

Play to Your Strengths



Did you know that Lance Armstrong began his sports career as a tri-athlete? Prior to becoming the world's premiere cyclist, Lance spread his energy among running, swimming and cycling. He was a good swimmer and fast on his feet as a runner, but he truly excelled at cycling. Recognizing that biking was his strength, Lance concentrated his efforts on cycling competitions, and the payoff is historic, both for the world of sports and for Lance! Unlike Lance, many of our clients focus their efforts on improving and overcoming their weaknesses. This is not only ineffective for driving sustainable personal growth, it's also boring and uninspiring! Most of us were raised in the grip of society's myth of well-roundedness. Early in life we learn that being well-rounded—being a little bit good at everything—is the desirable end-state of our schooling. We're taught to overcome all of our weaknesses by simply "trying harder." We're encouraged to practice ballet or the clarinet even if we hate it. How utterly exhausting and frustrating! I'm convinced that the truth of the matter is, there's a better way to work. It isn't about weakness at all. It's about our strengths.

Our strengths create the platform from which we can excel. Our strengths fuel our passions, and bring joy, success, fulfillment and sustainability to our work.

Most of us have never focused on our strengths. We discount them, if we notice them at all. For many, our strengths are the sea in which we swim—and so, we don't even see them. We may be dimly aware that we sometimes overuse a strength—say, a strength of compassion, or a strength of directness—but how often do we really stop and assess our strengths? How often do we acknowledge and claim them? How often do we celebrate them? For that matter, how often do we even think about this sea of power in which we're swimming?

Shifting ourselves and others to focus on their strengths is profound, tantalizing and fun work! When we help others clearly see their strengths, we create an impact in their lives that is next to none. When clients discover what they're good at, when they understand their natural gifts, when they come to accept and acknowledge and commit to growing and utilizing their strengths, we witness a profound self-acceptance and release from the constraints of "never being good enough."

The StrengthsFinder®, helps create a language around strengths not replicated in the few other instruments that exist. It is a marvel when people understand their strengths as innate, unique and intriguing gifts. Even people who believe they know their strengths are surprised to discover they actually know the behaviors they excel at—not the underlying strength.

For example, a senior leader in one very rational, hard-driving corporation was shocked to

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discover that “Harmony” is one of his strengths. He’s learned to manage and embrace conflict, and he doesn’t shy away from tough issues. But as we explored the strength of Harmony, we realized that it isn’t conflict management he is good at—it’s achieving the outcome of harmony among people and aligning them with an approach, a strategy or an idea. In fact, his ability to create harmony among disparate parties has fueled his success and draws talented people to clamor to work for him. Because he now sees his strength in a much broader light, he also sees many more possibilities open to him for applying his strength!

Working with the StrengthsFinder, people open up to bold new perspectives and many new options. Personally, my own top strengths of Maximizer and Strategic tell me that I excel at taking something good and turning it into something excellent, that I can pick the right path to do this successfully, and that I quickly spot the patterns so that I pick the right thing to transform. As you might guess, these strengths serve me in all aspects of my life and can be applied to almost any career, hobby, relationship, interest or passion.

Strengths are a powerful resource to invigorate growth and development, from the basis of a solid understanding of a person’s natural creativity, resourcefulness and wholeness.

Individual Strengths Development:

Inviting people to complete the StrengthsFinder is also very easy. They buy the book (There are a variety available, all of which have the same assessment provision). *These are available from leading bookstores or by contacting the Strengths Network office.* Inside the cover of the book, is a code that can be used one time to take the StrengthsFinder instrument. On completion of the on-line assessment the next step is to make an appointment for a personal coaching session. This is an important component of the Strengthsfinder tool and is facilitated by one of our accredited coaches. To arrange a coaching session email your request to strengthsfinder@cys.org.nz

Strengths based Teams:

The Strengths finder tool also provides an excellent language for teams to develop partnerships and learn how best to work together. It builds an understanding of why people approach the same task differently and when we leverage people’s strengths, we achieve greater results as a team. “A Champion Team will always beat a Team of Champions”

To learn more about this program email strengthsfinder@cys.org.nz

“A person can perform only from strength. One cannot build performance on weaknesses,

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let alone on something one cannot do at all. —Peter F. Drucker, “Managing Oneself,”
Harvard Business Review, March-April 1999

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