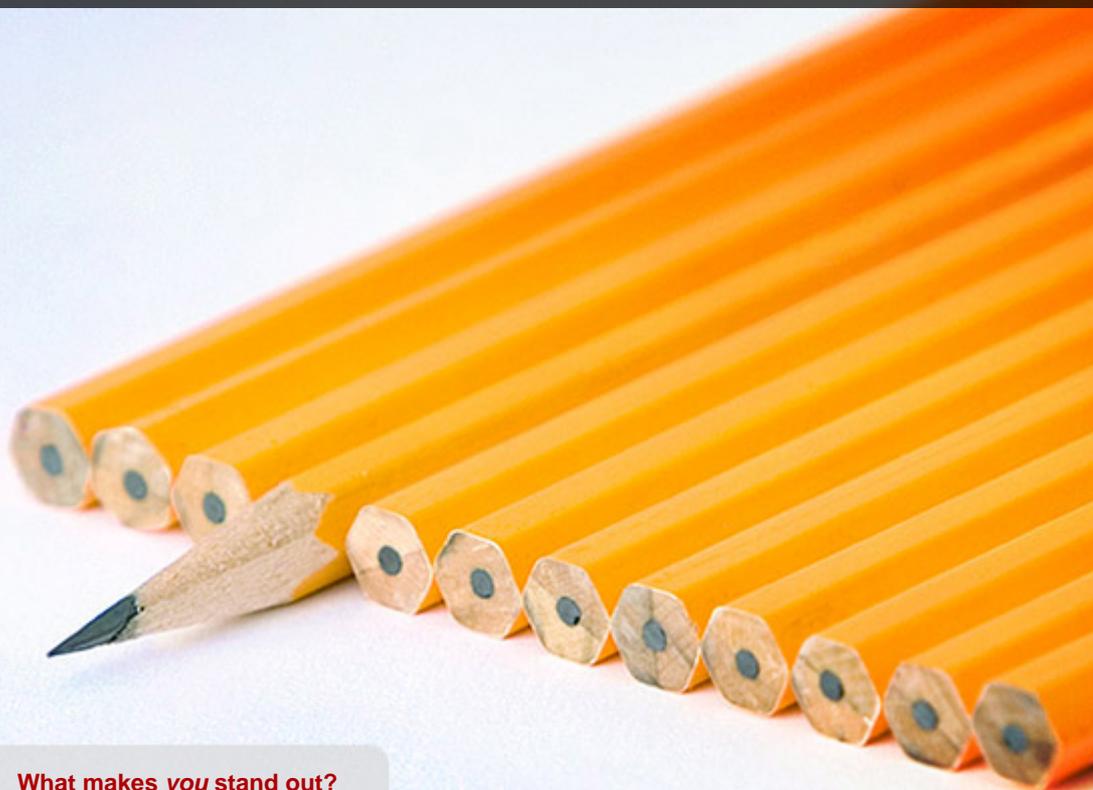


clifton
strengthsfinder 2.0

Strengths Discovery and Action-Planning Guide



What makes *you* stand out?

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VENKATESH RAO

Your Top 5 Themes

Intellection

Strategic

Input

Context

Ideation

What's in This Guide?

- For each of your top five themes, you will find:
 - A brief Shared Theme Description
 - Your Personalized Strengths Insights, which describe what makes you stand out from others with the same theme in their top five
 - Some examples of what the theme "sounds like" — real quotes from people who also have the theme in their top five
 - 10 Ideas for Action
- A Strengths Discovery Activity to get you thinking about how your talents and your investment work together to build strengths that you can apply to your work and personal life
- A Strengths-Based Action Plan for review with a friend, manager, or colleague

