

Creating Our Best Selves Through Strengths and Wellbeing

Discover, Develop and Apply Your Strengths



StrengthsQuest™
THE GALLUP ORGANIZATION



**SOUTH MOUNTAIN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

StrengthsQuest: Helping Students, Staff, and Faculty Achieve
Academic, Career, and Personal Success

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Learning Objectives:

After this seminar, participants will be able to:

- Define talent, theme, and strength.
- Discuss the role that talent and strengths play in the success of top achievers.
- Identify and define, in basic terms, their own themes of talent.
- Discuss their themes of talent with significant others.
- Define, in basic terms, the 34 themes of talent.
- Recognize the unique, but different, talents of others.
- Describe their themes of talent.
- Recognize the role of their themes of talent in their behavior.
- Identify how their themes of talent have contributed to past success.
- Describe how their themes of talent work together.
- Value their themes of talent and the role they play in their lives.
- Identify knowledge and skills useful in transforming their talents into strengths.
- Identify and demonstrate ways in which their talents can help them achieve success.
- Build relationships with others mindful of their own talents and strengths and the talents and strengths of others.
- Communicate more effectively with others in light of their own talents and the talents of others.
- Work more effectively by partnering with others with complementary themes of talent.

Activity: A Time at Your Best - Five Clues to Talent

YEARNING

What activities can you not wait to start?

RAPID LEARNING

What kind of activities do you seem to pick up quickly?

FLOW

In what activities do you get “lost in the moment”?

SATISFACTION

What activities make you think, “When can I do that again?”

GLIMPSES OF EXCELLENCE

During what activities have you had moments of excellence, when you thought “How did I do that?”?

Activity: Writing Challenge

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

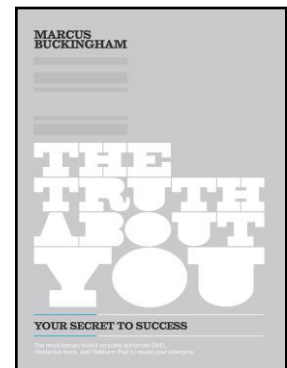
4. _____

5. _____

DVD: The Truth About You

The truths that allow you to play to your strengths most of the time

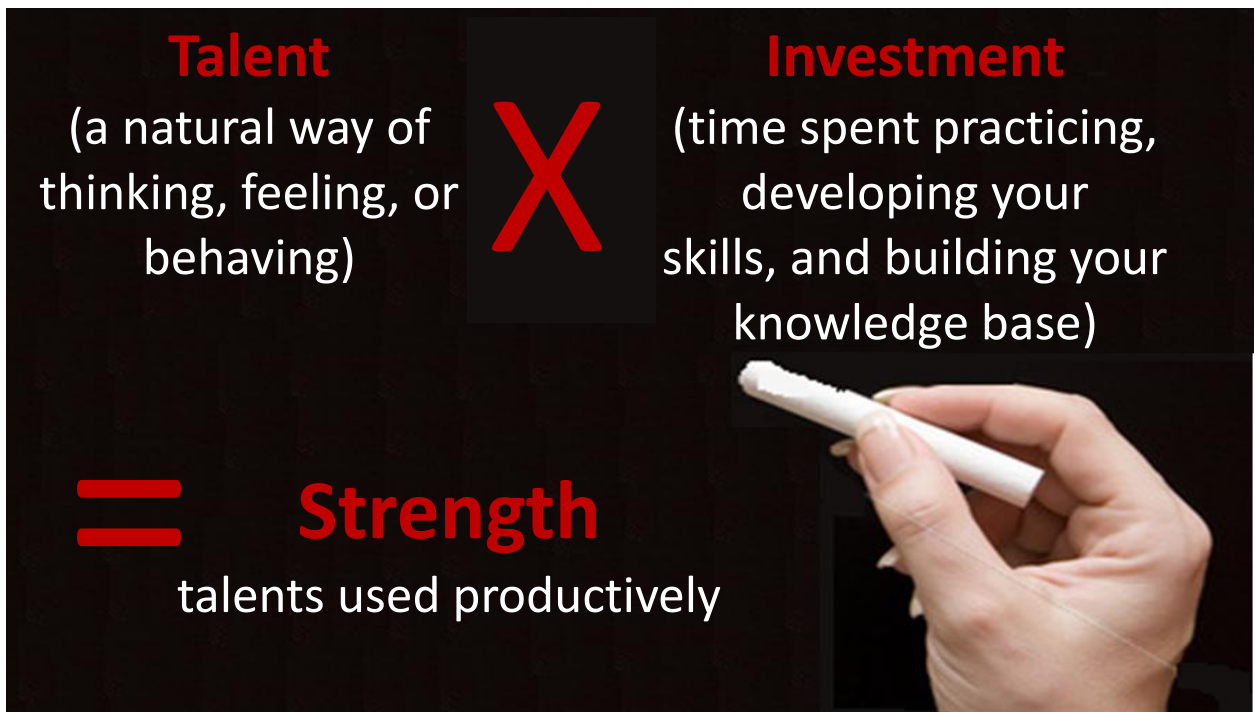
- As you grow you become more of who you already are
- You are going to grow and develop the most in your areas of strength
- What your team needs of you most of all is for you to bring your strengths deliberately



*Teach a person grammar and she will write a sentence,
Inspire her to channel her strengths and she will write
poetry.* -Marcus Buckingham

What are Strengths?

