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**strengthsfinder** 2.0

Strengths Discovery and Action-Planning Guide



**What makes *you* stand out?**

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## CHARLOTTE STURTZ

### Your Top 5 Themes

**Learner**

**Activator**

**Significance**

**Arranger**

**Connectedness**

### What's in This Guide?

- For each of your top five themes, you will find:
  - A brief Shared Theme Description
  - Your Personalized Strengths Insights, which describe what makes you stand out from others with the same theme in their top five
  - Some examples of what the theme "sounds like" — real quotes from people who also have the theme in their top five
  - 10 Ideas for Action
- A Strengths Discovery Activity to get you thinking about how your talents and your investment work together to build strengths that you can apply to your work and personal life
- A Strengths-Based Action Plan for review with a friend, manager, or colleague

## LEARNER

### Shared Theme Description

People who are 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.

### Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

It's very likely that you are a rational thinker. That is, you exhibit good judgment and exercise sound reasoning. These thought processes serve you well whenever you set out to acquire true knowledge and/or gain a skill. You school yourself by reading, investigating, examining, experiencing, or receiving instruction in a subject. By nature, you spend considerable time examining exactly why something has gone wrong. Whenever you experience a personal or professional loss, make a mistake, or experience failure, you tend to investigate. You are likely to be restless until you have answers to all your basic questions: What? How? When? Where? Who? Why? Because of your strengths, you endorse the importance of acquiring additional knowledge and gaining new skills. You regard education as an ongoing activity. Driven by your talents, you think intensely whenever you are working on tasks that match your area of expertise or pique -- that is, arouse and excite -- your natural curiosity. Rarely do you allow distractions to pull your mind away from topics, issues, questions, or experiments that intrigue you. Intrusions that often distract others are seldom a problem for you. Instinctively, you fill your mind with new ideas by asking questions, reading, studying, observing, or listening. Normally, you accumulate facts, data, stories, examples, or background information from the people you meet. Determining what they want to accomplish in the coming weeks, months, or years generally satisfies your curiosity. These insights also allow you to understand why individuals behave the way they do in different situations.

### Learner sounds like this:

Annie M., managing editor: "I get antsy when I am not learning something. Last year, although I was enjoying my work, I didn't feel as though I was learning enough. So I took up tap dancing. It sounds strange, doesn't it? I know I am never going to perform or anything, but I enjoy focusing on the technical skill of tapping, getting a little better each week, and moving up from the beginners' class to the intermediate class. That was a kick."

Miles A., operations manager: "When I was seven years old, my teachers would tell my parents, 'Miles isn't the most intelligent boy in the school, but he's a sponge for learning, and he'll probably go really far because he will push himself and continually be grasping new things.' Right now, I am just starting a course in business-travel Spanish. I know it is probably too ambitious to think I could learn conversational Spanish and become totally proficient in that language, but I at least want to be able to travel there and know the language."

Tim S., coach for executives: "One of my clients is so inquisitive that it drives him crazy because he can't do everything he wants to. I'm different. I am not curious in that broad sense. I prefer to go into greater depth with things so that I can become competent in them and then use them at work. For example, recently one of my clients wanted me to travel with him to Nice, France, for a business engagement. So I started reading up on the region, buying books, and checking the Internet. It was all interesting and I enjoyed the study, but I wouldn't have done any of it if I wasn't going to be traveling there for work."

### Ideas for Action:

- Refine how you learn. For example, you might learn best by teaching; if so, seek out opportunities to present to others. You might learn best through quiet reflection; if so, find this quiet time.
- Develop ways to track the progress of your learning. If there are distinct levels or stages of learning within a discipline or skill, take a moment to celebrate your progression from one level to the next. If no such levels exist, create them for yourself (e.g., reading five books on the subject or making three presentations on the subject).
- Be a catalyst for change. Others might be intimidated by new rules, new skills, or new circumstances. Your willingness to soak up this newness can calm their fears and spur them to action. Take this responsibility seriously.
- Seek roles that require some form of technical competence. You will enjoy the process of acquiring and maintaining this expertise.
- As far as possible, shift your career toward a field with constantly changing technologies or regulations. You will be energized by the challenge of keeping up.
- Because you are not threatened by unfamiliar information, you might excel in a consulting role (either internal or external) in which you are paid to go into new situations and pick up new competencies or languages quickly.
- Research supports the link between learning and performance. When people have the opportunity to learn and grow, they are more productive and loyal. Look for ways to measure the degree to which you and others feel that your learning needs are being met, to create individualized learning milestones, and to reward achievements in learning.
- At work, take advantage of programs that subsidize your learning. Your organization may be willing to pay for part or all of your instructional coursework or for certifications. Ask your manager for information about scholarships and other educational opportunities.
- Honor your desire to learn. Take advantage of adult educational opportunities in your community. Discipline yourself to sign up for at least one new academic or adult learning course each year.
- Time disappears and your attention intensifies when you are immersed in studying or learning. Allow yourself to "follow the trail" by scheduling learning sessions during periods of time that will not be interrupted by pressing engagements.