INTELLECTION

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Chances are good that you enjoy reflecting on what you already know and on what you want to know. Your concentration leads you to major and minor discoveries. You need ample quiet time to critically examine new information, theories, concepts, or philosophies. Wherever you go and whatever you do, your mind is seldom at rest. You consider what you have observed. You pose never-before-asked questions. Thinking deeply about things is a necessity for you. It is not a luxury. It is not an option. Because of your strengths, you relish the nuances and intricacies of language. Your sophisticated or specialized vocabulary allows you to choose words for their power and clarity. Whether speaking or writing, you convey what you are thinking and feeling in a forceful, matter-of-fact manner. Usually no one has to second-guess -- that is, wonder about -- the true meaning of your intentions, messages, expectations, or orders. It's very likely that you aim to finish reading books, publications, or Internet sites once you have started. You do not dawdle -- that is, move slowly -- when amassing information that may or may not prove useful at a later date. Quite simply, you enjoy the act of reading and the process of collecting ideas. By nature, you delve into intriguing subject matter. You read, write, listen to lectures, experiment, and research topics to broaden your understanding of them. Often you think of questions no one else has ever asked. Just as often, you find your own answers. Instinctively, you have a rich vocabulary upon which to draw. The words you choose often expand and challenge your listeners' or readers' thinking.

Intellection sounds like this:

Lauren H., project manager: "I suppose that most people who meet me in passing presume that I am a flaming extrovert. I do not deny the fact that I love people, but they would be amazed to know how much time alone, how much solitude, I need in order to function in public. I really love my own company. I love solitude because it gives me a chance to allow my diffused focus to simmer with something else. That's where my best ideas come from. My ideas need to simmer and 'perk.' I used this phrase even when I was younger: 'I have put my ideas in, and now I have to wait for them to perk.'"

Michael P., marketing executive: "It's strange, but I find that I need to have noise around me or I can't concentrate. I need to have parts of my brain occupied; otherwise, it goes so fast in so many directions that I don't get anything done. If I can occupy my brain with the TV or my kids running around, then I find I concentrate even better."

Jorge H., factory manager and former political prisoner: "We used to get put into solitary confinement as a punishment, but I never hated it as much as the others did. You might think that you would get lonely, but I never did. I used the time to reflect on my life and sort out the kind of man I was and what was really important to me: my family, my values. In a weird way, solitary actually calmed me down and made me stronger."

Ideas for Action:

- Consider beginning or continuing your studies in philosophy, literature, or psychology. You will always enjoy subjects that stimulate your thinking.
- List your ideas in a log or diary. These ideas will serve as grist for your mental mill, and they might yield valuable insights.
- Deliberately build relationships with people you consider to be "big thinkers." Their example will inspire you to focus your own thinking.
- People may think you are aloof or disengaged when you close your door or spend time alone. Help them understand that this is simply a reflection of your thinking style, and that it results not from a disregard for relationships, but from a desire to bring the most you can to those relationships.
- You are at your best when you have the time to follow an intellectual trail and see where it leads. Get involved on the front end of projects and initiatives, rather than jumping in at the execution stage. If you join in the latter stages, you may derail what has already been decided, and your insights may come too late.
- Engaging people in intellectual and philosophical debate is one way that you make sense of things. This is not the case for everyone. Be sure to channel your provocative questions to those who similarly enjoy the give and take of debate.
- Schedule time for thinking; it can be energizing for you. Use these occasions to muse and reflect.
- Take time to write. Writing might be the best way for you to crystallize and integrate your thoughts.
- Find people who like to talk about the same issues you do. Organize a discussion group that addresses your subjects of interest.
- Encourage people around you to use their full intellectual capital by reframing questions for them and by engaging them in dialogue. At the same time, realize that there will be some who find this intimidating and who need time to reflect before being put on the spot.

STRATEGIC

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Instinctively, you are innovative, inventive, original, and resourceful. Your mind allows you to venture beyond the commonplace, the familiar, or the obvious. You entertain ideas about the best ways to reach a goal, increase productivity, or solve a problem. First, you think of alternatives. Then you choose the best option. Chances are good that you can reconfigure factual information or data in ways that reveal trends, raise issues, identify opportunities, or offer solutions. You bring an added dimension to discussions. You make sense out of seemingly unrelated information. You are likely to generate multiple action plans before you choose the best one. Because of your strengths, you generate innovative ideas. You offer unique perspectives on events, people, and proposals. You probably inspire people to start projects and launch initiatives. You tend to identify a goal, devise numerous ways of reaching it, then choose the best alternative. This explains why you see opportunities, trends, and solutions before your teammates, classmates, or peers see them. By nature, you trust your ability to be an innovative thinker. You routinely invent many ways you can reach a single goal. Only then do you start narrowing down your options to the best one. You probably take into consideration prevailing circumstances, available resources, budgetary constraints, or pressing deadlines. It's very likely that you might easily detect unusual configurations or spot new trends in data or factual information. Devising options appeals to you. You have little interest in simply repeating what worked in the past.