- **Talent:** A natural way of thinking, feeling, behaving.
 - **Behavior** patterns that make you **effective**
 - **Thought** patterns that make you **efficient**
 - **Beliefs** that **empower** you to **succeed**
 - **Attitudes** that sustain your efforts toward achievement and **excellence**
 - **Motivations** that propel you to take action and maintain the **energy** needed to **achieve**
 - You cannot not do it
 - Talents are potential strengths!
- **Theme:** A group of similar talents.
- **Skill:** The capacity to perform the functional steps of an activity.
- **Knowledge:** What you know, either factually or through awareness gained by experience.
- **Strength:** Produced when talents are refined with knowledge and skill

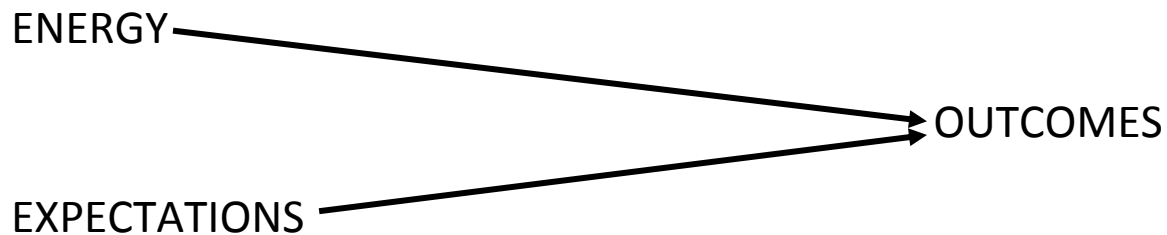


“One should waste as little effort as possible on improving areas of low competence. It takes far more energy to improve from incompetence to mediocrity than it takes to improve from first-rate performance to excellence.” -Peter Drucker

What Gives You Energy?

“Despite the American myth, I cannot be or do whatever I desire – a truism, to be sure, but a truism we often defy.”

Our created natures make us like organisms in an ecosystem: There are some roles and relationships in which we thrive and others in which we wither and die.”
-Parker Palmer, Let Your Life Speak



Activity: First Glance

What was your first reaction to your Strengths Finder results?

What new discovery have you made about yourself?

What, if anything, surprised you about your results?

Have you shared your “Top 5” with anyone? What was their reaction?

Activity: Treasure Hunt

- Talk to co-workers who have at least one Signature Theme different than your own.
- Jot down the theme you discussed, and at least one benefit of that theme.

Name	Theme	One Benefit of the Theme

Which theme or themes did you gain a greater appreciation for as a result of this conversation?

What did you learn about yourself as a result of this activity?

Discussion: Weakness

A weakness is something that gets in your way or in the way of others.

- Is there a talent or lack of talent that is currently getting in your way or in the way of others?
- Is there something that you aren't very good at that isn't a weakness? Is it a non-strength?

Define a weakness:

- lack of skill or knowledge
- non-strength
- overused strength
- underused strength

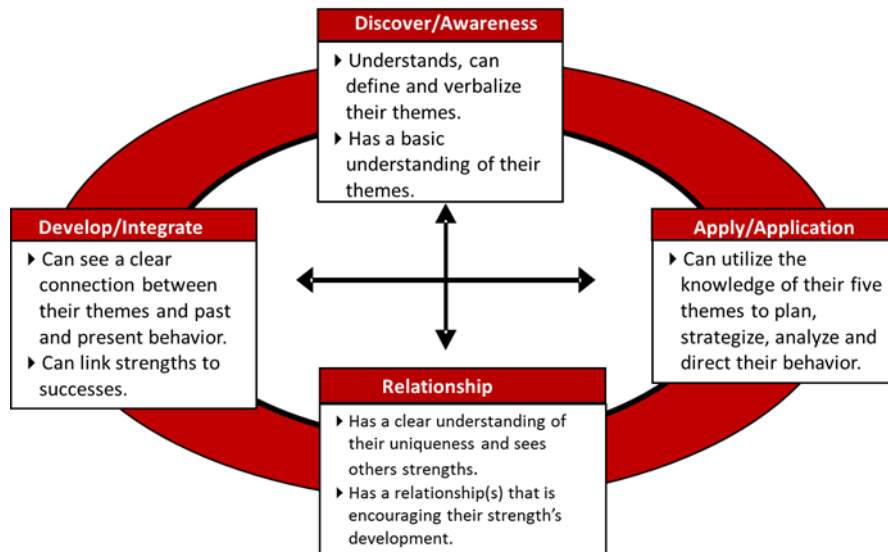
Mitigating weakness

- Open Communication/Transparency
- Get the RIGHT training
- Leverage other talents
- Use support systems
- Form complementary partnerships
- Adjust/Change role

"A talent is like a precious jewel. It can be covered by dirt, yet it is unchanged by the dirt. Through the process of development, we bring the jewel into the light where it can shine."