## ACTIVATOR

### Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.

### Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

Driven by your talents, you probably stimulate individuals to be more enthusiastic about what they are doing. How? You repeatedly remind them that you truly value their contributions, talents, experience, and expertise. It's very likely that you have a gift for raising a person's self-esteem. You notice something special he or she said. Then you formally or informally acknowledge the individual's most interesting ideas. Because of your strengths, you typically take the lead. You seldom wait for orders or directions from people in positions of authority. You probably operate on the premise that it is better to ask for forgiveness than to ask for permission. Using this approach, you have delivered impressive results and reached important goals. By nature, you help people understand they are people of consequence -- that is, important. How? You probably acknowledge the merit of something they said. As a result, many individuals feel a lot more confident about themselves. Chances are good that you sometimes make choices or judgments when no one else seems willing to do so. Once you take charge, you may be eager to launch initiatives, present proposals, or solve problems.

### Activator sounds like this:

Jane C., Benedictine nun: "When I was prioress in the 1970s, we were hit by the energy shortage, and costs skyrocketed. We had a hundred and forty acres, and I walked the acreage every day pondering what we should do about this energy shortage. Suddenly I decided that if we had that much land, we should be drilling our own gas well, and so we did. We spent one hundred thousand dollars to drill a gas well. If you have never drilled a gas well, you probably don't realize what I didn't realize: namely, that you have to spend seventy thousand dollars just to drill to see if you have any gas on your property at all. So they dug down with some kind of vibratory camera thing, and they told me that I had a gas pool. But they didn't know how large the pool was, and they didn't know if there was enough pressure to bring it up. 'If you pay another thirty thousand dollars, we will try to release the well,' they said. 'If you don't want us to, we'll just cap the well, take your seventy thousand, and go home.' So I gave them the final thirty thousand and, fortunately, up it came. That was twenty years ago, and it is still pumping."

Jim L., entrepreneur: "Some people see my impatience as not wanting to listen to the traps, the potential roadblocks. What I keep repeating is, 'I want to know when I am going to hit the wall, and I need you to tell me how much it is going to hurt. But if I choose to bump into the wall anyway, then don't worry -- you've done your job. I just had to experience it for myself.'"

### Ideas for Action:

- Seek work in which you can make your own decisions and act on them. In particular, look for start-up or turnaround situations.
- At work, make sure that your manager judges you on measurable outcomes rather than your process. Your process is not always pretty.
- You can transform innovative ideas into immediate action. Look for creative and original thinkers, and help them move their ideas from conceptual theory to concrete practice.
- Look for areas that are bogged down by discussion or blocked by barriers. End the stalemate by creating a plan to get things moving and spur others into action.
- You learn more from real experience than from theoretical discussions. To grow, consciously expose yourself to challenging experiences that will test your talents, skills, and knowledge.
- Remember that although your tenacity is powerful, it may intimidate some. Your Activator talents will be most effective when you have first earned others' trust and loyalty.
- Identify the most influential decision makers in your organization. Make it a point to have lunch with each of them at least once a quarter to share your ideas. They can support you in your activation and provide critical resources to make your ideas happen.
- You can easily energize the plans and ideas of others. Consider partnering with focused, futuristic, strategic, or analytical people who will lend their direction and planning to your activation, thereby creating an opportunity to build consensus and get others behind the plan. By doing this, you complement each other.
- Give the reasons why your requests for action must be granted. Otherwise, others might dismiss you as impatient and label you a 'ready, fire, aim' person.
- You possess an ability to create motion and momentum in others. Be strategic and wise in the use of your Activator talents. When is the best time, where is the best place, and who are the best people with whom to leverage your valuable influence?

## SIGNIFICANCE

### Shared Theme Description

People who are especially talented in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.

