



People often ask us... what makes *Strengths at Work*[®] such an indispensable tool?

FEATURE

BENEFIT

Targets development of natural abilities	⇒	Makes change easier, more attainable, and faster
Identifies improvement areas	⇒	Frames opportunities by strength, not weakness
Uses self-assessment	⇒	Reduces resistance and increases ownership
Utilizes "every day" language	⇒	Facilitates rapid understanding and adoption
Employs a simple sorting process	⇒	Drives self reflection in a fast, fun way
Uses validation from respected others	⇒	Offers a "reality check" and deepens understanding
Highlights behaviors associated with "overdrive" or less-than-ideal expression of a strength	⇒	Facilitates self-improvement and coaching opportunities
Describes how each strength and associated "overdrive" behaviors are expressed and may be perceived by others	⇒	Provides a powerful mirror to understand the impact of potentially limiting behaviors
Indicates how fully someone has tapped into a strength	⇒	Helps people develop awareness of themselves and how they can foster optimal expression of a natural asset
Targets a manageable number of areas	⇒	Narrows the focus to someone's dominant behavioral drivers
Supports multiple leader responsibilities (position profiling, coaching, team building)	⇒	Enhances ease of adoption and integration into day-to-day practices in order to improve effectiveness and professional satisfaction
Applies to personal interactions (family, friends, community)	⇒	Improves ease of application to every day relationships... communication... and sense of fulfillment
Utilizes a reusable physical tool (deck of cards)	⇒	Provides a portable and affordable system to reinforce learning and easily share a strengths-orientation with others
Works well in a group setting	⇒	Helps teams and committees understand their assets and challenges
Applies to any organizational level	⇒	Enhances a common language and understanding across functions; fosters an inclusive, appreciative culture; is more affordable because it's reusable

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The What & Why of Strengths

What is a strength — and what's the difference between skills and strengths?

A strength is a *natural* capacity. It's more than just a skill; it embodies talent... values... skills... and behaviors. Innate strengths are often most evident in what motivates a person. One of our clients who's very good at researching and at noticing patterns wondered why she didn't have *Analyzing* as a strength. In her case, these behaviors grew out of her strength of *Solving Problems*.

Some people confuse competence with a strength. For example, someone may become a persuasive salesperson even though it doesn't come easily to them. If *Being Persuasive* were really a natural strength of theirs, most likely they would always be trying to influence and convince people because it's such a part of who they are — they almost can't help it.

Where does a strength come from?

Many things affect strengths... what someone is born with... the environment they're raised in... the experiences they have... the opportunities they have to use the strength... and the response they get to their strengths. Someone can hide their strengths — or put them aside as they develop other skills — but a strength is always present, waiting to be tapped into, to be expressed. To thrive, strengths need to be used, developed, and mastered.

Why are strengths important?

Over and over, we've seen that people who use their natural strengths (in environments where those are valued) become more aware of and adept with these personal assets; increase the likelihood of professional and personal success; experience confidence and enhanced ease in the world; feel like they're "in the right place;" and enjoy a greater sense of fulfillment and personal integrity.

Does every strength have an inherent weakness?

In a word, no. A weakness is the absence of something that's desired in a given situation. Many managers, groups, or parents focus on the lack of a certain strength and call that a weakness. People often feel defensive, hurt, or resistant to this type of "You're not enough" feedback.

In contrast, *Strengths at Work*® identifies difficulties that can arise from an excessive or unfocused use of a strength. We call these situations "overdrive." When a strength goes into "overdrive" (for a variety of reasons), it may manifest in less-than-desirable behaviors. For example, someone with the strength of *Leading* may become bossy or take over when someone else is actually in charge. Once someone is aware of what triggers "overdrive" for them and what signals they're "in overdrive," they can take steps to address these challenges.

What makes *Strengths at Work*® unique?

Strengths at Work® is a self-directed process. People tell us they prefer it to assessments where they answer questions and receive a report or yet another identity label. Using the *Strengths at Work*® cards provides an enjoyable enlightening journey of self-exploration. Because these tools are written in "every day" language, it's simple to understand and immediately apply. The convenient and portable deck format makes it easy to share and... use over and over.

Some of our clients who use other tools and systems to understand behavioral styles also use *Strengths at Work*® to expand someone's understanding of the drivers, personal patterns, and improvement opportunities related to a strength — making it easier to master optimal behaviors and better manage "overdrive" expressions of a strength.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

About Strengths: A Deeper Dive

Should I look at my strengths from a professional or personal standpoint?

With some instruments that assess behavioral or personality styles, context is important. Our experience is that a *natural* strength operates across contexts. For example, someone with the strength of *Organizing* will demonstrate it in work and personal situations.

Why is it important to get another person's input before finalizing someone's top five strengths?

Have you ever heard the expression that it's hard to cut your own hair (especially in the back)? We've found that seeing ourselves objectively is like that. Getting input from someone who knows you (or doesn't know you, but is very familiar with *Strengths at Work*® tools) provides a more impartial view. Having a "sounding board" enables someone to distinguish between: strengths and skills... how they *really* are and how they *wish* they were... how they *naturally* are and how they may have *needed to be*.

For example, one client with the strength of *Organizing* didn't initially include it in her selection of top five strengths because it didn't seem desirable or powerful. (In fact, some people have teased her about being "compulsive" in how she organizes her home and her workspace.) Yet, her ability to organize detailed and complex projects has definitely contributed to her professional success... being an indispensable member of the team... and being a mom who seemed to have things under control.

Can existing strengths be further developed?

