individuals who most appreciate your forward thinking probably want and need to hear from you often.

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Individualization

SHARED THEME DESCRIPTION

People exceptionally talented in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how different people can work together productively.

YOUR PERSONALIZED STRENGTHS INSIGHTS

What makes you stand out?

Driven by your talents, you are quite sensitive to the trials, tribulations, and loneliness forward-looking thinkers experience. When people callously — that is, insensitively — discard their inventive ideas, futurists sense you appreciate their vision of what can be accomplished in the coming months, years, or decades. It's very likely that you routinely choose to spend time with people who recognize, applaud, or value your accomplishments. You probably prefer the company of those who see what you have to offer. You thrive when surrounded by supportive individuals. You tend to distance yourself from people who repeatedly ignore, downplay, or feel threatened by what you do so naturally and so well. By nature, you are keenly aware of people's unique traits. You notice characteristics that distinguish each person from everyone else. Because of your strengths, you easily identify with what others are thinking and feeling. You intuitively understand their hopes, fears, joys, and sorrows. This helps you consider things from each individual's perspective. Instinctively, you instinctively recognize that you grow and benefit when you emphasize your strong points. This explains why you routinely seek the company of people who value your unique gifts.

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Focus

SHARED THEME DESCRIPTION

People exceptionally talented in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.

YOUR PERSONALIZED STRENGTHS INSIGHTS

What makes you stand out?

Because of your strengths, you may be aware that you are more persistent and determined than many people are. Perhaps this is most evident when you have established a clear goal. You direct most of your attention to the task. You avoid being distracted by irrelevant, time-consuming, and/or nonproductive activities. It's very likely that you typically immerse yourself in intense activities. Preferring a fast pace, you thrive on excitement. You appreciate being surrounded by like-minded individuals. They motivate you to expend even more energy accomplishing whatever needs to be done. You stay busy and work hard whenever it is necessary. Instinctively, you seek to govern the circumstances of your life. You probably choose to work on tasks by yourself so you can determine what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. Group decision-making usually frustrates you. Chances are good that you keep your assignments and projects on track by setting weekly objectives. You work your plan and concentrate on your goals until you attain them. By nature, you normally establish step-by-step performance targets for yourself. Keeping each week's tasks and goals in mind probably improves your chances of finishing in first place and being declared the best.

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Maximizer

SHARED THEME DESCRIPTION

People exceptionally talented 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.

YOUR PERSONALIZED STRENGTHS INSIGHTS

What makes you stand out?

Instinctively, you are grateful when your questions are answered, your studies yield new information, or your knowledge increases. You routinely deepen your understanding through conversations, the media, the Internet, books, or classes. You resist spending the majority of your time on topics that are not in line with your natural abilities. Instead, you choose to take advantage of your talents — and by doing so, you consistently produce topnotch results. Chances are good that you customarily figure out what makes each person special. You talk to, observe, or study individuals who produce nothing less than excellence to identify what inspires them. Unquestionably, you prefer to associate with those who share your passion for taking something good and making it better. Once you understand what drives a person, you can motivate him or her to transform whatever was made better into something utterly superb. Because of your strengths, you select projects, assignments, or tasks that allow you to use your talents to produce outcomes. You actively seek opportunities to work independently. You probably realize you make a lot more progress when you are allowed to work alone. By nature, you are attracted to people who acknowledge your talents as an individual contributor. Your chances of success markedly increase when you can determine how you will solve problems, reach goals, acquire knowledge, apply your skills, or handle assignments. It's very likely that you have identified your talents and strengths. You know the things you do quite well. You waste very little time mulling over your limitations, shortcomings, or failures. Your strengths allow you to capture first-place honors again and again. You refuse to concentrate much energy on areas where you must struggle just to be average. "What's the point?" you ask yourself.

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

Significance

IDEAS FOR ACTION:

Choose jobs or positions in which you can determine your own tasks and actions. You will enjoy the exposure that comes with independence.

Your reputation is important to you, so decide what it should be and tend to it in the smallest detail. For example, identify and earn a designation that will add to your credibility, write an article that will give you visibility, or volunteer to speak in front of a group who will admire your achievements.

Share your dreams and goals with your family or closest friends and colleagues. Their expectations will keep you reaching.

Stay focused on performance. Your Significance talents will drive you to claim outstanding goals. Your performance had better match those goals, or others might label you as a big talker.

You will perform best when your performance is visible. Look for opportunities that put you on center stage. Stay away from roles that hide you behind the scenes.

