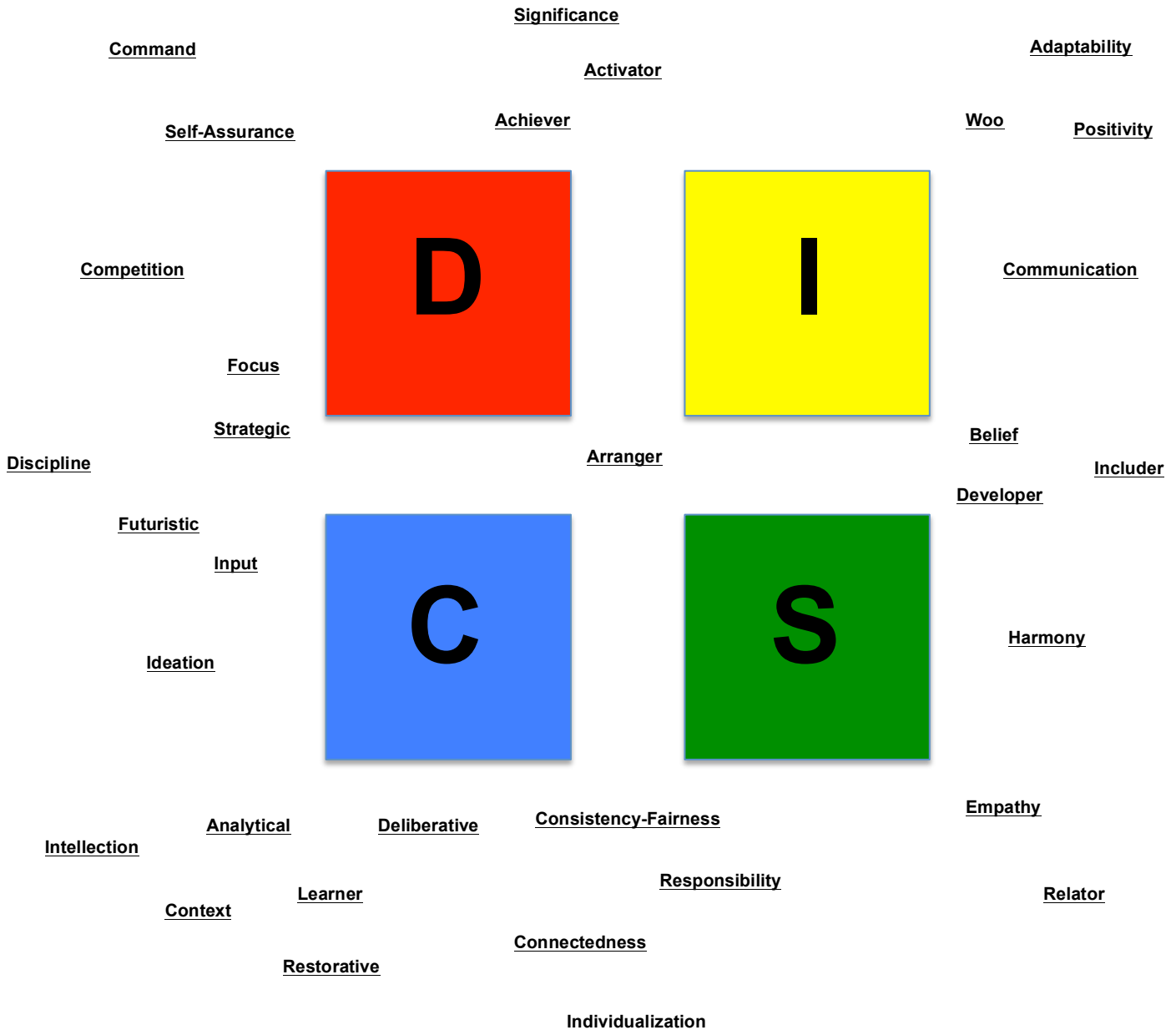# STRENGTHSPATH

"Do What You Do Best"

DISC & Strengthsfinder

DISC and STRENGTHSFINDER may not match up with perfect symmetry. Gallup has their own groupings released in the book Strengths-Based Leadership and Core Clarity did 4 category groupings of Strengthsfinder before Gallup.