Strategic sounds like this:

Liam C., manufacturing plant manager: "It seems as if I can always see the consequences before anyone else can. I have to say to people, 'Lift up your eyes; look down the road a ways. Let's talk about where we are going to be next year so that when we get to this time next year, we don't have the same problems.' It seems obvious to me, but some people are just too focused on this month's numbers, and everything is driven by that."

Vivian T., television producer: "I used to love logic problems when I was a kid -- you know, the ones where 'if A implies B, and B equals C, does A equal C?' Still today, I am always playing out repercussions, seeing where things lead. I think it makes me a great interviewer. I know that nothing is an accident; every sign, every word, every tone of voice has significance. So I watch for these clues and play them out in my head, see where they lead, and then plan my questions to take advantage of what I have seen in my head."

Simon T., human resources executive: "We really needed to take the union on at some stage, and I saw an opportunity -- a very good issue to take them on. I could see that they were going in a direction that would lead them into all kinds of trouble if they continued following it. Lo and behold, they did continue following it, and when they arrived, there I was, ready and waiting. I suppose it just comes naturally to me to predict what someone else is going to do. And then when that person reacts, I can respond immediately because I have sat down and said, 'Okay, if they do this, we'll do this. If they do that, then we'll do this other thing.' It's like when you tack in a sailboat. You head in one direction, but you jinx one way, then another, planning and reacting, planning and reacting."

Ideas for Action:

- Take the time to fully reflect or muse about a goal that you want to achieve until the related patterns and issues emerge for you. Remember that this musing time is essential to strategic thinking.
- You can see repercussions more clearly than others can. Take advantage of this ability by planning your range of responses in detail. There is little point in knowing where events will lead if you are not ready when you get there.
- Find a group that you think does important work, and contribute your strategic thinking. You can be a leader with your ideas.
- Your strategic thinking will be necessary to keep a vivid vision from deteriorating into an ordinary pipe dream. Fully consider all possible paths toward making the vision a reality. Wise forethought can remove obstacles before they appear.
- Make yourself known as a resource for consultation with those who are stumped by a particular problem or hindered by a particular obstacle or barrier. By naturally seeing a way when others are convinced there is no way, you will lead them to success.
- You are likely to anticipate potential issues more easily than others. Though your awareness of possible danger might be viewed as negativity by some, you must share your insights if you are going to avoid these pitfalls. To prevent misperception of your intent, point out not only the future obstacle, but also a way to prevent or overcome it. Trust your insights, and use them to ensure the success of your efforts.
- Help others understand that your strategic thinking is not an attempt to belittle their ideas, but is instead a natural propensity to consider all the facets of a plan objectively. Rather than being a naysayer, you are actually trying to examine ways to ensure that the goal is accomplished, come what may. Your talents will allow you to consider others' perspectives while keeping your end goal in sight.
- Trust your intuitive insights as often as possible. Even though you might not be able to explain them rationally, your intuitions are created by a brain that instinctively anticipates and projects. Have confidence in these perceptions.
- Partner with someone with strong Activator talents. With this person's need for action and your need for anticipation, you can forge a powerful partnership.
- Make sure that you are involved in the front end of new initiatives or enterprises. Your innovative yet procedural approach will be critical to the genesis of a new venture because it will keep its creators from developing deadly tunnel vision.