Leading crucial teams or significant projects brings out your best. Your greatest motivation may come when the stakes are at their highest. Let others know that when the game is on the line, you want the ball.

Make a list of the goals, achievements, and qualifications you crave, and post them where you will see them every day. Use this list to inspire yourself.

Identify your best moment of recognition or praise. What was it for? Who gave it to you? Who was the audience? What do you have to do to recreate that moment?

Unless you also possess dominant Self-Assurance talents, accept that you might fear failure. Don't let this fear prevent you from staking claims to excellence. Instead, use it to focus on ensuring that your performance matches your claims.

You might have a natural awareness of what other people think of you. You may have a specific audience that you want to like you, and you will do whatever it takes to win their approval and applause. Be aware that while reliance on the approval of others could be problematic, there is nothing wrong with wanting to be liked or admired by the key people in your life.

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.
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Futuristic

IDEAS FOR ACTION:

Choose roles in which you can contribute your ideas about the future. For example, you might excel in entrepreneurial or start-up situations.

Take time to think about the future. The more time you spend considering your ideas about the future, the more vivid your ideas will become. The more vivid your ideas, the more persuasive you will be.

Seek audiences who appreciate your ideas for the future. They will expect you to make these ideas a reality, and these expectations will motivate you.

Find a friend or colleague who also has powerful Futuristic talents. Set aside an hour each month for “future” discussions. You can push each other to greater heights of creativity and vividness.

Partner with someone with strong Activator talents. This person can remind you that you do not discover the future, you create it with the actions you take today.

You inspire others with your images of the future, yet your thinking may be too expansive for them to comprehend. When you articulate your vision, be sure to describe the future in detail with vivid words and metaphors. Make your ideas and strategies more concrete via sketches, step-by-step action plans, or mock-up models so that others can readily grasp your intent.

Surround yourself with people who are eager to put your vision into motion. They will feel exhilarated by your Futuristic talents, and you can harness their energy to propel the vision toward reality.

Be prepared to provide logical support for your futuristic thinking. Your exciting visions of future success will be best received when rooted in real possibility.

Your Futuristic talents could equip you to be a guide or coach for others. Unlike you, they might not be able to easily see over the horizon. If you catch a vision of what someone could be or do, don't assume that he or she is aware of that potential. Share what you see as vividly as you can. In doing so, you may inspire someone to move forward.

Musing about the future comes naturally to you. Read articles about technology, science, and research to gain knowledge that will fuel your imagination.

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.

Individualization

IDEAS FOR ACTION:

Select a vocation in which your Individualization talents can be both used and appreciated, such as counseling, supervising, teaching, writing human interest articles, or selling. Your ability to see people as unique individuals is a special talent.

Become an expert in describing your own strengths and style. For example, answer questions such as: What is the best praise you ever received? How often do you like to check in with your manager? What is your best method for building relationships? How do you learn best? Then ask your colleagues and friends these same questions. Help them plan their future by starting with their strengths, then designing a future based on what they do best.

Help others understand that true diversity can be found in the subtle differences between each individual — regardless of race, sex, or nationality.

Explain that it is appropriate, just, and effective to treat each person differently. Those without strong Individualization talents might not see the differences among individuals and might insist that individualization is unequal and therefore unfair. You will need to describe your perspective in detail to be persuasive.

Figure out what every person on your team does best. Then help them capitalize on their talents, skills, and knowledge. You may need to explain your rationale and your philosophy so people understand that you have their best interests in mind.

You have an awareness and appreciation of others' likes and dislikes and an ability to personalize. This puts you in a unique position. Use your Individualization talents to help identify areas where one size does not fit all.

Make your colleagues and friends aware of each person's unique needs. Soon people will look to you to explain other people's motivations and actions.

Your presentations and speaking opportunities will be most engaging when you relate your topic to the experiences of individuals in the audience. Use your Individualization talents to gather and share real-life stories that will make your points much better than would generic information or theories.

You move comfortably among a broad range of styles and cultures, and you intuitively personalize your interactions. Consciously and proactively make full use of these talents by leading diversity and community efforts.

Your Individualization talents can help you take a different approach to interpreting data. While others are looking for similarities, make a point of identifying distinctiveness. Your interpretations will add a valuable perspective.

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.

Focus

IDEAS FOR ACTION:

When you set goals, discipline yourself to include timelines and measurements. These will provide regular proof that you are indeed making progress.

Seek roles in which you can function independently. With your dominant Focus talents, you will be able to stay on track with little supervision.