### **Your Personalized Strengths Insights**

*What makes you stand out?*

Instinctively, you express your ideas and feelings so others take notice. You delight in conversations, storytelling, presentations, debates, or discussions. The verbal give-and-take between human beings is something you value and do quite well. Because of your strengths, you crave positions in which you can channel your energy and creativity into activities that distinguish you from others. Because you trust your judgment and your abilities, it is imperative that your work be both invigorating and challenging. You want it to be a vital expression of who you are. Chances are good that you yearn to step into roles where you can influence people to follow you. Many individuals allow you to take charge. Why? They likely remember times you set them up for success in the past. By nature, you view yourself as a person who possesses finely honed skills, extensive knowledge, and a depth of expertise. This explains why you spontaneously gravitate to people whose work ethics are sound and whose need to be highly productive is apparent. Simply put: You usually want to spend time with people who are known for their accomplishments just as you are recognized for your successes. It's very likely that you may take the time to become personally acquainted with people. Sometimes you observe, listen, or ask questions to understand each one a little bit better. You might support individuals when they encounter problems, setbacks, or obstacles. Maybe you give them emotional support. Maybe you contribute resources, such as money, supplies, or time. Maybe you introduce them to people they need to know. Maybe you create opportunities that match their talents.

### **Significance sounds like this:**

Mary P., healthcare executive: "Women are told almost from day one, 'Don't be too proud. Don't stand tall.' That kind of thing. But I've learned that it's okay to have power, it's okay to have pride, and it's okay to have a big ego -- and also that I need to manage it and drive it in the right directions."

Kathie J., partner in a law firm: "Ever since I can remember, I have had the feeling that I was special, that I could take charge and make things happen. Back in the '60s, I was the first woman partner in my firm, and I can still recall walking into boardroom after boardroom and being the only woman. It's strange, thinking back. It was tough, but I actually think I enjoyed the pressure of standing out. I enjoyed being the 'woman' partner. Why? Because I knew that I would be very hard to forget. I knew everyone would notice me and pay attention to me."

John L., physician: "All through my life, I felt that I was onstage. I am always aware of an audience. If I am sitting with a patient, I want the patient to see me as the best doctor he or she has ever had. If I am teaching medical students, I want to stand out as the best medical educator they have ever had. I want to win the Educator of the Year award. My boss is a big audience for me. Disappointing her would kill me. It's scary to think that part of my self-esteem is in other people's hands, but then again, it keeps me on my toes."

### **Ideas for Action:**

- Choose jobs or positions in which you can determine your own tasks and actions. You will enjoy the exposure that comes with independence.
- Your reputation is important to you, so decide what it should be and tend to it in the smallest detail. For example, identify and earn a designation that will add to your credibility, write an article that will give you visibility, or volunteer to speak in front of a group who will admire your achievements.
- Share your dreams and goals with your family or closest friends and colleagues. Their expectations will keep you reaching.

- Stay focused on performance. Your Significance talents will drive you to claim outstanding goals. Your performance had better match those goals, or others might label you as a big talker.
- You will perform best when your performance is visible. Look for opportunities that put you on center stage. Stay away from roles that hide you behind the scenes.
- Leading crucial teams or significant projects brings out your best. Your greatest motivation may come when the stakes are at their highest. Let others know that when the game is on the line, you want the ball.
- Make a list of the goals, achievements, and qualifications you crave, and post them where you will see them every day. Use this list to inspire yourself.
- Identify your best moment of recognition or praise. What was it for? Who gave it to you? Who was the audience? What do you have to do to recreate that moment?
- Unless you also possess dominant Self-Assurance talents, accept that you might fear failure. Don't let this fear prevent you from staking claims to excellence. Instead, use it to focus on ensuring that your performance matches your claims.
- You might have a natural awareness of what other people think of you. You may have a specific audience that you want to like you, and you will do whatever it takes to win their approval and applause. Be aware that while reliance on the approval of others could be problematic, there is nothing wrong with wanting to be liked or admired by the key people in your life.

## ARRANGER

### Shared Theme Description

People who are 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.

### Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

By nature, you are careful to surround yourself with ethical people. You choose to associate with individuals whose consciences tell them the difference between right and wrong. You tend to distance yourself from those who lack this clarity. It's very likely that you may gravitate to team tasks rather than work alone. Once you join a group, you might make a firm commitment to do your fair share of the mental and physical labor. To some degree, you understand that teams reach their goals when their individual members perform well. Chances are good that you yearn to be given additional duties. You expect to be held accountable for your productivity, profit, behavior, comments, and actions. Instinctively, you are motivated by your sense of obligation to finish what you start. You fight the impulse to delegate and procrastinate. You remind yourself that you are the one who is personally accountable. Because of your strengths, you are a doer. You derive much satisfaction from reaching goals, finishing assignments, and accomplishing whatever is expected.

### Arranger sounds like this:

Sarah P., finance executive: "I love really complicated challenges where I have to think on my feet and figure out how all the pieces fit together. Some people look at a situation, see thirty variables, and get hung up trying to balance all thirty. When I look at the same situation, I see about three options. And because I see only three, it's easier for me to make a decision and then put everything into place."

Grant D., operations manager: "I got a message the other day from our manufacturing facility saying

that demand for one of our products had greatly exceeded the forecast. I thought about it for a moment, and then an idea popped into my head: Ship the product weekly, not monthly. So I said, 'Let's contact our European subsidiaries, ask them what their demand is, tell them the situation we are in, and then ask what their weekly demand is.' That way we can meet requirements without building up our inventory. Sure, it'll drive shipping costs up, but that's better than having too much inventory in one place and not enough in another."

Jane B., entrepreneur: "Sometimes, for instance, when we are all going to a movie or a football game, this Arranger theme drives me up the wall. My family and friends come to rely on me -- 'Jane will get the tickets, Jane will organize the transportation.' Why should I always have to do it? But they just say, 'Because you do it well. For us it would take half an hour. For you, it seems to go much faster. You just call up the ticket place, order the right tickets, and just like that, it's done.'"

### Ideas for Action:

- Learn the goals of your coworkers and friends. Let them know that you are aware of their goals, and then help set them up for success.
- If a team needs to be created, make sure you are involved. You recognize talents, skills, and knowledge in people, and that awareness will help you get the right people in the right spots.
- You intuitively sense how very different people can work together. Take a close look at groups with divergent personalities and opinions, as they may have the greatest need for your Arranger talents.
- Be sure to keep track of ongoing deadlines for your many tasks, projects, and obligations. Although you enjoy the chance to juggle lots of activities, others with less powerful Arranger talents may become anxious if they don't see you working on their projects frequently. Inform them of your progress to ease their fears.
- Seek complex, dynamic environments in which there are few routines.
- Take on the organization of a big event -- a convention, a large party, or a company celebration.
- Give people time to understand your way of doing things when you present it to them. Your mental juggling is instinctive, but others might find it difficult to break with existing procedures. Take the time to clearly explain why your way can be more effective.
- At work, focus your Arranger talents on the most dynamic areas of your organization. Divisions or departments that are static and routine in nature are likely to bore you. You will thrive when your Arranger talents are energized, and you will suffer when you are bored.
- Help others see your far-reaching expertise by sharing your "what if" thinking with them. When they know you've identified and carefully considered all possible options and arrangements, they'll feel more confident.
- You are flexible in the way you organize people, as well as in how you configure space. Figure out how you can improve workflow by rearranging spaces and/or procedures to maximize efficiency and to free up time for you and for others.

## CONNECTEDNESS

### Shared Theme Description

People who are 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.

## Your Personalized Strengths Insights

*What makes you stand out?*

Instinctively, you customarily search for pertinent facts and relevant data to reconstruct the chain of events that produced a problem or an opportunity. You prefer reasonable explanations. Typically you reject the notion that fate, chance, or luck rules your life. By nature, you sometimes sense a special bond with certain individuals regardless of whether you have met them. Perhaps time or distance does not prevent you from feeling closely linked to specific people or the lives they lead. Chances are good that you often are the one who helps people understand how they are linked across time, distance, race, ethnicity, religion, economic levels, languages, or cultures. You make it possible for individuals to work together. You aim to break down barriers that separate them. Because of your strengths, you might want people to seek your company or crave your friendship. Sometimes you sense that you know particular individuals the instant you first meet. Perhaps you are struck by the existence of this unexplainable yet real bond. It's very likely that you routinely isolate facts that link ideas, events, or people. You are especially sensitive to how one person's optimistic or negative thoughts can affect the entire human family. This prompts you to pay close attention to what individuals and groups think and do.