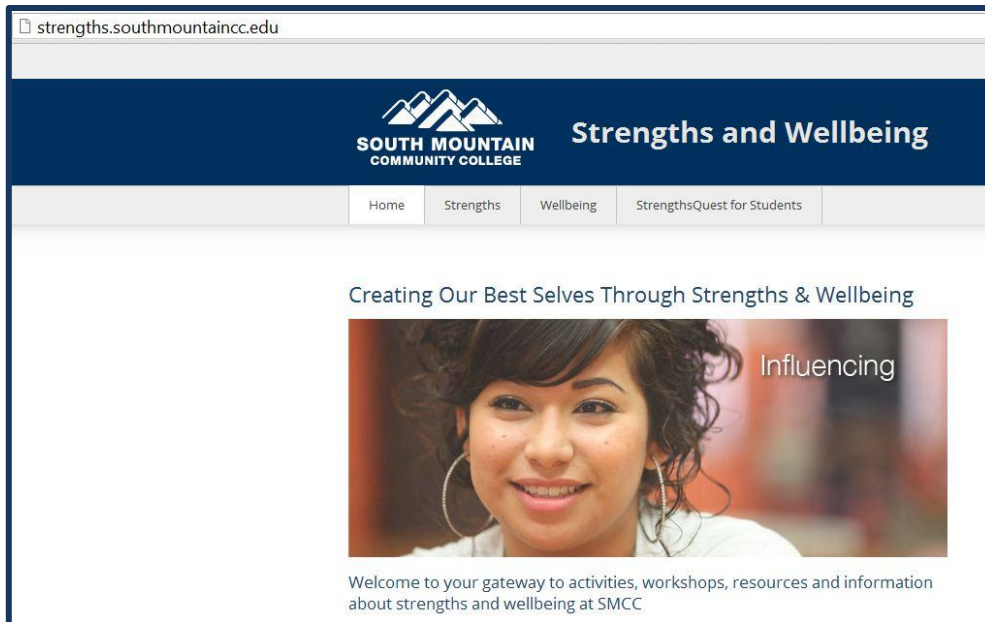
-Donald Clifton

Discussion: Strengths Development Framework



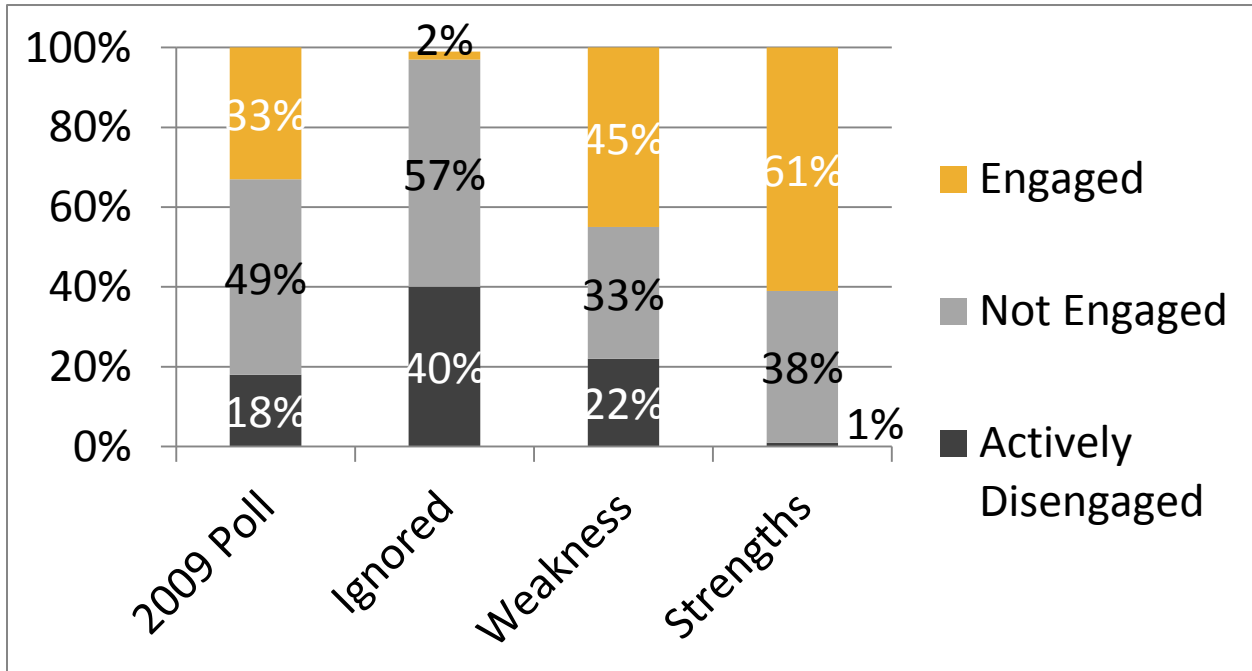
DVD: What Part of a Person can you Change?

RESOURCE: South Mountain Community College Strengths Web site
<http://strengths.southmountaincc.edu/>



DEVELOP AND APPLY YOUR STRENGTHS

Why do conversations about strengths matter?



Are you engaged?

Engaged

- These employees are loyal and productive. They are likely to stay with their company for at least a year. They are less likely to have accidents on the job and less likely to steal.

Not Engaged

- These employees may be productive, but are not psychologically connected to their company. They are more likely to miss work days and to leave.

Actively Disengaged

- These employees are physically present but psychologically absent. They are unhappy with their work situation and insist on sharing this unhappiness with colleagues.

Strengths Awareness → Confidence → Self Efficacy →
Motivation to excel → **Engagement**

Apply strengths to areas needing improvement →
Greater likelihood of success

Video: Long Legs Long Lashes

Activity: Applying Your Strengths

Take a moment and jot down your thoughts related to the following questions:

- ✓ What about your role at South Mountain Community College energizes you?

Think of a goal or project you have been working on recently at work.

- ✓ Identify one of your strengths or themes that you used in the past 10 days to assist you in reaching this goal?

- ✓ Did you partner with anyone with a complementary strength to assist you in reaching this goal? What was the complementary strength you partnered with?

Turn to someone at your table and share a discussion on your responses to these questions.

DVD: Where does passion fit in?

Activity: Talent Connection

- Below, place your five Signature Themes in the first column.
- Then, think about what those Signature Themes allow you to do.
- Identify one specific example of when you have recently used each theme. An example is provided for you.

Theme	What this allows me to do	When / Where I recently used this theme
Restorative	I listen well and can provide suggestions that help solve problems.	A co-worker was having a hard time finding a solution for a problem a student was having. I was able to understand the situation and offer the input on how the situation could be solved.

Activity: Critical Tasks

List your Signature Themes and three critical activities you will perform this week, and then identify the theme or themes that will help you meet this week's critical activities.

