

# Career Management Digest

### Play To Your Strengths

In our every day world, we often find ourselves focusing more on weaknesses than strengths. We look at what we need to improve, vs. what we shine at. Improvement is always good—but if we find a way to use our strengths in our career, in our relationships and in our community efforts, we will be more engaged in our jobs and more than three times as likely to report having an excellent quality of life in general.

Included in this newsletter is information on how YOU can discover your own strengths, a little bit on how to develop them (or where to find more information on it!) and how to build your networking relationships.

### DISCOVER YOUR STRENGTHS

Recently our office team was introduced to the book, “Strengthsfinder 2.0” by Tom Rath. Rath began working in 1998 with a team of Gallup scientists, led by a man who is known as the Father of the Strengths Philosophy, Donald O. Clifton. This team had tired of the common mindset that we had to “fix” our weaknesses in order to be successful and live a happy life. People focus on their own shortcomings first instead of looking at their strengths.

Some every day examples come to my mind: When your family is planning an event, perhaps a child’s birthday party, the organizer asks for help from others. The person who is creative and good at decorating is who you ask to take the child’s ‘theme’ and run with it. The family member who is an excellent baker would be thrilled to make the cake. If you are good at children’s games, you plan the fun. When a basketball coach is putting together the team, he/she puts the players into positions that capitalize on their strengths, not their weaknesses. These are only two examples, but they point out the “Play to your strengths” mindset. Some people say that in personal relationships, you find a person who is like-minded, but compliments you. Simply put, people find the yin to their yang.

According to the website [www.gallupstrengthscenter.com](http://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com), Gallup’s research proves that individuals, teams and entire organizations succeed when they play to their strengths. Workplace teams that use CliftonStrengths experience 72% lower turnover and 29% increased profit and higher employee engagement. Understanding your strengths does more than improve your career; it will impact your thinking processes, your ability to achieve your



goals. It will make a difference in your relationships.

In the 40-year Gallup study, the scientists looked at human strengths and created what they call a “language” of 34 most common talents and developed the Clifton Strengthsfinder assessment to help people uncover their top five talents. Then, they share how to use these

themes to impact your world. The book also gives you a Plan of Action. This knowledge is great but you need to explore how to implement these action steps into your life.

In an article on the website [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com), August 27, 2013 by Ekaterina Walter, titled Four Essentials of Strength-based Leadership, Walter references some business examples:

**Facebook** is well-known for its unique approach to hiring. They bring people on board based on their talent, not to fill a specific position. Facebook employees work on projects that they are passionate about and utilizes their talents. Every 18 months, the employees rotate and work on something new to bring fresh eyes and ideas to the project.

**3M** is also a company that utilizes a “15 percent” program. Employees are encouraged to use a portion of their work week to work on their own projects. This freedom to use their strengths to create has led to many successful products, one of them the Post-It Note.

Think about your relationships, work situations and other activities. Do you see the “play to your strengths” concept in action? Google “strengthsfinder” and see how you can make that happen!

~Valerie Kvale, Career Planner/Placement Specialist, Workforce Development, Inc., Freeborn County

**GET TO KNOW ME...BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND DEVELOPING CONTACTS**

Career Management as an **essential** professional skill... It must be developed, maintained, and constantly refined to keep up with trends and technology.

The same can be said for building relationships and developing contacts.

**Never give up** and **never relinquish** the responsibility of your career development and/or job search to anyone other than yourself. Let it be known that your career path and its ultimate destination is in **your hands**.

Never miss an opportunity to **make valuable contacts** and add people to your network – with **integrity** – and for the right reasons – meaning that both parties will respectfully **benefit** from the interaction.

Take a sincere interest in people. Make a commitment to network and **stay connected**.

Keep a steady stream of activity, job leads, contacts, relationships, and active job openings **in your sight**.

Keep in mind that a lot of job leads will not necessarily come from your closest friends and relatives, but most will come from a **network of acquaintances**.

~Ed Duda, Career Planner, Workforce Development, Inc., Olmsted County



**The ABCDs of Strength-based Leadership**  
**A-Align, don't fix.** Invite team members to work on a project, instead of assigning. Look at the skills they possess and ask them to take it on. It's o.k. if you have to make a tweak or two until it works.

**B-Build diverse teams.** Diversity brings new and different perspectives and ideas. Embrace that!

**C-Create the culture of transparency.** Your team members need to trust each other. They need to listen and ask questions and assure that truly understand each other.

**D-Don't manage, empower.** Once you've formed your team, give the team permission to create. Talk things through. Everyone has a voice. Everyone listens. Conflict or lively discussion is part of the process. Guide the team back to the project at hand and encourage.

~Adapted from "Four Essentials of Strength-based Leadership", Ekaterina Walter.

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