INPUT

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Chances are good that you may desire to be knowledgeable about certain things. Depending on your other talents, perhaps you want to understand one topic in depth or comprehend many subjects at a basic level. Whatever your style, you might pay attention to particular people's comments. When someone shares an interesting piece of information, you occasionally say or do something that tells the person, "I value your insights, and I look forward to hearing more of your ideas." It's very likely that you purposely interject highly technical language into your conversations -- language that may be understood by a limited number of people. Your vocabulary, in and of itself, tends to alert listeners that your ideas and opinions carry extra weight. Simply put: Your air of authority causes individuals to take quite seriously whatever you tell them. Driven by your talents, you put yourself in the middle of mentally stimulating conversations. You want to gather new ideas, discover new approaches, hear about new theories, consider new concepts, or apply new technologies. Often you are one of the early discoverers of innovations. Others can lag behind if they wish, but you consistently acquire knowledge. You exhibit little need to know precisely where all this information ultimately will lead you. By nature, you read to acquire new information or to collect insights about unique discoveries, events, or people. Characteristically you conduct an in-depth examination of a subject. Your curiosity is not easily satisfied. Frequently you rely on books, publications, or printed materials to deepen your understanding of the topic. Instinctively, you have kept conversations centered on ideas since childhood. As a child, you likely listened carefully to discussions among adults. This approach allowed you to join in without rocking the boat -- that is, without causing trouble where none was welcome. Today, you continue to listen intently to collect information before adding your ideas, contributing your insights, offering your suggestions, or asking your questions.

Input sounds like this:

Ellen K., writer: "Even as a child, I found myself wanting to know everything. I would make a game of my questions. 'What is my question today?' I would think up these outrageous questions, and then I would go looking for the books that would answer them. I often got in way over my head, deep into books that I didn't have a clue about, but I read them because they had my answer someplace. My questions became my tool for leading me from one piece of information to another."

John F., human resources executive: "I'm one of those people who thinks that the Internet is the greatest thing since sliced bread. I used to feel so frustrated, but now if I want to know what the stock market is doing in a certain area or the rules of a certain game or what the GNP of Spain is or other different things, I just go to the computer, start looking, and eventually find it."

Kevin F., salesperson: "I'm amazed at some of the garbage that collects in my mind, and I love playing Jeopardy and Trivial Pursuit and anything like that. I don't mind throwing things away as long as they're material things, but I hate wasting knowledge or accumulated knowledge or not being able to read something fully if I enjoy it."

Ideas for Action:

- Look for jobs in which you are charged with acquiring new information each day, such as teaching, research, or journalism.
- Devise a system to store and easily locate information. This can be as simple as a file for all the articles you have clipped or as sophisticated as a computer database.
- Partner with someone with dominant Focus or Discipline talents. This person will help you stay on track when your inquisitiveness leads you down intriguing but distracting avenues.
- Your mind is open and absorbent. You naturally soak up information in the same way that a sponge soaks up water. But just as the primary purpose of the sponge is not to permanently contain what it absorbs, neither should your mind simply store information. Input without output can lead to stagnation. As you gather and absorb information, be aware of the individuals and groups that can most benefit from your knowledge, and be intentional about sharing with them.
- You might naturally be an exceptional repository of facts, data, and ideas. If that's the case, don't be afraid to position yourself as an expert. By simply following your Input talents, you could become known as the authority in your field.
- Remember that you must be more than just a collector of information. At some point, you'll need to leverage this knowledge and turn it into action. Make a point of identifying the facts and data that would be most valuable to others, and use this information to their advantage.
- Identify your areas of specialization, and actively seek more information about them.
- Schedule time to read books and articles that stimulate you.
- Deliberately increase your vocabulary. Collect new words, and learn the meaning of each of them.
- Identify situations in which you can share the information you have collected with other people. Also make sure to let your friends and colleagues know that you enjoy answering their questions.

CONTEXT

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

By nature, you really like to read about past events and the key people involved. By accumulating lots of knowledge regarding days gone by, you regularly anticipate the opportunities and pitfalls you are apt to face in the coming months, years, or decades. It's very likely that you are quite intrigued by history's significant events and people. Information about global conflicts fascinates you. Chances are good that you examine the past. You discover why things happened. This permits you to foresee the future. You study humankind's story to identify subtle nuances, recurring sequences of events, and predictable human behavior. Generating clever, resourceful, inventive, and original alternatives, you can offer solutions to age-old problems. Driven by your talents, you might like visiting, thinking, or working with people who have a keen appreciation of past events or an accurate understanding of historic figures. Instinctively, you are inclined to read about major wars. While some people find this topic boring or irrelevant, you are quite fascinated with it. Whenever you read about global conflicts, you feel impelled to collect more information. One book or article is likely to lead you to another then another. You experience the story of humankind unfolding before your eyes on the printed page.