My Themes	→	My Critical Activities
_____		_____
_____		_____
_____		_____

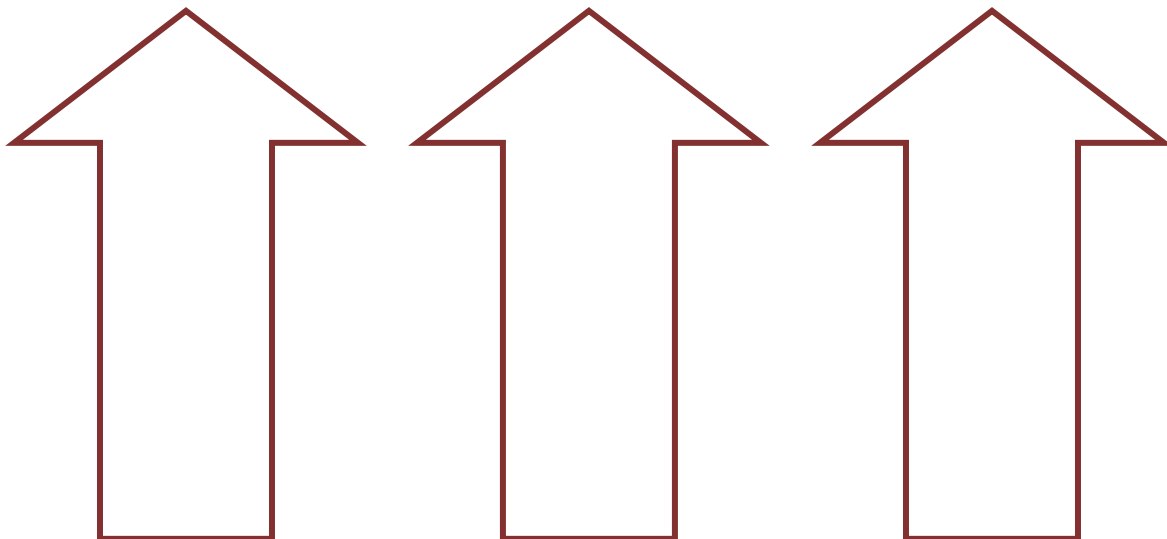
- Which of your signature themes seem to have the strongest connection to your critical activities?
- Could you begin to use talents from one or more of your signature themes more consciously in your role? Which ones and how?
- Do some of your required critical activities seem unconnected to your signature themes?
- What overall strategies could you put in place to further capitalize on your signature themes in relation to your role?

We are most successful and most engaged when we use who we naturally are to fulfill the requirements of our role. –Donald Clifton

DVD: How Do You Talk About Your Strengths?

Activity: Different Paths to the Same Destination

Pick three of your themes; discuss with a partner how these themes help you to be a positive part of the organization.



- How does each theme help you contribute to positive organizational outcomes?
- How are your themes different from those of the partner you shared with?
- Does one set of themes have an advantage over the other?

BUILDING RELATIONSHIP THROUGH STRENGTHS

"We don't see things as they are. We see them as we are."

-Anais Nin

Value Ladder

Learn to value others through strengths



Valuing

Appreciating

Respecting

Understanding

Judging

DVD: How Do I Deal with People that Weaken me?

Discussion: The 4 C's of Strengths Based Relationships

- Communicate
- Collaborate
- Control
- Cultivate

Discussion: Seeing Others Differently through Strengths

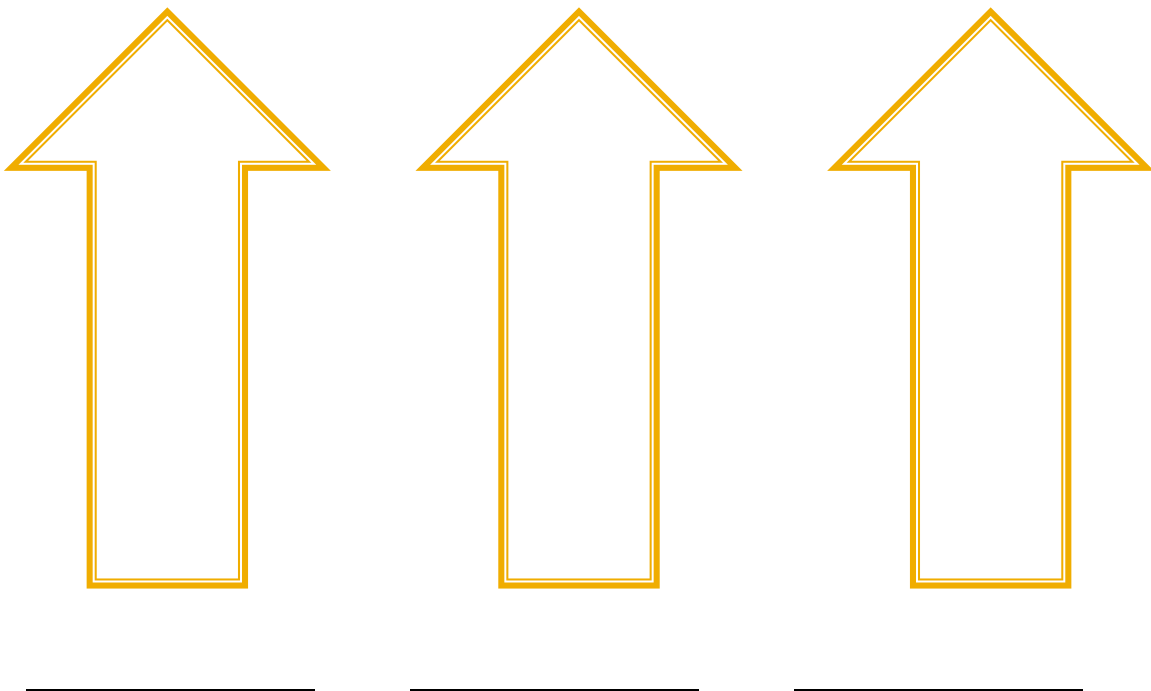
EXECUTING	INFLUENCING	RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	STRATEGIC THINKING
Achiever	Activator	Adaptability	Analytical
Arranger	Command	Developer	Context
Belief	Communication	Connectedness	Futuristic
Consistency	Competition	Empathy	Ideation
Deliberative	Maximizer	Harmony	Input
Discipline	Self-Assurance	Includer	Intellection
Focus	Significance	Individualization	Learner
Responsibility	Woo	Positivity	Strategic
Restorative		Relator	

The highest result of education is tolerance.
-Helen Keller

Activity: Different Paths to the Same Destination

- Write the 3 themes you are assigned below the arrows.

