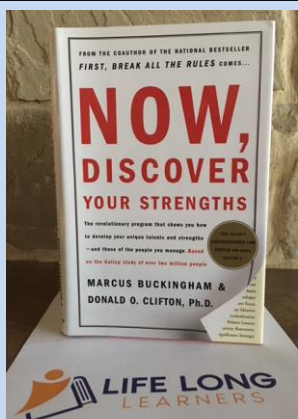


Now Discover Your Strengths

Donald O. Clifton, PhD. & Marcus Buckingham

Reviewed by Marisa Ortiz



About the Authors

Donald O. Clifton, PhD. professor of educational psychology University of Nebraska-Lincoln (1950-1969) when he founded Selection Research, Inc.(SRI) in 1988 it acquired the Gallup Organization, in which he served as a chairman and chief designer of the StrengthsFinder profile, now called Clifton Strengths.

Marcus Buckingham, former Sr VP of The Gallup Organization at the time of original publication, is a British author, motivational speaker and business consultant.

About the Book

Introduction: The Strengths Revolution at Work.

The Revolution and Two Million Interviews

I. The Anatomy of a Strength

Chapter 1. Strong Lives: What does a strong life look like? What is a strength? What do you need to build your life around your strengths?

Chapter 2. Strength Building: Is he always this good? Knowledge and Skills. Talent.

II. Discover the Source of Your Strengths

Chapter 3. StrengthsFinder: The Traces of Talent. The StrengthsFinder Profile

Chapter 4. The Thirty-Four Themes of StrengthsFinder

III. Put Strengths to Work

Chapter 5. The Questions You're Asking

Chapter 6. Managing Strengths: What is the secret to their success? How can you manage each of the thirty-four themes of StrengthsFinder?

Chapter 7. Building a Strengths-Based Organization: Who is leading the strengths revolution at work? How can you build a strengths-based organization?

Appendix – A Technical Report on StrengthsFinder.

What research underpins the StrengthsFinder Profile, and what research is planned to refine the instrument?

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*Blue Sky Leadership Consulting works with organizations to leverage Strategic Thinking and Execution Planning and we encompass many of the principles in these books into our **Four Decisions™** methodology and development of your company's **One Page Strategic Plans**. Need to grow top line revenue? Improve bottom-line profits? Build accountable and trusting teams? Improve cash flow? Develop leadership team members? Contact us for a free consultation*



Introduction:

We wrote this book to start a revolution, the strengths revolution. (pg5)

The great organization must not only accommodate the fact that each employee is different, it must capitalize on these differences. (pg5)

The two assumptions that guide the world's best managers:

1. Each person's talents are enduring and unique
2. Each person's greatest room for growth is in the areas of his or her greatest strength. (pg8)

These thirty-four are the most prevalent themes of human talent...In their many combinations, can do the best job of explaining the broadest possible range of excellent performance. These signature themes are your most powerful sources of strength. The real tragedy of life is not that each of us doesn't have enough strengths, it's that we fail to use the ones we have. (pg 12)

I. The Anatomy of Strength – Strong lives

The secret to their success lies in the ability to discover their strengths and to organize their life so that these strengths can be applied. (pg22) Strength: consistent near perfect performance in an activity. For an activity to be a strength you must be able to do it consistently. You do not have to have strength in every aspect of your role to excel. (pg 25)

That excellent performers must be well rounded is one of the most pervasive myths we hope to dispel in this book. When we studied them, excellent performers were rarely well rounded. On the contrary, they were sharp. They found ways to manage around their weaknesses, thereby freeing them up to hone their strengths to a sharper point. (pg26)

The three revolutionary tools you will need to build a strong life:

1. Understanding how to distinguish your natural talents from things you can learn. (pg28)

Talents are your naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior. Your various themes of talent are what the StrengthsFinder profile actually measures. Knowledge consists of the facts and lessons learned.

Skills are the steps of an activity. These three-talents, knowledge, and skills – combine to create your Strengths. (pg29)

2. A system to identify your dominant talents. StrengthsFinder will shine a spotlight on them. It will be up to you to perform. (pg32)

3. A common language to describe your talents. It must be positive; it must help us explain strength, not frailty. And it must be common; it must be a language in which we are all fluent so that no matter who we are or where we are from, we all know exactly what is meant when someone says, "Marcus embodies Command" or "Don exhibits Achiever." (pg32)

There are two distinct kinds of knowledge: factual knowledge, which is content. It won't guarantee excellence, but excellence is impossible without it. The second kind of knowledge you need is experiential, which isn't taught in classrooms or found in manuals and it takes a multitude of forms. (pg42)

Every environment offers chances to learn. Some experiential knowledge is more conceptual for example your values and your self-awareness. (pg43)



Skills bring structure to experiential knowledge. (pg45) Skills are so enticingly helpful that they obscure their two flaws. The first flaw is that while skills will help you perform, they will not help you excel. (pg46) The second flaw is that some activities, almost by definition, defy being broken down into steps.

