

CAN YOU PUT
your
strengths
TO WORK?

DOING MORE OF WHAT YOU DO BEST EACH DAY

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Why Do Strengths Matter?

Can you name your top five strengths? You know – those things you like doing and are good at? Give it a try.

If you're like most people you're probably struggling to name all five.¹ You see while your brain has a built-in negativity bias that makes it easy for you to spot your weaknesses, it generally isn't as well equipped when it comes to identifying your strengths. And yet it's your strengths that seem to offer the greatest opportunity for growth and development when it comes to your work.

More than a decade of research has found that people who use their strengths more:

- **Are happier** – studies have found they report lower levels of depression, higher levels of vitality, and good mental health.²
- **Experience less stress** – studies have found they report higher levels of positivity; and in particular the character strengths of kindness, social intelligence, self-regulation, and perspective appear to create a buffer against the negative effects of stress and trauma.^{3,4,5}
- **Feel healthier and have more energy** – studies have found that greater endorsement of character strengths is associated with a number of healthy behaviors including leading an active life, pursuing enjoyable activities, and eating well.^{6,7}
- **Feel more satisfied with their lives** – studies have found individuals who are satisfied with life are good problems-solvers, show better work performance, tend to be more resistant to stress and experience better physical health.^{8,9,10,11,12,13,14}
- **Are more confident** – studies have found that both strengths knowledge and strengths-use are significantly associated with self-efficacy, self-esteem, self-acceptance, and self-confidence.^{15,16,17}

- **Experience faster growth and development** – studies have found that positive self-monitoring and strengths building are particularly suited to circumstances when you're learning something new, something difficult, or something perceived as difficult.¹⁸
- **Are more creative and agile at work** – studies have found that the feelings of authenticity, vitality and concentration created by developing strengths help people to better adapt to change, engage in more creative and proactive behaviors, pay more attention to detail, and work harder.^{19,20}
- **Feel more satisfied and experience more meaning in their work** – studies have found that people who use four or more of their top character strengths at work are more likely to experience job satisfaction, pleasure, engagement, and meaning in their work.^{21,22,23,24,25,26}
- **Are more engaged in their work** – studies have found that employees who have the opportunity to regularly use their strengths at work each day are up to six times more engaged in what they're doing.^{27,28,29}

Not only is it good for you, it's also good for your team and your organization. Managers who focus on people's strengths experience improved team performance and greater success. Studies have found that leaders who focus on the strengths of employees benefit from lower levels of staff turnover, higher levels of productivity, more satisfied customers, and greater profitability.^{30,31,32,33}

That's a lot of reasons to start putting your strengths to work, but where should you start?

HOW DO STRENGTHS WORK?

A strength is a strength because your brain is hardwired to perform these behaviors well. Over time you've practiced these thoughts, feelings and actions so often that they've become well-developed neural pathways in your brain, making their use enjoyable, engaging, and energizing. This is why your strengths are things you look forward to doing, feel absorbed in whilst doing, and feel invigorated and fulfilled by after you've done them.³⁴

You can put this to the test right now. Grab a pen and paper and in your dominant hand write down your first and last name. If you're right-handed, use your right hand. If you're left-handed, use your left hand. Then swap the pen into your other hand - your non-dominant hand - and write your first and last name again.

Looking at them objectively, do you think anyone could guess which one is which?

For most of us it's pretty clear when our strengths are and aren't engaged.

You might have noticed when you wrote your name in your dominant hand, you didn't need to concentrate too hard on what you were doing, it didn't require a lot of effort, and you were probably reasonably happy with the outcome. But if you think back to when you first started learning to write your name at school, it probably wasn't this easy.

This is because when you're performing a behavior, the cells in your brain called 'neurons' are lighting up and talking to each other. And at first, they struggle to co-ordinate the message to get your hand to create the shapes of the letters that form your name. Over time however, as you practiced writing your name again and again, these cells started to wire together into neural pathways. If you've heard the phrase "neurons that fire together, wire together", this is what it means. The more those neurons light up and talk to each other the stronger the pathways become making the behavior easier and easier.³⁵

Now compare this to how you found writing your name in your non-dominant hand. You might have noticed it required more concentration, took more effort, and you probably weren't as happy with the results. This is because your brain isn't yet wired to perform this behavior well.

The good news is that scientists have discovered you can train your brain to turn a weakness into a strength. And while there is still much debate about exactly how long this might take, popular estimates are that it would require somewhere between 8,000 and 10,000 hour of deliberate practice.³⁶ To put that number into context it would mean you had to practice for a couple of hours, every day, for about eight to ten years to really master a behavior.