A new member with the themes below joins your team;
How can you help them be successful?



- Thinking specifically of their themes:
 - What would you tell them before the first meeting?
 - What would you ask them to do before the first meeting?
 - What would you give them to read or study before the first meeting?
- Is it difficult to help someone with themes quite different from yours?
- How does it help to understand themes in others?

Communicate

Communication is inevitable and irreversible

In the most successful relationships, the ratio of positive to negative statements is 5:1 *-John Gottman, Gottman Institute*

Activity: Balconies and Basements

- Choose one of your Signature Themes and fill in the words that you have heard used to describe that theme.
- The Balcony descriptors are those that sound like compliments.
- The Basement descriptors are the barrier labels – terms used when a talent is mistakenly devalued and dismissed or understood as a weakness.

Balcony

Strengths Theme

Basement

- Share your thoughts with someone in your session.
 - What could you do to ensure that others know the balcony impact of your talents versus the basement moments?
 - Are there moments where the basement descriptions are accurate? If so, how could you manage that talent differently so that it is not viewed as a weakness?

Collaborate

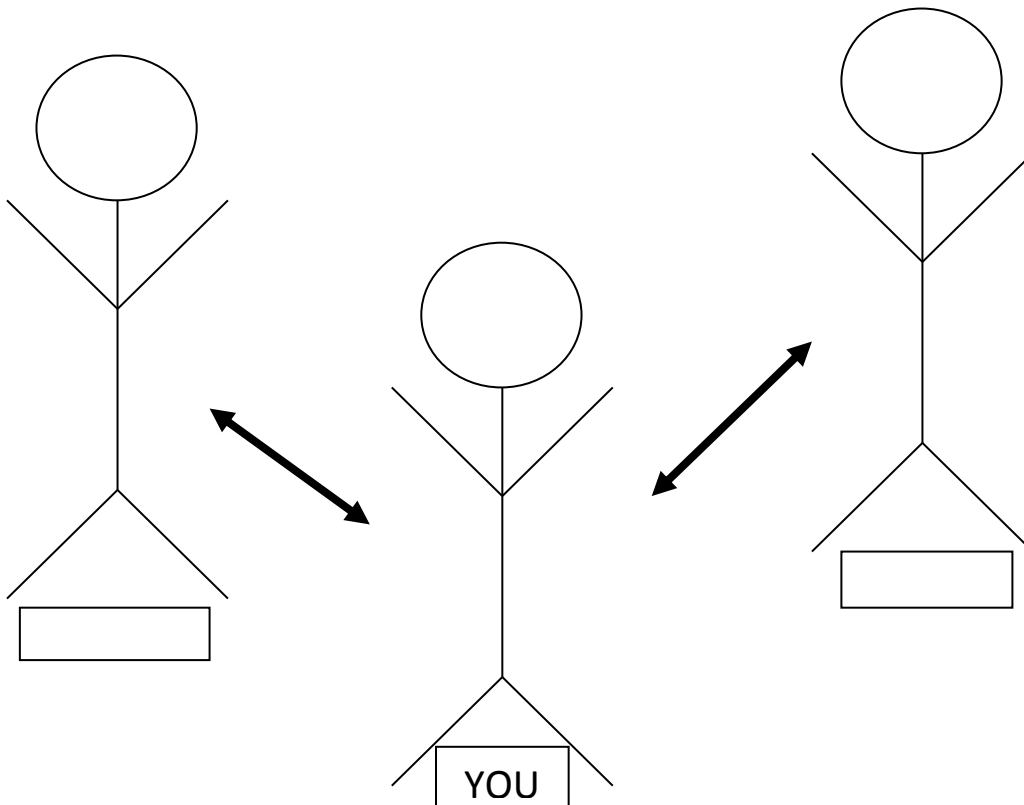
Partnerships are forming all around us every day. They are formed for a variety of reasons. For example:

- To “**make up**” for a lesser talent
- To “**take over**” where one person leaves off
- To “**enhance**” what one person already possesses

Activity: Complementary Strengths

Think of an activity you are responsible for at work or a home.

- Look back at the strengths matrix.
- Label the stick figure in the middle with your themes and “create” two new partners with complementary strengths that could help you achieve excellence.



Control

Control conflict by using your talent productively and mitigating your weaknesses.

Are your strengths not productively applied or do you have a weakness?

First, define a weakness in an effective way.

Identify the difference between “non-strength” and “weakness.”

- Is there something that you aren't very good at that isn't a weakness?
- A non-strength becomes a weakness when it interferes with your own ability to perform to expected levels—or interferes with others' ability to do their work.

Mitigating Weakness

- Open Communication/Transparency
- Get the RIGHT training
- Leverage other talents
- Use support systems
- Form complementary partnerships
- Adjust/Change role

DVD: How Do You Talk About Your Weaknesses without Whining?

Activity: Identify Weakness

- Pair up with a partner you do not regularly work with and share a weakness that you believe is currently getting in your way, or keeping others from achieving excellence?
- How could you mitigate this weakness?

Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation.

Your character is what you really are.

Your reputation is merely what others think you are.

-John Wooden

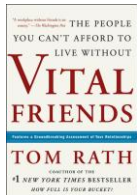
Cultivate

The Gallup Organization's decade long research into employee engagement offers some insight and strategies about relationships. In his book *Vital Friends*, Tom Rath, asks us to look at relationships in our lives and ask which measurably improve our lives and which could we not live without. These are our Vital Friends.

Gallup research has found if you have a best friend at work, you are significantly more likely to:

- ✓ Engage your team
- ✓ Get more done in less time
- ✓ Have fun on the job
- ✓ Have a safe workplace
- ✓ Innovate and share new ideas
- ✓ Feel informed and know that your opinions count
- ✓ Have the opportunity to focus on your strengths each day

Activity: Vital Friends



Tom Rath has identified 8 categories of vital friends. Take a moment to look through the list below and identify someone in your life that fills one of these vital categories. Which categories do you fill for others in our life? Do you fill more than one vital category for more than one person?