A skill is designed to make the secrets of the best easily transferable. If you learn a skill, it will help you get a little better, but it will not cover for a lack of talent. Instead, as you build your strengths, skills will actually prove most valuable when they are combined with genuine talent. (pg47)

Your recurring patterns are created by the connections in your brain; and no, beyond a certain age you are not going to be able to stitch a completely new design-your talents are enduring. (pg49) Put more plainly, your synapses create your talents. By the time you wake up on your sixteenth birthday, half your network is gone. (pg51)

Nature and nurture reinforce some connections and allow billions of others to fade away. And so you emerge-a distinctly talented individual blessed/or cursed to react to the world in your own enduringly unique way. Our talents come so easily to us that we acquire a false sense of security. On some level it is quite comforting to believe that the "sense" we make of the world is "common" to everyone. (pg53)

Skills determine if you can do something, whereas talents reveal something more important: how well and how often you do it.

Damage control versus development: damage control can prevent failure, but it will never elevate you to excellence. (pg58) The danger of repetitive training without underlying talent is that you burn out before you net any improvement. (pg59)

Most organizations, with their heavy emphasis on weakness fixing, ignore how deadening it can be. (pg60)

Your talents, your strongest synaptic connections, are the most important raw material for strength building. Identify your most powerful talents, hone them with skills and knowledge, and you will be well on your way to living the strong life. (pg61)

II. Discover the Source of Your Strengths

If you want to reveal your talents, monitor your spontaneous, top-of-mind reactions to situations you encounter-they provide the best trace of your talents. They reveal the location of strong mental connections. (pg67)

Your yearnings reflect the physical reality that some of your mental connections are simply stronger than others. Rapid learning offers another trace of talent. Satisfactions provide the last clue to talent. If it feels good when you perform an activity, chances are that you are using a talent. (pg73)

You are better served by tuning your antenna toward identifying those positive activities that seem to bring your psychological strength and satisfaction. We are all woven so uniquely that each of us experiences slightly different satisfactions. (pg 74)



StrengthsFinder Profile: measures the 34 themes of talent that we discovered during our own study of excellence. Your five most dominant themes of talent, your signature themes. These may not yet be strengths. Each theme is a recurring pattern of thought, feeling and behavior- the promise of a strength. (pg79)

The Thirty-Four Themes of StrengthsFinder

Achiever * Activator * Adaptability * Analytical * Arranger * Belief * Command * Communication * Competition * Connectedness * Context * Deliberative * Developer * Discipline * Empathy * Fairness (Consistency) * Focus * Futuristic * Harmony * Ideation * Inclusiveness (Includer) * Individualization * Input * Intellection * Learner * Maximizer * Positivity * Relator * Responsibility * Restorative * Self-Assurance * Significance * Strategic * WOO

III. Put Strengths to Work

The questions you are asking. *Are there any obstacles to building my strengths?*

The truth is that many people are reluctant. Many people don't concern themselves with the intricacies of their strengths; instead, they choose to devote their time and energy to investigating their weaknesses. (pg121)

In every culture the group least fixated on their weaknesses was the oldest group, those fifty-five years old and above. A little older, a little wiser, this group has probably acquired a measure of self-acceptance and realized the futility of trying to paper over the persistent cracks in their personality.

The three basic fears: *fear of weaknesses, fear of failure, and, fear of one's true self.*

Our fear of weaknesses seems to overshadow our confidence in our strengths. Most of us assume that our weaknesses trump our strengths. (pg122)

Whatever the weakness, whatever the strength, the strength is just a strength-to be admired and then simply assumed- but the weakness, ah, the weakness is an "area of opportunity." This fixation with weakness is deeply rooted in our education and upbringing. This weakness orientation persists in the fields of research and academia.

Criticism has "the power to do good when there is something that must be destroyed, dissolved or reduced, but [it is] capable only of harm when there is something to be built." Carl Jung 1930s. (pg124)

But building on your strengths isn't necessarily about ego. It's about responsibility. It is your opportunity to take your natural talents and transform them through focus and practice and learning into consistent near perfect performance. The most responsible, the most challenging and, in the sense of being true to yourself, the most honorable thing to do is to face up to the strength potential inherent in your talents and then find ways to realize it. (pg126)

"Fidelity to the law of your own being is...an act of high courage flung in the face of life." Carl Jung (pg.127)

"To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life. Baruch Spinoza (pg128)



Will I become too narrow if I focus on my signature themes? You will actually become stronger, more robust, more open to new discoveries and, more importantly, more appreciative of people who possess themes very different from your own. Unsure of who we really are, we define ourselves by the knowledge we have acquired or the achievements we have racked up along the way...we become reluctant to change careers or learn new ways of doing things because then, in the new career, we would be forced to jettison our precious haul of expertise and achievement. We would have to jettison our identity. (pg144)

Unsure of who we really are, we become reluctant to investigate who others really are. Our uncertainty about ourselves limits our inquisitiveness about other things. No matter what your choice of profession, no matter what the trajectory of your career, if you are applying and refining and polishing your top five themes, then you are indeed living your life. Living the life you were supposed to live. (pg145)

How can I manage around my weaknesses? A weakness is anything that gets in the way of excellent performance.