Context sounds like this:

Adam Y., software designer: "I tell my people, 'Let's avoid vuja de.' And they say, 'Isn't that the wrong word? Shouldn't it be déjà vu?' And I say, 'No, vuja de means that we're bound to repeat the mistakes of our past. We must avoid this. We must look to our past, see what led to our mistakes, and then not make them again.' It sounds obvious, but most people don't look to their past or don't trust that it was valid or something. And so for them, it's vuja de all over again."

Jesse K., media analyst: "I have very little empathy, so I don't relate to people through their present emotional state. Instead, I relate to them through their past. In fact, I can't even begin to understand people until I have found out where they grew up, what their parents were like, and what they studied in college."

Gregg H., accounting manager: "I recently moved the whole office to a new accounting system, and the only reason it worked was that I honored their past. When people build an accounting system, it's their blood, sweat, and tears; it's them. They are personally identified with it. So if I come in and blandly tell them that I'm going to change it, it's like me saying I am going to take your baby away. That's the level of emotion I was dealing with. I had to respect this connection, this history, or they would have rejected me out of hand."

Ideas for Action:

- Before planning begins on a project, encourage the people involved to study past projects. Help them appreciate the statement: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."
- If you are in a role that requires teaching others, build your lessons around case studies. You will enjoy the search for the appropriate case, and your students will learn from these precedents. Use your understanding of the past to help others map the future.
- At work, help your organization strengthen its culture via folklore. For example, collect symbols and stories that represent the best of the past, or suggest naming an award after a person who embodied the historical traditions of your organization.
- Partner with someone with strong Futuristic or Strategic talents. This person's fascination with what "could be" will stop you from becoming mired in the past, while your deep understanding of context will stop him or her from ignoring the lessons of the past. Together you are more likely to create something that lasts.
- Accept change. Remember that your Context talents do not require you to "live in the past." Instead, you can actually become known as an active agent for positive change. Your natural sense of context should allow you to identify more clearly than most the aspects of the past that can be discarded and those that must be retained to build a sustainable future.
- Use fact-based comparisons to prior successes to paint a vivid picture for others of "what can be" in the future. The real-life illustrations you create can build confidence and emotional engagement.
- You recognize that the best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. Probe your friends and coworkers about actions that might have contributed to their current successes so you can help them make better choices in the future. This will help them put their decisions into an overall context.
- Read historical novels, non-fiction, or biographies. You will discover many insights that will help you understand the present. You will think more clearly.
- Compare historical antecedents and situations to your current challenge. Identifying commonalities may lead you to a new perspective or an answer to your problems.
- Seek out mentors who have a sense of history. Listening to their memories is likely to spark your thought process.

IDEATION

Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.

Your Personalized Strengths Insights

What makes you stand out?

Driven by your talents, you are an original and innovative thinker. Others frequently rely on you to generate novel concepts, theories, plans, or solutions. You refuse to be stifled by traditions or trapped by routines. You probably bristle when someone says, "We can't change that. We've always done it this way." Instinctively, you think creatively. You see possibilities. You are inclined to reject traditional approaches to problem solving. You trust your feelings to lead you to the proper solution. Chances are good that you relish conversations with people whose vocabulary is as sophisticated as their thinking. Discussing philosophies, theories, or concepts is exhilarating. You do not have to translate this or that word or explain the basic points of a complex thought. You love to ask questions and be readily understood. As engaged as you are in the dialogue, you still make a point of pulling together insights so you can use this knowledge later. Because of your strengths, you are concerned about what individuals think of you. You want them to recognize your ability to involve all kinds of people in groups or activities. Knowing others are watching and judging you probably is highly motivating. It's very likely that you spontaneously tune in to what others think of you as a person and as a professional. As a result, you intentionally commit to memory complicated and intricate words as well as specialized terminology. You use language to your advantage in situations when you desire to influence, confront, make demands of, or issue orders to people. Your vocabulary allows you to speak with authority.