Your greatest worth as a team member might be helping others set goals. At the end of meetings, take responsibility for summarizing what was decided, for defining when these decisions will be acted on, and for setting a date when the group will reconvene.

Others will think, act, and talk less efficiently than you do. Pay attention. Sometimes their “detours” will lead to discoveries and delights.

Stretch your goal setting beyond work. If you find yourself becoming too focused on work goals, set goals for your personal life. They will give weight to your personal priorities and thereby help create balance in your life.

Hours can disappear when you are intent on a task; you lose track of time. Make sure that all of your objectives are met and all of your priorities are followed by scheduling your efforts and sticking to that schedule.

You function best when you can concentrate on a few well-defined initiatives and demands. Give yourself permission to reject projects or tasks that do not align with your overall mission. This will help you concentrate your efforts on your most important priorities — and will help others appreciate your need for focus.

Take the time to write down your aspirations, and refer to them often. You will feel more in control of your life.

At work, be sure to tell your manager your mid-term and short-term goals. This might well give your manager the confidence to give you the room you need.

Make sure that the focus points you set for yourself take into consideration both quantity and quality. The integrity of your objectives will ensure that the application of your Focus talents leads to solid and long-lasting success.

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.

Maximizer

IDEAS FOR ACTION:

Once you have identified your own greatest talents, stay focused on them. Refine your skills. Acquire new knowledge. Practice. Keep working toward strength in a few areas.

Develop a plan to use your most powerful talents outside of work. In doing so, consider how your talents relate to the mission in your life and how they might benefit your family or the community.

Problem solving might drain your energy and enthusiasm. Look for a restorative partner who can be your chief troubleshooter and problem solver. Let that person know how important your partnership is to your success.

Study success. Deliberately spend time with people who have discovered their strengths. The more you understand how marshaling strengths leads to success, the more likely you will be to create success in your own life.

Explain to others why you spend more time building on great talent rather than fixing weaknesses. Initially, they might confuse what you are doing with complacency.

Don't let your Maximizer talents be stifled by conventional wisdom, which says you should find what is broken and fix it. Identify and invest in the parts of your organization or community that are working. Make sure that most of your resources are spent in the build-up and build-out of these pockets of excellence.

Keep your focus on long-term relationships and goals. Many make a career out of picking the low-hanging fruit of short-term success, but your Maximizer talents will be most energized and effective as you turn top potential into true and lasting greatness.

See if you can make some of your weaknesses irrelevant. For example, find a partner, devise a support system, or use one of your stronger talents to compensate for one of your weaker ones.

Seek roles in which you are helping people succeed. In coaching, managing, mentoring, or teaching roles, your focus on strengths will prove particularly beneficial to others. Because most people find it difficult to describe what they do best, start by arming them with vivid descriptions.

Devise ways to measure your performance and the performance of others. These measures will help you spot strengths, because the best way to identify a strength is to look for sustained levels of excellent performance.

QUESTIONS

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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.

SIGNIFICANCE SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Mary P., healthcare executive: “Women are told almost from day one, ‘Don’t be too proud. Don’t stand tall.’ That kind of thing. But I’ve learned that it’s okay to have power, it’s okay to have pride, and it’s okay to have a big ego — and also that I need to manage it and drive it in the right directions.”

Kathie J., partner in a law firm: “Ever since I can remember, I have had the feeling that I was special, that I could take charge and make things happen. Back in the ‘60s, I was the first woman partner in my firm, and I can still recall walking into boardroom after boardroom and being the only woman. It’s strange, thinking back. It was tough, but I actually think I enjoyed the pressure of standing out. I enjoyed being the ‘woman’ partner. Why? Because I knew that I would be very hard to forget. I knew everyone would notice me and pay attention to me.”

John L., physician: “All through my life, I felt that I was onstage. I am always aware of an audience. If I am sitting with a patient, I want the patient to see me as the best doctor he or she has ever had. If I am teaching medical students, I want to stand out as the best medical educator they have ever had. I want to win the Educator of the Year award. My boss is a big audience for me. Disappointing her would kill me. It’s scary to think that part of my self-esteem is in other people’s hands, but then again, it keeps me on my toes.”

FUTURISTIC SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Dan F., school administrator: “In any situation, I am the guy who says, ‘Did you ever think about . . . ? I wonder if we could . . . I don’t believe it can’t be done. It’s just that nobody has done it yet. Let’s figure out how we can.’ I am always looking for options, for ways not to be mired by the status quo. In fact, there is no such thing as the status quo. You are either moving forward, or you are moving backward. That’s the reality of life, at least from my perspective. And right now, I believe that my profession is moving backward. State schools are being out-serviced by private schools, charter schools, home schools, Internet schools. We need to free ourselves from our traditions and create a new future.”