This is why I believe being strengths-focused doesn't mean you have to ignore your weaknesses.

If there is an area where you really want to improve and you're willing to commit the time, energy and effort to make that happen then go for it. But, I think it's important that this is an informed choice and not just your brain's natural tendency to focus most on the things that need fixing.

You can start becoming more strengths-focused by simply pausing when you notice areas for growth and development and considering: in this situation, for these particular outcomes, which approach will serve me best? Are there strengths I can build upon that will work with my brain to make this change more engaging, energizing and enjoyable? Or is this a genuine weakness I need to fix and am prepared to do the work on or find ways to manage around?

There is no wrong answer. It's simply a matter of finding the answer that serves you best.

WHAT ARE CHARACTER STRENGTHS?

You have a variety of strengths within you that will arise in different degrees and contexts. These may include your:

- **Character strengths:** your positive identity – who you are at your core; viewed as positive personality traits that lead to benefits for yourself and others, e.g., gratitude, perseverance, hope, and creativity.
- **Talents:** strengths that are innate and have a strong biological loading; includes your abilities and talents such as spatial reasoning, musical ability, interpersonal ability, and so on.
- **Interests:** areas and topics that you're passionate about, e.g., playing tennis, collecting coins, watercolor painting.
- **Resources:** the one type of strength that is external but substantially supports you, e.g., professional network, formal learning, and informal experiences.

While there are benefits to developing each of these types of strengths, I believe one of the best places to focus your effort and energy when it comes to doing more of what you do best each day at work is on your character strengths. This is because character strengths, being universal human capacities, serve as a catalyst or pathway for these other strengths areas, for example, you can't develop your talent for music without using extensive perseverance and self-regulation; likewise, you need to deploy kindness, gratitude, and social intelligence (among other character strengths) to develop good relationships that will serve as resources to you.

You can discover your character strengths by taking the free, ten-minute VIA Survey. Created by a team of leading social scientists who scoured the world for ways to identify, measure and develop what is "good" in people, these positive personality traits reflect "how" you like to go about your work. Aligned to the values you hold and how you believe it's important to show up in the world, you will draw on these strengths regardless of whether anybody pays you or recognizes you for it.³⁷

Once you've taken the free survey, you will receive a report containing a list ranked from your highest to lowest strength as of this moment. It's important to note, that while your strengths exist within you, they are also shaped by the situations you find yourself in. Over time (it is recommend you take the survey once a year) you'll find your strengths may move around based on what's happening in your life or the conscious choices you're making to develop certain strengths.

In the past, researchers have found that focusing on your top five strengths – your 'signature strengths' – can be particularly beneficial. However, new research suggests that taking a more balanced approach that recognizes the benefit of developing our middle strengths (those we can draw upon but tend to use less often) and our lesser strengths (our bottom five) may help us to better adapt to the demands of different situations.³⁸

Your character strengths are also shaped by context and don't operate in isolation from the settings you find yourself in.³⁹ This means it's worth retaking the survey annually, or whenever big shifts are going on in your life such as changing jobs, moving city, or welcoming a new arrival into your family. When you do this year after year you'll find many of your strengths remain fairly consistent, but several move around depending on your current context and the strengths you're drawing on most in these situations.

This is why I think that far more interesting than your actual results, is how you feel about your results. Chances are when you first looked at your VIA Survey results you had one of three responses:

“YES, THAT’S ME”

For many people seeing their list of strengths feels like looking in a mirror. Although we may never have had the words to articulate how we are at our best so clearly, there are no real surprises in the results and we feel quietly happy that this is who we are. If this was your response, then the challenge becomes finding ways to spend more time at work doing what you do best.

“WHY’S THAT STRENGTH DOWN THERE?”

Some people are surprised to find particular strengths are not where they would expect them to appear. Remember your character strengths are moveable and buildable. If a strength is not as high as you'd hoped, then the challenge becomes finding ways to spend more time developing this particular element of yourself.

“THIS DOESN’T SOUND LIKE ME”

A few people feel their results could have been written about another person entirely. If this is the case, share your results with colleagues, friends, or family who know you well and ask them how they would rate your strengths. Then trust their guidance and your own experiences of where you feel the most engaged, energized and enjoyment in your work to find the strengths you want to focus on developing.

If you're unclear on exactly what some of the character strengths like "Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence", "Spirituality", or "Zest" might look like at work, you'll find detailed definitions and examples of each of the strengths throughout this eBook. Knowing more about the strength will often help you find ways you're already developing it at work.

HOW CAN YOU DEVELOP YOUR STRENGTHS?