Ideation sounds like this:

Mark B., writer: "My mind works by finding connections between things. When I was hunting down the Mona Lisa in the Louvre museum, I turned a corner and was blinded by the flashing of a thousand cameras snapping the tiny picture. For some reason, I stored that visual image away. Then I noticed a 'No Flash Photography' sign, and I stored that away too. I thought it was odd because I remembered reading that flash photography can harm paintings. Then about six months later, I read that the Mona Lisa has been stolen at least twice in this century. And suddenly I put it all together. The only explanation for all these facts is that the real Mona Lisa is not on display in the Louvre. The real Mona Lisa has been stolen, and the museum, afraid to admit their carelessness, has installed a fake. I don't know if it's true, of course, but what a great story."

Andrea H., interior designer: "I have the kind of mind where everything has to fit together or I start to feel very odd. For me, every piece of furniture represents an idea. It serves a discrete function both independently and in concert with every other piece. The 'idea' of each piece is so powerful in my mind, it must be obeyed. If I am sitting in a room where the chairs are somehow not fulfilling their discrete function -- they're the wrong kind of chairs or they're facing the wrong way or they're pushed up too close to the coffee table -- I find myself getting physically uncomfortable and mentally distracted. Later, I won't be able to get it out of my mind. I'll find myself awake at 3:00 a.m., and I walk through the person's house in my mind's eye, rearranging the furniture and repainting the walls. This started happening when I was very young, say seven years old."

Ideas for Action:

- Seek a career in which you will be given credit for and paid for your ideas, such as marketing, advertising, journalism, design, or new product development.
- You are likely to get bored quickly, so make some small changes in your work or home life. Experiment. Play mental games with yourself. All of these will help keep you stimulated.

- Finish your thoughts and ideas before communicating them. Lacking your Ideation talents, others might not be able to "join the dots" of an interesting but incomplete idea and thus might dismiss it.
- Not all your ideas will be equally practical or serviceable. Learn to edit your ideas, or find a trusted friend or colleague who can "proof" your ideas and identify potential pitfalls.
- Understand the fuel for your Ideation talents: When do you get your best ideas? When you're talking with people? When you're reading? When you're simply listening or observing? Take note of the circumstances that seem to produce your best ideas, and recreate them.
- Schedule time to read, because the ideas and experiences of others can become your raw material for new ideas. Schedule time to think, because thinking energizes you.
- You are a natural fit with research and development; you appreciate the mindset of visionaries and dreamers. Spend time with imaginative peers, and sit in on their brainstorming sessions.
- Partner with someone with strong Analytical talents. This person will question you and challenge you, therefore strengthening your ideas.
- Sometimes you lose others' interest because they cannot follow your abstract and conceptual thinking style. Make your ideas more concrete by drawing pictures, using analogies or metaphors, or simply explaining your concepts step by step.
- Feed your Ideation talents by gathering knowledge. Study fields and industries different from your own. Apply ideas from outside, and link disparate ideas to generate new ones.

Strengths Discovery Activity

As you begin to think about your talents, consider this equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Talent} \text{ (a natural way of thinking, feeling, or behaving)} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Investment} \text{ (time spent practicing, developing your skills, and building} \\ \text{your knowledge base)} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Strength} \text{ (the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance)} \end{array}$$

Here is an example:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Talent is:} \text{ Truly listening to your customers' wants and needs} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Investment is:} \text{ Researching products and keeping up-to-date on the industry} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Strength is:} \text{ Consistently providing near-perfect customer service} \end{array}$$

Now, think about what *you* naturally do best. How can you invest in that talent to build strength?

Do your own Strengths Discovery Interview:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Your Talent is:} \text{ _____} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Your Investment is:} \text{ _____} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Your Strength is:} \text{ _____} \end{array}$$

My Strengths-Based Action Plan

Now that you have discovered your top five themes and considered action items for development, choose 1-3 themes that describe you best, and list them below. Talk to people who know you well, and ask them to describe how you embody these themes. Ask them for specific examples of times when they have seen you using each theme in action or how each theme manifests itself in you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Now, write down some specific actions that you could take in the next week, month, and year to build and apply your strengths. Refer to your Personalized Strengths Insights and Ideas for Action if you need help.

In the next week, I will:

-
-
-

In the next month, I will:

-
-
-

In the next year, I will:

-
-
-

Next, list the name of at least one person who you will meet with to review this plan. Be sure to choose someone who can help you to keep these goals "top of mind" and who will help you leverage your talents to build strengths.

Name: _____ Date reviewed: _____

Name: _____ Date reviewed: _____