Jan K., internist: “Here at the Mayo Clinic, we are launching a group called the Hospitalists. Rather than having patients handed off from one doctor to another during their stay in the hospital, I envision a family of providers. I envision fifteen to twenty MDs, of various genders and races, with twenty to twenty-five nurse practitioners. There will be four to five new hospital services, most of which will work

with surgeons and will provide para-operative care as well as care for the hospitalized elderly. We are redefining the model of care here. We don't just take care of the patients when they are in the hospital. If a patient comes in for a knee replacement, a member of the Hospitalist team would see him before the surgery, follow him from the day of surgery through the days of hospitalization, and then see him when he comes in six weeks later for his postoperative check. We will provide patients with a complete episode of care so that they don't get lost in the handoffs. And to get the funding, I just saw the detailed picture in my head and kept describing this picture to the department chair. I guess I made it seem so real that they had no choice but to grant me the funds."

INDIVIDUALIZATION SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Les T., hospitality manager: "Carl is one of our best performers, but he still has to see me every week. He just wants a little encouragement and to check in, and he gets fired up a little bit after that meeting. Greg doesn't like to meet very often, so there's no need for me to bother him. And when we do meet, it's really for me, not for him."

Marsha D., publishing executive: "Sometimes I would walk out of my office and — you know how cartoon characters have those balloons over their head? I would see these little balloons over everyone's head telling me what was in their minds. It sounds weird, doesn't it? But it happens all the time."

Andrea H., interior designer: "When you ask people what their style is, they find it hard to describe, so I just ask them, 'What is your favorite spot in the house?' And when I ask that, their faces light up, and they know just where to take me. From that one spot, I can begin to piece together the kind of people they are and what their style is."

FOCUS SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Nick H., computer executive: "It is very important to me to be efficient. I'm the sort of guy who plays a round of golf in two and a half hours. When I was at Electronic Data Systems, I worked out a set list of questions so that I could conduct a review of each division in 15 minutes. The founder, Ross Perot, called me 'The Dentist' because I would schedule a whole day of these in-and-out, fifteen-minute meetings."

Brad F., sales executive: "I am always sorting priorities, trying to figure out the most efficient route toward the goal so that there is very little dead time, very little wasted motion. For example, I will get multiple calls from customers who need me to call the service department for them, and rather than taking each one of these calls as they come and interrupting the priorities of the day, I group them together into one call at the end of the day and get it done."

Mike L., administrator: "People are amazed how I put things into perspective and stay on track. When

people around the district are stuck on issues and caught on contrived barriers, I am able to pole-vault over them, reestablish the focus, and keep things moving.”

Doriane L., homemaker: “I am just the kind of person who likes to get to the point — in conversations, at work, and even when I am shopping with my husband. He likes to try on lots of things and has a good time doing it, whereas I try one thing on, and if I like it and it is not horribly priced, I buy it. I’m a surgical shopper.”

MAXIMIZER SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Gavin T., flight attendant: “I taught aerobics for ten years, and I made a point of asking people to focus on what they liked about themselves. We all have parts of our body that we would like to change or that we would like to see differently, but to focus on that can be so destructive. It becomes a vicious cycle. So I would say, ‘Look, you don’t need to be doing that. Instead, let’s focus on the attribute you like about yourself, and then we’ll all feel better about expending all of this energy.’”

Amy T., magazine editor: “There is nothing I hate more than having to fix a poorly written piece. If I have given the writer a clear focus and she comes back with a piece that is completely off the mark, I almost can’t bring myself to write comments on it. I’m more inclined to just hand it back to her and say, ‘Just please start again.’ On the other hand, what I love to do is take a piece that is so close and then refine it to make it perfect. You know, just the right word here, a little cut there, and suddenly it’s a brilliant piece.”

Marshall G., marketing executive: “I am really good at setting a focus for people and then building a sense of team spirit as we all march forward. But I am not so good at strategic thinking. Fortunately, I have a boss who understands that about me. We have been working together for quite a few years. He has found people who play the strategic role, and at the same time, stretches me to be even better at the focus and team-building role. I’m so lucky to have a boss who thinks this way. It’s made me more secure and made me charge ahead much faster, knowing that my boss knows what I am good at and what I’m not good at; he doesn’t bother me with the latter.”

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?