

The background to Gallup and the Clifton StrengthsFinder™ by Richard Brown

How StrengthsFinder™ is different from other tools

There are many tools and techniques which assess one's inherent attributes – and organisations and individuals use them for many different purposes – two examples being “Belbin” and “Myers Briggs”

Belbin's Self-Perception Inventory identified nine “clusters of behaviour” or Team Roles (defined as “*a tendency to behave, contribute and interrelate with others in a particular way*” - and some of these role titles have passed into fairly everyday language ... Shaper, Plant, Completer Finisher probably being the best examples. (My strongest were Team Worker, Resource Investigator and Plant, which is pretty accurate)

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment is a psychometric questionnaire designed to measure psychological preferences in how people perceive the world and make decisions, ultimately allotting a four-character shorthand code to cover attitudes and functions – Extroversion or Introversion; Sensing or Intuition; Thinking or Feeling; Judgement or Perception. (I think I was ESTJ when I did it).

I always wanted more from these, that wasn't delivered ... an understanding of why I found some things easy and others difficult, why some things were fun and others a drudge, why some things I put off in the rush to do others.

Gallup's StrengthsFinder™ 2.0 is an assessment tool that gives you, your staff, and your manager the ability to uncover possibly hidden talents, and increase the chances that you “have the opportunity to do what you do best every day”

What's the story behind the research?

Most of us know the name of the Gallup Organisation, but all too many associate it only with its role in producing polls of various types. In fact, it has been involved in management development for many years, not only to analyse what makes the best employees tick but also to improve the quality and suitability of new employees through psychometric interviewing.

Roughly a decade ago, Gallup unveiled the results of a 30-year research project on strengths, in the book “*First, break all the rules*” (Buckingham and Coffman), followed quite swiftly by “*Now, discover your strengths*” (Buckingham and Clifton).

One of their counter-intuitive, almost controversial proposals in the first book is “*Spend the most time with your best people*” ... because “*the time you spend with your best is your most productive time*”

Included in their research output is the very effective Q12 Staff Engagement survey, which explodes the myth that “staff attitude surveys” need to be long and in-depth – their research showed that the average survey could be over 100 questions long, and left staff more brassed off with a company at the end of it than at the start !

Q12 is twelve questions long, with each very specifically worded based on worldwide research, and participating companies are compared to a global database.

The Gallup Path

It all seems very logical and simplistic, but Gallup found that the most successful companies

- identify the strengths they require
- get the right fit of people for roles
- give them great managers

This leads to engaged employees

- which leads to loyal customers
- giving sustainable growth, real profit increase and stock increase

Strengths findings

If your manager primarily ...	The chances of you being actively disengaged:
... ignores you	40%
... focusses on your weaknesses	22%
... focusses on your strengths	1%

Memorable quote :

*“You **cannot** be anything you want to be –
but you **can** be a lot more of who you already are”*

The 34 Strengths themes:

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

A Personal View on Strengths by Richard Brown:

When I first completed Strengthsfinder, about 9 years ago, my top 5 themes were :

Connectedness – believing there is a link between everything

Strategic – creating alternative ways to proceed

Maximiser – seeking to transform something strong into something superb

Relator – enjoying working hard with close friends to achieve a goal

Individualisation – intrigued with the unique qualities of each person

At the time (15 years with the one organisation, knowing how the place worked, who to call to make things happen, enjoying most working with strong performers on high quality projects), it was spot on.

I completed the updated Strengthsfinder 2.0 recently (4+ years away from that organisation, now self-employed, working more on my own as a facilitator, coach and NLP practitioner), and I found there had inevitably been some changes. My top themes now are:

Strategic - stet

Empathy – sensing the feeling of others by imagining self in their situations

Relator - stet

Maximiser - stet

Adaptability – “going with the flow”, discovering the future one day at a time

This seems to make perfect sense, given my change of circumstances, and Gallup predicts that there is a strong chance that at least three of one's top themes will be constant from one set of results to another – which was the case with me.

I know constantly keeping my strengths in mind – and the effect my lesser strengths may have – has enabled me to increase my effectiveness considerably, and understand others best ways of working too.

Most importantly, if you and others around you take the strengths assessment, and know and share your themes of strength, it provides a common language for discussion, in a more powerful and understandable way than Myers Briggs or Belbin.