



Three Insights to Interpreting and Applying Strengths

Our approach to interpreting Strengths is based on the behaviors of individuals, not a set of definitions found in a book. A definition does not take into consideration your personality. Your Strengths are detected in your vocabulary, posture, emotions, presence, attitudes, and actions. Understanding that your Strengths come alive in you differently from someone else gives you the freedom to interpret your Strengths as a dynamic set of talents in light of your experiences, environment, and personality.

Over the past 20+ years, we have taken this behavior-based approach to our psychometric of choice, CliftonStrengths®, and noticed three insights emerge from more than 50,000 conversations. These three insights below will help unlock more of your uniqueness as an individual and better understand how you contribute to a team. Leveraging Strengths can deepen your compassion, help you take courageous and vulnerable risks, and grow relational trust.

Whether you are learning about your Strengths or helping others on their Strengths journey, the following three insights are time-tested and effective for the interpretation and application of Strengths. In addition, our guiding principles and accompanying reflection questions will help you dive deeper.

1. Strengths Work In Pairs

A foundational phrase we use at Leadership Vision is “No Strength works alone.” Strengths pair together and are constantly evolving. Strengths pair in response to and change based on your environment and relationships.

QUESTION: When you observe one of your Strengths at play, ask yourself, “What other Strength might I be using?”

Select 2 of your Top 5 Strengths that you think might work together. (There is no wrong answer.)

- What does this Strengths pairing look like? List an example.
- Think of a time when you’ve noticed those two Strengths express themselves in you? Describe that moment.

EXAMPLE: Nathan sees his Strengths of Ideation® and Communication® at play together most often when trying to solve a problem on our team. He can quickly come up with a variety of possible solutions, and communicate just enough of those ideas to other team members in order to figure out if it is viable to proceed with.

2. Functional Order is Key

When you receive your Strengths report, your Strengths are in “Rank order,” indicating your Strength’s greatest to least capacity, from 1 to 34. Rank order is a good data point, but avoid getting caught up in the order. “**Functional order**” refers to how you actively engage your Strengths, the two or three Strengths used most consistently as you naturally respond to your relationships and environment. Often rank order and functional order are not the same.

QUESTION: While reading the definitions for each of your Themes of Strengths in the book (our ours [here](#)), which statements resonate with you the most?

- Think of a context where you saw these statements come alive (work, family, social settings, etc.)
- Repeat this exercise with each of your 5 Themes of Strength.

Based on your reflection, reorder your Strengths in what you believe is your Functional order. Is it the same as your Rank order?

EXAMPLE: In the early days of a start-up, an Entrepreneur's rank order was: Activator, Maximizer, Communication, Input, Futuristic. But a year after their idea got off the ground, their Functional order changed to: Maximizer, Communication, Futuristic, Input Activator. This change reflects how different talents needed to rise to the top based on the changing demands of their role.

3. Strengths Are Generative

Strengths are generative when they bring excitement and energy to others and yourself. Strengths don't arrive complete; they evolve, grow, and mature over time. To assume your Top 5 are always expressed and interpreted positively is not the case. Knowing when your Strengths are generativity applied takes intentional time and practice.

QUESTION: When do you observe your Strengths helping you feel alive and helping others feel more alive, too?

To help you process this question, think of a time recently when you:

- Deeply enjoyed what you were doing.
- Were the most productive.
- Were the most relationally in tune with others.
- Felt like you were making a contribution.

Can you connect any of your Strengths to your answers?

EXAMPLE: Steve has the Strength of WOO. Sometimes he uses his talents to win others over to projects which serve the greater team or company. Yet there are other times when Steve uses these talents to try to influence others to meet his own goals and ambitions.

When Steve uses his talents of WOO for the good of others, it is being generative. When using it to manipulate others towards his own goals, his talents are degenerative. It's critical for Steve to spend time understanding his Strengths, so he knows how to apply them generatively, and become aware of when he is not so that he can grow.

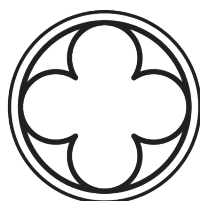
Conclusion

We are so glad you are entering into your journey of discovering what is right about you. Those who experience the greatest epiphanies have all deepened their understanding of these 3 insights: the pairing of Strengths, functional order, and generative application of Strengths. Applying these insights can be detected in a blend of the science of the tool and the art of the application.

We challenge you to take the next step and work through the questions to each of these insights. Now that you've processed these three insights above:

- What have you learned about yourself?
- What was the greatest insight you had into your strengths?
- How have you learned to apply your Strengths in a new way?

For more information about applying what you learned in this activity, contact us at connect@leadershipvisionconsulting.com. We would love to hear any new insights you may have gleaned, and help you think about the next steps in your Strengths journey.



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