

The Language of Strengths

Exactly What Is “Strength”?

Consistent, near-perfect performance: That’s strength.

“Strength” sounds good, doesn’t it? Think about the qualities associated with strength. Strength always delivers. Strength gets the job done and does it right. You can count on strength.

Obviously, strength is a good thing, regardless of whether it is one of your strengths or you are benefiting from others’ strengths. But what exactly is strength?

Well, in slightly more technical terms, strength is the ability to consistently produce a nearly perfect positive outcome in a specific task.

Strengths: Gallup defines strengths as those activities for which one can provide consistent, near-perfect performance. Strengths are composed of skills, knowledge and talent.

People count on and appreciate strengths.

Consider these people who consistently deliver a nearly perfect performance in a specific task:

- a waiter who is consistently one step ahead of your needs
- a call center representative who quickly “wins over” every upset customer
- a nurse who routinely administers injections so smoothly that patients “don’t feel a thing”
- a bank teller who always recommends the perfect services for each customer’s financial needs
- a salesperson who consistently builds long-term loyalty in client relationships

These are examples of people performing with strength.

But, how did these people get there? How did these strengths develop?

First, strength requires talent.

Our talents help us understand who we are.

Talents are a person’s innate abilities — what we do without even thinking about it. They are what a person does well — naturally. You might even say our talents are hard-wired.

Second, strength develops from investment.

If we want to use our talents productively, we must invest in them. We do this by thinking about how we can add our current knowledge and skills to our talents. Additionally, we want to think about what new knowledge and skills we need to be even more effective.

Talent (a natural way of thinking, feeling or behaving)

X Investment (time spent practicing, developing your skills and building your knowledge base)

= Strength (the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance)

We invest in our talents through practice.

Skills: Skills represent the abilities to perform the fundamental steps of specific tasks, such as operating specific machinery. Skills are not naturally recurring; you must acquire them through formal or informal training and practice.

Knowledge: Knowledge is what you know. You can acquire knowledge through formal or informal education.

Talents: Talents are natural ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, such as an inner drive to compete, sensitivity to the needs of others or the tendency to be outgoing at social gatherings. Talents come into existence naturally, and you are less likely to acquire them as you do skills and knowledge.

Building your talents into real strengths requires practice and hard work, much like developing physical strength.

When we become aware of our talents, we can practice using them every day. And we can add to or develop new knowledge and skills to help us be more effective. This investment of skills, knowledge and practice propels us to strength — the ability to consistently produce a specific positive outcome.

As you use your talents repeatedly, they become refined. You gain experience, and through that experience, you gain knowledge and skills that will combine with your talents to create strength.

Of course, before you can begin to develop strengths, you must identify your talents. That’s where CliftonStrengths comes in.

Grounded in decades of the study of talents, strengths and success, the StrengthsFinder is an invaluable tool to help you seek the source of your natural talent.

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

By analyzing your instinctive reactions to 177 sets of paired statements, the assessment pulls together important clues to the ways in which you most naturally think, feel and behave as a unique individual.

Creating a list of every talent is an impossible task. But, if you step back, you will see that talents often have something in common: a theme that connects them.

Some talents — like a natural tendency to share thoughts, to create engaging stories and to find the perfect word — relate directly to communication. That's what they have in common — their theme — so to begin thinking and talking about them, we can call them COMMUNICATION talents.

Themes are the basic language of talent.

Talent Theme: A theme is a category of talents. Themes help you begin to discover and talk about your greatest talents. Decades of research into talents and success have shown that the talents most related to potential for success can be grouped into 34 themes. Each theme comprises many talents.

Understanding ourselves starts with knowing our top themes, and then it advances to understanding the talents within those themes that we can apply in our lives every day.

Themes are a starting point for thinking and talking about talents.

- ✓ The Clifton StrengthsFinder is a tool that can help you discover the source of your natural talents.
- ✓ Themes are the basic language of talent. They help you begin to discover and talk about your greatest talents. Each StrengthsFinder theme comprises many talents.
- ✓ Strengths develop when people tap into their talents and intentionally invent ways to apply them to accomplish tasks or reach desired outcomes.