Significance

Command

Adaptability

Activator

Self-Assurance

Achiever

Woo

Positivity

D

I

Competition

Communication

Focus

Strategic

Belief

Arranger

Includer

Discipline

Developer

Futuristic

Input

C

S

Ideation

Harmony

Empathy

Analytical

Deliberative

Consistency-Fairness

Intellection

Responsibility

Relator

Context

Learner

Connectedness

Restorative

Individualization

I think it's best to remember that the best assessment is only an approximation of the complexity we find in each human being. The beauty of DISC is that it is fairly easy to grasp and remember as it starts with only 4 categories. The downside of only 4 categories is that it badly misses the complexities and contradictions found in most people. Most of the DISC assessment producers have realized it and resolved it in part by adding categories and shades, I think up to about 25. Beyond that, some DISC reports have 40,000 or more nuances in their report system.

The beauty of Strengthsfinder is that it began with a lot of what Gallup would call "granularity". 34 Themes allowed for about 33 million top 5 combinations alone with many times that if you look at the 1-34 sequences. This allows for so much more reflection of human complexity and contradiction. I just debriefed an individual who had both "Strategic" and "Adaptability" in his top 5. On the surface they are contradictory or at least in tension. But in my experience, that's how people are. They don't fit in nice neat box. In NLP they talk about "Parts" and "Meta-Programs". We all have some experience with the phrase, "part of me wants to do this, and part of me wants to do that". Strengthsfinder does such a wonderful job explaining that.

Gallup also adds the "thread" concept to explain even more complexity. They haven't put a number on it, but I have been able to identify close to 200 talent threads or about 5 under each of the 34 themes.

The down-side of Strengthsfinder is that most people will not wrestle with the 34 Themes long enough and deep enough to really make it useable and useful. Those who have the talent theme of "Individualization" either in there top 5 or at least high in their 1-34 sequence are the most likely to get the most out of the assessment at least without on going coaching and accountability.

Marcus Buckingham has tried to resolve this problem in part with his new "StandOut" assessment which has more or less re-packaged the 34 Themes into 9 Roles. They all fit on a tic-tac-toe board very nicely. For most, it may become the ideal gateway assessment or introduction to strengths in the future. One downside of "StandOut" is that it frustrates the people with "Individualization" because you lose granularity. And those with "Individualization" are the most likely to be drivers and catalysts of organization wide strengths based programing.

Let me add one further caveat. The best psychometric assessment is at best 80% accurate. That means on average, about 20% of the assessment report will be in some way off the mark. That's actually pretty good.   But it also means that in some cases you may debrief an individual that is only about 50% on target. And no assessment begins to measure all the possible talents. Some are better measured with work sample assessments rather than psychometric tools.

From my perspective the highest value of Strengthsfinder, DISC, StandOut and several others is that they provide a data point or a foundation to tee up an ongoing conversation on natural talent and strengths that have been developed through training and experience. These assessments are invaluable for that alone.   They also provide a common language and an individualized strategy for career development.

I have one other point about DISC. I think it has actually been under utilized as a strengths assessment. It's mostly been used as a tool to help people understand each other better. It's terrific for conflict resolution and understanding perspectives. And it's a wonderful tool for sales people who are basically in the communication business and manages who are in the people business.

But DISC really does have a strong application for understanding behaviors that are really rooted or at least connected to natural talent. From that point it can be used as an aid in placement, job crafting or shaping, and in individualized training and development much the same way that Strengthsfinder is used. It can be used to tee up that conversation about natural talents which is so helpful for anyone hiring and/or managing people.