Builder

Builders are great motivators, always pushing you toward the finish line. They continually invest in your development and genuinely want you and the team to succeed. Builders are generous with their time as they help you see your strengths and use them productively.

Champion

Champions stand up for you and what you and the team believe in. They are the friends who sing your praises and praise the team. Champions are loyal friends with whom you can share things in confidence. When you need someone to promote your cause or the cause of the team, look to a champion.

Collaborator

A Collaborator is a friend with similar interests—the basis for many great friendships. You might share a passion for sports, hobbies, religion, work, politics, food, music, movies, or books. In many cases, you belong to the same group or share affiliations. When you talk with a Collaborator, you're on familiar ground, and this can serve as the foundation for a lasting relationship. Indeed, in those conversations, you often find that you have similar ambitions in work and life.

Companion

A Companion is always there for you, whatever the circumstances. You share a bond that is virtually unbreakable. When something big happens in your life—good or bad—this is one of the first people you call. At times, a true Companion will even sense where you are headed—your thoughts, feelings, and actions—before you know it yourself.

Connector

A Connector is a bridge builder who helps you and your team get what you want. Friends who play the role of a Connector are always inviting you to lunch, dinner, drinks, and other social gatherings where you can meet new people. This extends your network dramatically and gives you access to newfound resources.

Energizer

Energizers are quick to pick you up when you're down—and can make a good day great. They are always saying and doing things that make you feel better. Energizers have a remarkable ability to figure out what gets you going. When you are around these friends, you smile a lot more. You are more likely to laugh in the presence of an Energizer.

Mind Opener

Mind Openers are the friends who expand your horizons and encourage you to embrace new ideas, opportunities, cultures, and people. They challenge you to think in innovative ways and help you create positive change. Mind Openers know how to ask good questions, and this makes you more receptive to ideas. When you are around a Mind Opener, you are unguarded and express opinions aloud, especially controversial ones that you might not be comfortable sharing with other friends.

Navigator

Navigators are the friends who give you advice and keep you headed in the right direction. You go to them when you need guidance, and they talk through the pros and cons with you until you find an answer. In a difficult situation, you need a Navigator by your side. They help you see a positive future while keeping things grounded in reality. Any time you're at a crossroads and need help making a decision, you can look to a Navigator. They help you know who you are—and who you are not.

Building Vital Friends at Work

- Family Ties
- Water Cooler Effect
- Plugging In

"It is not so much our friends' help that helps us as the confident knowledge that they will help us." - Epicurus

Discussion: Strength Based Teams

What do strong teams have in common?

- Good leaders and managers pay attention to strengths when forming teams.
- Productive teams have a variety of strengths represented and a balance of strengths and weaknesses
- Well rounded teams are not made up of a bunch of well-rounded people
- Conflict doesn't destroy strong teams because strong teams focus on results
- Strong teams prioritize what's best for the organization and then move forward
- Members of strong teams are as committed to their personal lives as they are to their work
- Strong teams embrace diversity
- Strong teams manage for talent



Ideas for Maximizing Team Talents

- Sign into each meeting on a blank strengths matrix listing each member's top 5.
- Each team member selects one of his or her Signature Themes. Then each person finds or writes a sentence or phrase that captures the essence of his or her talents in that theme and posts it in a prominent place. When you enter one another's work space, ask that person: "How have you used that talent theme in your role today?"
- As a group, pick a talent theme to focus on during the week or month --- Achiever for example. Watch for evidence of that talent theme in one or another, and point it out when you see it in action. This will help each person better understand that talent theme and begin to see that theme's nuances within the context of each person's personality. A certain theme might not be among your Signature Themes, but you still have talent in it to some degree.
- Using the Theme Dynamics in Partnership activity, identify one way in which you can uniquely partner with each team member.
- Review your Symphony of Themes, and respond to the following questions as a team. Consider starting your next team meetings with one of the questions.
 - How do we get work done?
 - How might a new person feel joining our team?
 - How do we celebrate?
 - How do we track our success?
 - How do we build relationships?
 - How do we generate new ideas?
 - What makes us tick?
 - What is it like to be part of this team?
 - How do we communicate?
 - How do we measure success?
 - What numbers are important to us?
 - How do we respond to change?
 - Are we implementers of others ideas?
 - How do we add value to the College?
- Before beginning a team project or addressing a team challenge, take time to identify an exhaustive "to do" list. Then, ask people to take on those "to-do" items where they could leverage their natural talents.
- With each critical activity the team handles, make sure expectations are clear among team members. Talk about who owns which projects, deadlines or assignments.
- Think about forming complementary partnerships for specific tasks. Given what needs to be done, consider who would partner with whom to be most effective.

Strengths Themes

ACHIEVER	People especially talented in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.
ACTIVATOR	People especially talented in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.
ADAPTABILITY	People especially talented in the Adaptability theme prefer to “go with the flow.” They tend to be “now” people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.
ANALYTICAL	People especially talented in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.
ARRANGER	People especially talented in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to figure out how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.
BELIEF	People especially talented in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.
COMMAND	People especially talented in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.
COMMUNICATION	People especially talented in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.
COMPETITION	People especially talented in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.
CONNECTEDNESS	People especially talented in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.
CONSISTENCY	People especially talented in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world with consistency by setting up clear rules and adhering to them.
CONTEXT	People especially talented in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.
DELIBERATIVE	People especially talented in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.
DEVELOPER	People especially talented in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements.
DISCIPLINE	People especially talented in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.
EMPATHY	People especially talented in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others’ lives or others’ situations.