Before you rush off and start using your strengths more, it helps to be aware that you can have too little and too much of a good thing. After all, you don't want to apply a character strength like "Love" at work in the wrong way or you could be fired for it.

Underplaying your strengths at work generally appears as a lack of confidence. This is often due to blindness about particular strengths we have to offer or uncertainty about how to apply them in ways that will be valued at work. As a result you might have noticed at times you're holding yourself back, dimming yourself down, procrastinating or disengaging from certain situations and people for fear of ridicule or failure.

For example, people often say they don't feel like they can use the character strength of "Love" at work for fear they'll be seen as "too nice" or "too soft". Yet thriving at work is less about how we perform the assigned tasks and more about being able to express who we are through the work we do so it feels engaging and meaningful.

But has overplaying your strengths at work ever gotten you into trouble or led you to the point of burn out? You should be nodding your head right now because every one of our strengths has what researchers call a "shadow side".⁴⁰

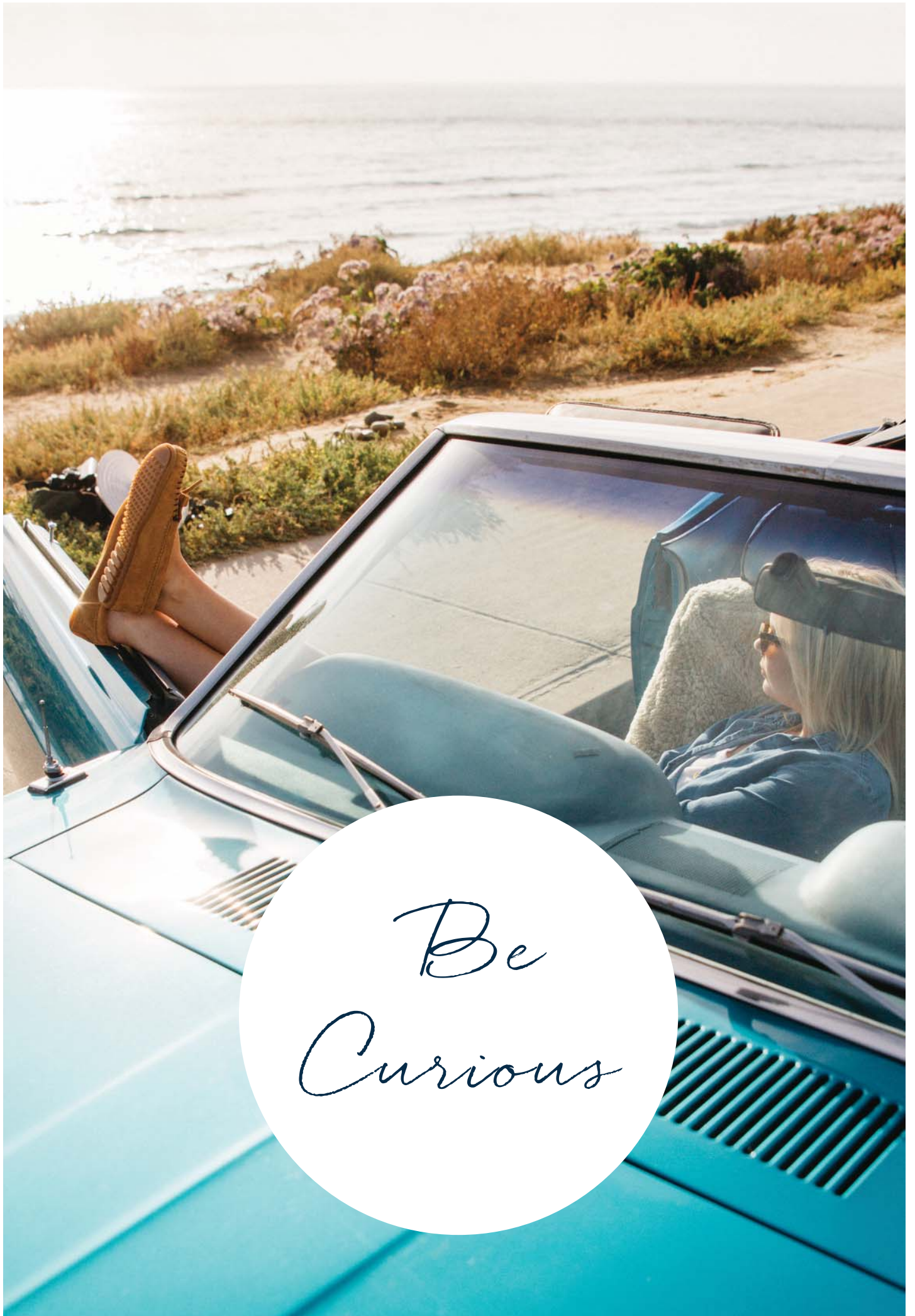
For example, people with the strength of Honesty often have examples of being too blunt with others. People with the strength of Humor will have a story about how they've made a joke at the wrong time. And people with the strengths of Kindness or Love tell us they tend to give and give and give to everybody else until there is nothing left for themselves and they're completely run-down. You may find many of the "weaknesses" your boss has asked you to improve are actually strengths you're overplaying and just need to be dialing down.