Absolutely! Here are some ideas to enhance mastery. The fastest and simplest way is to choose one or two "overdrive behaviors" and develop an action plan to better manage those. Another strategy is to experiment with and deepen the ways a strength is positively expressed. Pick one of your strengths... A) Review the *Strengths at Work*® descriptions for that particular one... B) Notice which positive behaviors you *already* demonstrate... C) Identify described behaviors that you're not yet consistently using... D) Use the behaviors from Step C as your development targets... E) Seek out opportunities to utilize and practice these new expressions of your strength. (We recommend that you choose environments where your strengths are needed and likely to be appreciated.)

Can someone's strengths change?

To answer this, it's helpful to first distinguish between a strength and a skill. As people grow and mature, they develop many skills. Often, in response to a specific work or personal situation, individuals become skillful with certain tasks or ways of communicating. Some people confuse this type of competence with a *natural* strength. For example, someone may become an effective salesperson although it doesn't come easily to them. They work at it; they motivate themselves to do it. If *Being Persuasive* were really a natural strength of theirs, most likely they would always be trying to influence and convince people because it's an integral part of who they are, they almost can't help it.

Sometimes due to a lack of opportunity or being in an unsupportive environment, some people are unaware of their natural capabilities and haven't really tapped into them since childhood (or maybe ever). And, others have been known to downplay or even hide their strengths when these assets were underutilized, unappreciated, made fun of, or criticized. Even when strengths have been dormant, they can be awakened. Strengths are naturally enduring and someone's innate talents are unlikely to change.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Using *Strengths at Work*® Tools

How does *Strengths at Work*® compare with other personality and style assessments?

Strengths at Work® is a self-directed process. People tell us they prefer it to other tools where they answer questions and receive a report or a yet another "identity label." Using the *Strengths at Work*® cards provides an enjoyable and enlightening journey of self-exploration. Because these tools use "every day" language, the information is simple to understand and the insights are immediately applicable. The convenient and portable deck format makes it easy to share and use over and over.

Some of our clients who use other tools and systems to explore behavioral styles also use *Strengths at Work*® to expand someone's understanding of their motivations, personal patterns, and improvement opportunities related to a strength — making it easier to master the positive expression of strengths and better manage less advantageous aspects.

Why does someone only have five final strengths?

There's no magic in just having five strengths — maybe someone has four... or six... or even seven. Here's the thing, five is a manageable number to focus on. And, as someone becomes more familiar with their five strengths and how these impact one another, they'll notice patterns they've come to rely on as "winning strategies." And they'll see how these "grooves" deepen with use and time.

What if someone can't narrow their selection of strengths to just five?

Many behavioral style models focus on only four primary categories. And, we feel that it's fine to pick six or seven final strengths — just keep it manageable. Once someone is working closely with their final selection, they may notice that a certain four or five strengths are the dominant drivers of their choices and behaviors.

What if there's not a card for one of a person's primary strengths?

Even though the *Strengths at Work*® cards are written in every day language, words have different meanings to different people. With this in mind, it's important to read beyond the titles on the cards and to "try on" the descriptions of behaviors associated with a strength. Many people find it helpful to review the *Quick Guide* charts for Overlapping Strengths to consider strengths that may be similar or related. If doing this still doesn't surface the missing strength, give us a description. We're always working to improve our product and would welcome feedback.

Once I've identified my top five strengths, what do I do next?

In a nutshell, get to know your strengths. Identify... how they are operating for you... which behaviors feel like something you want more of or what you want less of... which environments and people seem to support your strengths (and which ones don't). Then, develop a plan to get more of what you want and less of what you don't want. To increase your mastery, review the card for each strength and notice if you're doing all of the optimal behaviors it describes — or just a few. And, our *21-Day Guide to Living Your Strengths* can help you keep your insights in the foreground as you strive to integrate a strengths-based perspective into the way you navigate your days.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Using *Strengths at Work*® Tools (continued)

Can this reveal whether I'm in the "right" career?

We definitely see some patterns of strengths within certain jobs and industries. For example, Administrative Assistants often have strengths of *Organizing* and *Being Helpful*. Salespeople often have the strengths of *Being Dynamic*, *Being Persuasive*, and/or *Building Relationships*. People with *Being Helpful* are often found in service, hospitality, or social service organizations. Strengths can be expressed in many different ways — so projecting appropriate careers is challenging. For example, the strength of *Being Creative* may help someone be successful as an artist — but others with this same strength may be most fully expressed as a performer, an architect, or a chef. There are many variables that influence whether a certain choice is right... the type of industry... the kind of leadership... the team.

Long story short, someone is likely to know when they're actually in the right situation, job, or relationship. If an individual is just starting their career or thinking about making a change, reviewing their strengths can help point them in the right direction. They would also benefit from considering times when they feel (or have felt) like they were... "in sync"... aligned with others... appreciated... or "in the zone." These personal examples will help them identify criteria for narrowing their search.

Is this validated?

Strengths at Work® uses validation from peers or respected others, but it is not scientifically validated. These tools were developed based on our experience of working with thousands of people — noticing and coming to understand their behaviors and driving motivations.

Can this reveal whether I'm in the "right" relationship?

Some people look for a partner who has the same or similar strengths. This strategy may help them feel like they speak the same language — or it may seem like they're so much alike that they're competing in some ways.

In contrast, people with very different strengths may find these contribute to... making things interesting... or to conflicting views on how to be or what to do. Again, there's no magic formula because a single strength can be fully expressed in an infinite variety of ways. We invite people to notice where they get to use their strengths and where these are appreciated. This sense of being in the right place is like a plant getting the right amount of sun and water. An encouraging environment fosters growth and mastery of natural strengths.

*If you have a question that's not addressed here,
Please email us: info@betterbychoice.com.*