### Connectedness sounds like this:

Mandy M., homemaker: "Humility is the essence of Connectedness. You have to know who you are and who you aren't. I have a piece of the wisdom. I don't have much of it, but what I do have is real. This isn't grandiosity. This is real humility. You have confidence in your gifts, real confidence, but you know you don't have all the answers. You start to feel connected to others because you know they have wisdom that you don't. You can't feel connected if you think you have everything."

Rose T., psychologist: "Sometimes I look at my bowl of cereal in the morning and think about those hundreds of people who were involved in bringing me my bowl of cereal: the farmers in the field, the biochemists who made the pesticides, the warehouse workers at the food preparation plants, even the marketers who somehow persuaded me to buy this box of cereal and not a different one sitting next to it on the shelf. I know it sounds strange, but I give thanks to these people, and just doing that makes me feel more involved with life, more connected to things, less alone."

Chuck M., teacher: "I tend to be very black and white about things, but when it comes to understanding the mysteries of life, for some reason, I am much more open. I have a big interest in learning about all different religions. I am reading a book right now that talks about Judaism versus Christianity versus the religion of the Canaanites. Buddhism, Greek mythology -- it's really interesting how all of these tie together in some way."

### Ideas for Action:

- Consider roles in which you listen and counsel. You can become adept at helping other people see connection and purpose in everyday occurrences.
- Explore specific ways to expand your sense of connection, such as starting a book club, attending a retreat, or joining an organization that puts Connectedness into practice.
- Within your organization, help your colleagues understand how their efforts fit in the larger picture. You can be a leader in building teams and helping people feel important.
- You are aware of the boundaries and borders created within organizations and communities, but you treat these as seamless and fluid. Use your Connectedness talents to break down silos that prevent shared knowledge.
- Help people see the connections among their talents, their actions, their mission, and their successes. When people believe in what they are doing and feel like they are part of something bigger, commitment to achievement is enhanced.
- Partner with someone with strong Communication talents. This person can help you with the words you need to describe vivid examples of connection in the real world.

- Don't spend too much time attempting to persuade others to see the world as a linked web. Be aware that your sense of connection is intuitive. If others don't share your intuition, rational argument will not persuade them.
- Your philosophy of life compels you to move beyond your own self-interests and the interests of your immediate constituency and sphere of influence. As such, you see the broader implications for your community and the world. Explore ways to communicate these insights to others.
- Seek out global or cross-cultural responsibilities that capitalize on your understanding of the commonalities inherent in humanity. Build universal capability, and change the mindset of those who think in terms of "us" and "them."
- Connectedness talents can help you look past the outer shell of a person to embrace his or her humanity. Be particularly aware of this when you work with someone whose background is very different from yours. You can naturally look past the labels and focus on his or her essential needs.

## Strengths Discovery Activity

As you begin to think about your talents, consider this equation:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Talent} \text{ (a natural way of thinking, feeling, or behaving)} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Investment} \text{ (time spent practicing, developing your skills, and building} \\ \text{your knowledge base)} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Strength} \text{ (the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance)} \end{array}$$

Here is an example:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Talent is:} \text{ Truly listening to your customers' wants and needs} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Investment is:} \text{ Researching products and keeping up-to-date on the industry} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Strength is:} \text{ Consistently providing near-perfect customer service} \end{array}$$

Now, think about what *you* naturally do best. How can you invest in that talent to build strength?

Do your own Strengths Discovery Interview:

$$\begin{array}{l} \mathbf{Your Talent is:} \text{ _____} \\ \mathbf{X} \text{ } \mathbf{Your Investment is:} \text{ _____} \\ \hline \mathbf{=} \text{ } \mathbf{Your Strength is:} \text{ _____} \end{array}$$

## My Strengths-Based Action Plan

Now that you have discovered your top five themes and considered action items for development, choose 1-3 themes that describe you best, and list them below. Talk to people who know you well, and ask them to describe how you embody these themes. Ask them for specific examples of times when they have seen you using each theme in action or how each theme manifests itself in you.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now, write down some specific actions that you could take in the next week, month, and year to build and apply your strengths. Refer to your Personalized Strengths Insights and Ideas for Action if you need help.

In the next week, I will:

- 
- 
- 

In the next month, I will:

- 
- 
- 

In the next year, I will:

- 
- 
- 

Next, list the name of at least one person who you will meet with to review this plan. Be sure to choose someone who can help you to keep these goals "top of mind" and who will help you leverage your talents to build strengths.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_