FOCUS	People especially talented in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.
FUTURISTIC	People especially talented in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.
HARMONY	People especially talented in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don't enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.
IDEATION	People especially talented in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.
INCLUDER	People especially talented in the Includer theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.
INDIVIDUALIZATION	People especially talented in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.
INPUT	People especially talented in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.
INTELLECTION	People especially talented in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.
LEARNER	People especially talented in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.
MAXIMIZER	People especially talented in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something especially talented into something superb.
POSITIVITY	People especially talented in the Positivity theme have an enthusiasm that is contagious. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.
RELATOR	People who are especially talented in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.
RESPONSIBILITY	People especially talented in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.
RESTORATIVE	People especially talented in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.
SELF-ASSURANCE	People especially talented in the Self-Assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.
SIGNIFICANCE	People especially talented in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.
STRATEGIC	People 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.
WOO	People especially talented in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with another person.

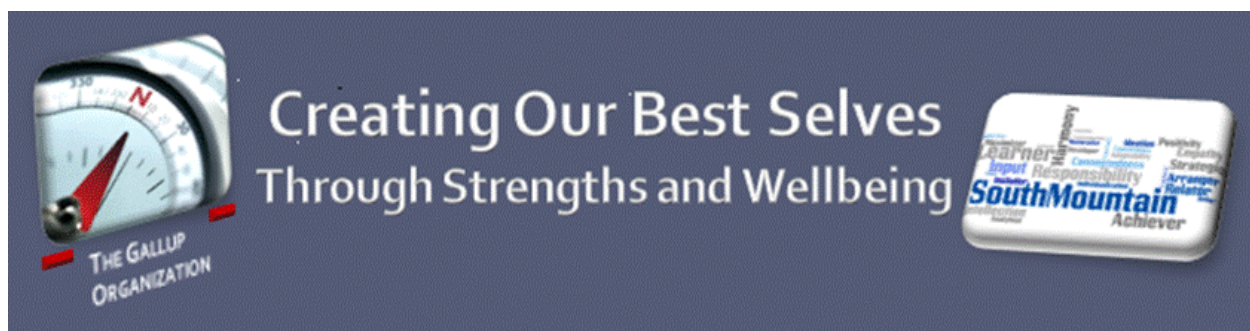
WHY CAN'T THIS LAST FOREVER?

Live Your Strengths!

- Know your top 5
- Be proud of your top 5
- Post your top 5
- Develop your top 5
- Build a relationship with your top 5.
- Donate your top 5! Donate them every day!

Commitments

- What is one of my Signature Themes that I want to learn more about, develop and consciously apply more often?
- What is one thing I will do starting today to get on and stay on my strengths path?
- What is one thing I will do starting today, to help those whom I work with get on and stay on their strengths path?
- In a word or phrase, what will I remember about today's seminar?



References and Resources

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Web Sites of Interest

http://strengths.southmountaincc.edu	The SMCC Strengths home page
https://www.strengthsquest.com	The StrengthsQuest home page
https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/	The Gallup Strengths home page
http://gmj.gallup.com	The Gallup Management Journal
http://coaching.gallup.com/	Strengths Coach Playbook
http://tmbc.com	The Marcus Buckingham Company

Questions or Feedback

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Appendix

A series of activities that will support your discovery,
development and application of your Strengths and Talents.

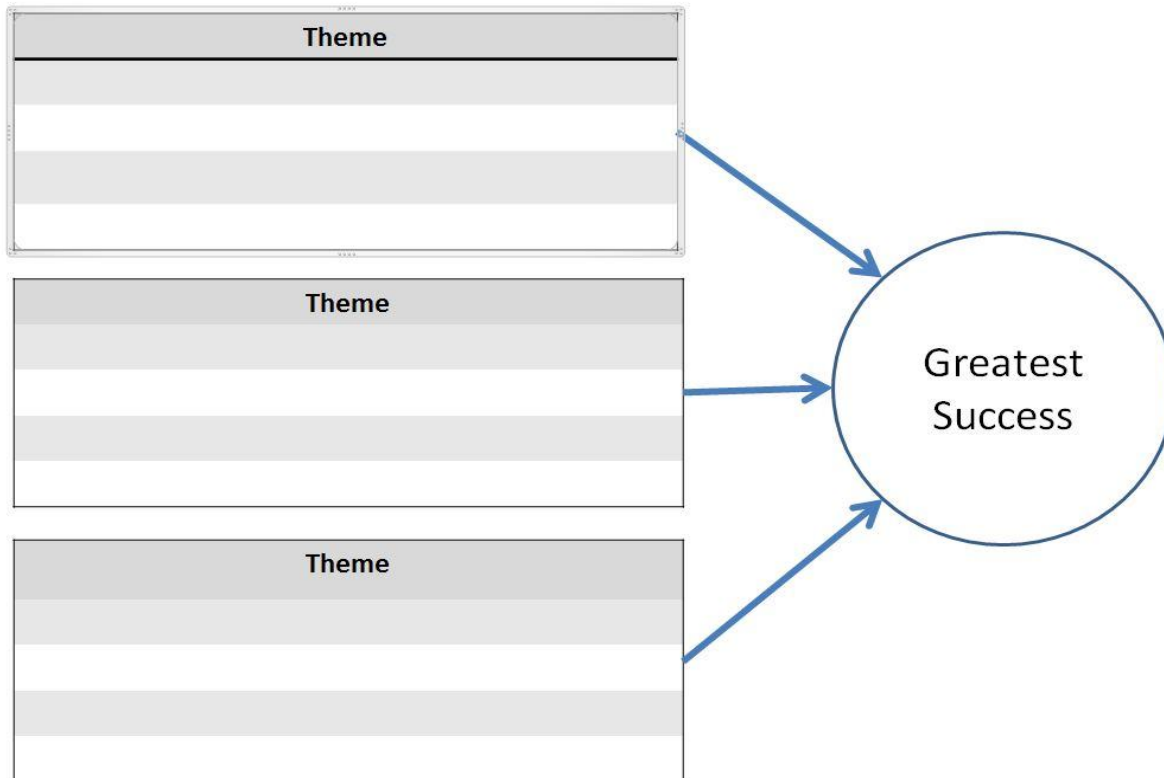
Activity: Develop and Apply your Talents

Review your Signature Themes and ask yourself how you-

1. Form relationships?
 2. Process thoughts/learn?
 3. Influence others?
 4. Get motivated?
 5. Get work done/work style?
- Are the ways you currently accomplish these outcomes giving you energy?
 - If not can you utilize your signature themes/talents as strengths in those areas to create personal energy?