In my experience if you scratch the surface of most of the feedback you've ever been given on your weaknesses you'll probably find it's a strength you're overplaying. For example, for years various bosses had told me to "slow down" a little at work so others could catch up. But slowing down was not in my nature – it wasn't how I enjoyed working – and to be honest I had no real motivation to fix this weakness. When I discovered one of my top strengths was "zest" – energy and vitality – I realized what they were describing was actually my strength being overplayed and dialing it down – essentially slowing down a little – became a whole lot easier. I was motivated to want to use this strength well and felt confident I could fine tune its use in different situations to achieve different results.

The good news is, when you get your strengths just right for the situation you're in and the results you want to achieve, you hit the "golden mean" of your strengths.⁴¹ It's at this moment you enter the state psychologists call "flow".⁴² This is the feeling of being "in the zone" or "one with the music" when you're completely absorbed in what you're doing, often losing all track of time but afterwards having a real sense of satisfaction about what you've accomplished.

The art of developing your strengths lies in finding this golden mean more frequently at work and finding small ways to do this more consistently each day. To help you, each of the strength overviews throughout this eBook provides examples of how you can avoid underplaying and overplaying them at work and small ways you can use your strengths more frequently no matter what your job description – or your boss – says.

Follow the three simple steps at the end of this eBook to help you put your strengths to work each day. Ready to start?



Be
Curious

APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE

Appreciation is your capacity to notice and enjoy the beautiful and/or excellent things you find in the world around you. You appreciate a wide variety of things – such as the physical environment, a demonstration of someone’s abilities or virtues, or even an interesting piece of knowledge.

At Your Best...

You’re at your best when your workplace values excellence – where you and those around you can openly express admiration, and where you’re exposed to a variety of beautiful and excellent experiences. For example, you like it when the exceptional work of your colleagues is recognized and displayed.

Challenged By...

Because you thrive on noticing the good, you find it challenging to work in environments where the people around you prefer a critical or negative attitude. For example, you might feel frustrated when people pick out what you’ve done wrong on a project and don’t also acknowledge what you’ve done exceptionally well.

Shadow Side...

The shadow side of appreciation is perfectionism, where only the best is accepted. Imagine, for example, someone who can’t work at their desk unless everything is in its proper place or hesitates to share their work because it’s not yet “good enough”. To avoid this shadow side, it is important to appreciate the good without being intolerant to the less-than-perfect.

Develop By...

- **Creating a work-space you love**
This might include a nice set of stationary, photos of loved-ones or favorite places, a comfortable chair, or a decorative pot-plant. Make your work area a place of sanctuary.
- **Making time to reconnect with nature**
During your breaks, take a few minutes and head outside. Sit under a tree, or walk through a park or along a river. Things that are green or blue are great for your wellbeing.
- **Hunting for greatness**
Look for the uplifting moments of excellence in your day that inspire you to be better. You might observe a great example of teamwork between colleagues, or notice someone who is making great progress on a challenging task.
- **Keeping an inspiration file**
Keep a folder to record the various sources of excellence you come across, and use it to inspire you when you feel like you need a boost. Your file might include photos, articles and your own notes.

BRAVERY

Bravery describes your willingness to rise up and confront difficult or threatening situations. You take the time to acknowledge and evaluate the risks involved in facing up to a challenge, and endeavor to derive the best outcome from tough conditions whilst remaining in charge of any feelings of fear you experience.

At Your Best...

Beyond your ability to demonstrate courage in the face of a physical threat, you can use your strength of bravery at work to confront psychological and moral challenges. For example, your bravery may enable you to persevere through a tough deadline, own up to a mistake you've made, or stick-up for a colleague who's not being supported by their team members.

Challenged By...

Because you like to face up to challenges, you struggle in circumstances where you're not given the freedom to stand up and take action in a courageous way. This might occur, for example, if you're deterred from standing up for a colleague because you're under the impression you'll be fired for it.

Shadow Side...