1. Get a little better at it
2. Design a support system
3. Use one of your strongest themes to overwhelm a weakness
4. Find a partner
5. Stop doing it

A person can never have too much of a particular theme. He can only have not enough of another one. (pg159)
You need to be careful about drawing too straight a line between a particular theme and a particular role. Our research interviews indicate that thousands of people with very different theme combinations nonetheless play the same role equally well. (pg165)

Can my themes reveal whether I am in the right career? No matter what the role, there are many routes to excellence. Our research into human strengths does not support the extreme, and extremely misleading, assertion that “you can play any role you set your mind to,” but it does lead us to this truth: Whatever you set your mind to, you will be most successful when you craft your role to play to your signature talents most of the time. (pg167)

If you are to keep your talented employees and spur each of them into greater performance, you will have to discern how each one is unique and then figure out ways to capitalize on this uniqueness. (pg174)

One by One – How to Manage a Person Strong in all 34 themes guide for Managers. (pg.177-210)

Building a Strengths-based Organization

1. Spend a great deal of time and money selecting people properly in the first place.
2. Focus performance by legislating outcomes rather than forcing each person into a stylistic mold.
3. Focus your training time and money on educating people about their strengths and figuring out ways to build on these strengths rather than on remedially trying to plug their “skill gaps.”
4. Devise ways to help each person grow their careers without necessarily promoting them up the corporate ladder and out of their areas of strength. (pg216)

A systematic process for maximizing the value locked up in your human capital. Much of the responsibility will lie with the manager to select for talent, set clear expectations, focus on strengths, and develop each employee’s career. (pg217)



The Practical Guide – How can you build a strengths-based organization?

1. The Strengths-based Selection System
 - a. Build selection system around an instrument of measuring talent
 - b. Calibrate your instrument by studying your best performers in each key role.
 - c. Teach the talent language throughout the organization.
 - d. Build a theme profile of your entire company.
 - e. Study the links between measured talent and subsequent performance.
2. The Strengths-based Performance Management System - Focus and develop talents into measurable performance
 - a. Impact on the business – figure out the right way to measure the desired performance.
 - b. Impact on the external/internal customer. Design a simple way to measure the emotional outcomes you want to create in your customers.
 - c. Impact on the employees around her/him.
 - i. Gallup Engagement Survey Q12 for Manager to Employee relationship.
 - ii. Employee-Employee relations survey
 - iii. Ensure that every manager has a strengths discussion with every employee.

If you want to keep a talented employee, show him not just that you care about him, not just that you will help him grow, but, more important, that you know him, that in the truest sense of the word you recognize him (or, at the very least, that you are trying to). (pg237)

The best mechanism for channeling the employee's path toward performance must, by definition be, regular, predictable, and productive meetings with his immediate manager. (pg237)

3. The Strengths-based Career Development System. - People can learn, grow their careers, and receive praise for good work without getting promoted.

Our great error is thinking that all human beings crave the same kind of prestige- the prestige that comes with power. In our knowledge economy where, specialized expertise and individualized customer relationships are prized, the chances are that the employees know more about their particular field or customer than their manager does, and thus the threat that he has power over his decisions, judgement and discretion loses much of its force. Anyone who is excelling in her role deserves prestige. Many kinds of prestige should be available to reflect the many different near perfect performances the organization wants to encourage. (pg241)

Your organization must build more ladders. Give people incentives to climb the rungs (pg242)

The more prestige your organization offers, the healthier your employees will be. Employees who strongly agreed that they had a chance to do what they do best every day claimed fewer sick days, filed fewer workers' compensation claims, and had fewer accidents while on the job. (pg244)

Our Faculty

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|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Peter Braeuler | Mark Wittig | Malcolm Coon | Robert Schmidt | Judy Zimmerman | Andrew Wittig | Marisa Ortiz | Rob Wicall | Catherine Lester |

Actions

What thought, or idea had the biggest impact on you today?

What is one specific action you will take TODAY from what was discussed?

HOW will you implement this action?

Calendar of Events

First Friday – Wittigs 2018 Avenue B San Antonio 7:30 – 9:00 [Sponsor: UTSA EMBA Alumni Association]

Feb 2nd Four Hour Workweek and Napoleon
 Mar 2nd Richest Man in Babylon and Unscripted
 Apr 6 Four Agreements and Future Workplace Experience

Wine & Cheese Wednesday – Wittigs 2018 Avenue B San Antonio 5:30 – 7:00 PM [Sponsor: Haworth]

Feb 7th Napoleon
 Mar 14th Unscripted
 Apr 11th Future Workplace Experience

Fourth Thursday – Haworth 2 E Greenway Plaza #100 Houston 11:30 – 1:00 [Sponsor: Haworth & Wittigs]

Feb 28th Four Hour Workweek (NOTE: date change)
 Mar 22nd Richest Man in Babylon
 Apr 19th Four Agreements

Fourth Friday – Alpha Home 419 E. Magnolia Ave. San Antonio 8:00 – 9:30 [Sponsor: Alpha Home]]

Feb 23rd Four Hour Workweek
 Mar 23rd Richest Man in Babylon
 Apr 20th Four Agreements