Activity: My Greatest Success

- Think of a great success in your life. Think of 3 themes that seemed to have contributed to this success.
- Review the “talents” you underlined in your signature theme reports and list those that strongly supported your success.



Activity: Realizing my Potential

Think of several tasks you complete on a regular basis. Consider a talent from your Signature Theme report that supports your success in completing that task. Then reflect on the knowledge, both factual (learned from reading or a class) and experiential (learned from experience) and skill required to complete the task.

Task		Talent		Knowledge		Skill
	→		+		+	
	→		+		+	
	→		+		+	
	→		+		+	
	→		+		+	

This exercise is intended to help you discover how you have used your talents on a regular basis allowing you to consider other opportunities to develop your talents with other skills and knowledge.

Activity: Dynamic Themes

- Below, place two of your Signature Themes on the lines.
- Think back or review your Talent Connection activity on how you utilize each theme.
- Write a description of how the two themes you selected are best described together
Examples:

Learner + Individualization = I love to learn about what makes people tick

Focus + Maximizer = I need to focus on projects that I can help make excellent

Now you try:

_____ + _____ = _____
Theme Theme How these themes work together.

Again:

_____ + _____ = _____
Theme Theme How these themes work together.

One more time:

_____ + _____ = _____
Theme Theme How these themes work together.

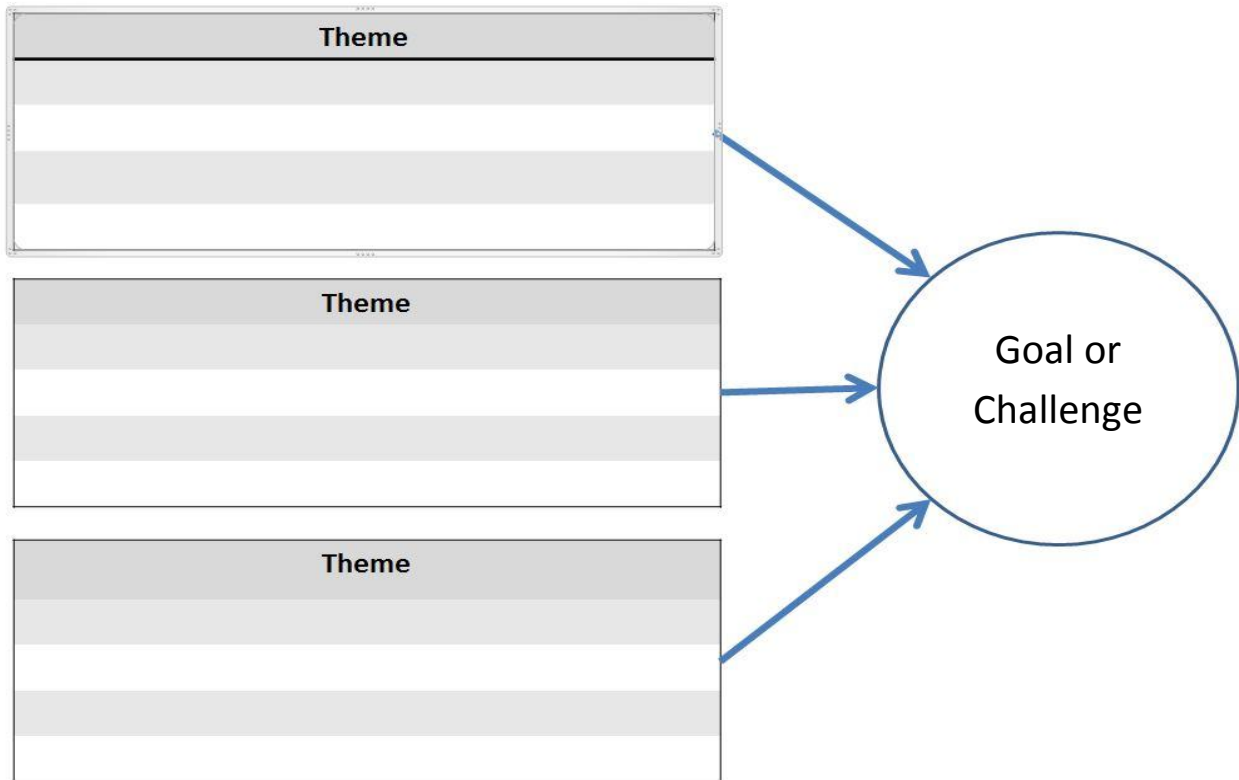
Write a strong statement, using the language in this exercise, that you would consider responding if ask, “What do you do at work?”

This language can now be used in a resume or cover letter or even in that dreaded job interview when they ask “What are your Strengths?”

Activity: Challenge, Goal or Project

Think of a goal you have set or a challenge you are facing in your life. Think of 3 themes that may support you efforts.

- Review the “talents” you underlined in your signature theme reports and list those that could help you accomplish your goal or overcome your challenge.



Activity: Developing Talents to Strengths

Pick one theme you would like to develop.

List a series of common situations in your life at work and home. Describe a specific way you can use and develop this theme in each situation.

Application	Actions to Develop Talents into Strengths
Interaction with co-workers	I will have a conversation with others in my department with the intent to learn something about them. (Learner)

Some possible life situations:

- Community Service
- Meetings
- Teaching
- Social Media
- Sports and Recreation
- Church
- Interactions with family (children, spouse, partner, etc)