When overplayed, your bravery can turn into recklessness. This means that you will take unnecessary risks in circumstances where the safer option is more sensible. To dial-down this shadow side, always weigh-up the situation to determine whether it's more beneficial to push for the risky-option or stick to the more cautious and steady pathway. Rather than diving in feet-first every time, it's often wise to pilot novel ideas to minimize any associated risk.

Develop By...

- **Stretching outside your comfort-zone**
Try to start each day by stepping outside of your comfort zone, whether it's in a big or small way. Endeavor to take action on one thing that you would normally put-off for a later time.
- **Cultivate unexpected partnerships**
Each week, make time to meet with someone you wouldn't normally interact with but whom you think will have a positive impact on your day-to-day work.
- **Find your heroes**
Each day, note down one person at work who you notice is courageously showing-up or stepping-forward in a way that is unexpected. This will help you reinforce the narrative that courageous behavior is respected, making you more likely to be brave yourself when necessary.

CREATIVITY

Creativity describes your preference for producing new ideas and executing behaviors that are original. You're good at generating novelty, and are able to apply this strength in ways that are useful and beneficial to yourself and others.

At Your Best...

You're at your best when working in a flexible environment; where you're given the room and the support to think outside the box and be innovative in order to solve problems and make things work. You thrive on novelty.

Challenged By...

Because you prefer to explore new ways of doing things, you can be challenged when working in heavily constricted environments; such as those that run on strict deadlines or that rely on procedures that are set-in-stone.

Shadow Side...

The shadow side of creativity emerges when you become more interested in creating than delivering. This can cause you to become so enamored with your ideas that you lose sight of the commercial value of what your organization requires. It can also result in you constantly tinkering with ideas so they're never quite finished. You may also find you become bored with an idea once it moves into delivery.

Develop By...

- **Making time for creative exploration**
Keep creative tools, such as textas and a sketchpad readily at hand. Spend at least ten minutes each day using these tools to explore a project you're currently working on by drawing or mind mapping ideas and approaches. You can do this yourself when you arrive at work, or with your team during your meetings.
- **Finding seven solutions**
Push your brain to think more creatively by coming up with at least seven different solutions to problems you may be trying to solve at work. Most of us stop at one or two, but the unexpected and unimagined possibilities usually emerge when we're pushed to beyond the obvious.
- **Play with your creativity**
Download an app on your smart-phone or tablet that promotes more creative, free thinking. Allow yourself ten minutes each day to explore your creativity through this outlet.

CURIOSITY

Curiosity refers to your appetite for knowledge. You constantly want to learn more by delving into the information you come across and engaging in new experiences. When you observe an opportunity to learn or participate in something new, you take action in order to feed your desire to keep growing.

At Your Best...

You thrive when you're able to put the new knowledge or practices that you have acquired to work in order to solve challenging problems or meet particular goals. You love to explore the best practices to adopt, test new approaches, research market opportunities, understand customer drivers, and figure out ways to get a handle on your competitors.

Challenged By...

You love having the permission to explore dynamically, and as a result you find it particularly challenging to work in situations where your performance is heavily monitored or measured, or you're given strict boundaries to adhere to. Under such circumstances, your intrinsic motivation to explore is depleted as you become more focused on the task at hand rather than the freedom to learn.

Shadow Side...

Curiosity can be problematic when it leads you to become too fascinated in exploring ideas without taking any action. This leaves you paralyzed in the search, where the learning you undertake is wasted in terms of the value of application. It is important to make an effort to translate your curiosity from knowledge to practice in order to help generate real-world outcomes.

Develop By...

- **Learning one new thing each day**
Make a note of something you learned through conversing with a colleague, reading an article, or listening during a meeting. In your note, include a brief explanation of why what you learned matters, as well as how this knowledge can be applied.
- **Thinking in questions**
Every action we take is preceded by a question. See if you can find the questions that need to be asked to create the outcomes you want. For example, create agenda questions for your meetings, rather than agenda items.
- **Looking for alternative explanations**
Avoid jumping to conclusions by challenging your beliefs and assumptions. Ask yourself: "Is this the only explanation for what's unfolding?" and note how these different stories make you want to feel and act.

FAIRNESS

Fairness refers to your strong sense of what you believe to be right, and your desire to act in accordance with these beliefs. You care deeply about others, and are good at understanding other people's perspectives.

At Your Best...

You're at your best in environments where the people around you support your need to act in congruence with your beliefs about right and wrong, and where your desire to act fairly is shared by your colleagues. In such an environment you would expect, for example, that you'd have the autonomy to freely speak up when you believe something is wrong.

Challenged By...

You particularly struggle to work in environments where your beliefs are not supported. For example, your desire to do what you think is right will be undermined in circumstances where you feel your work is having a negative impact on an individual or group of people.

Shadow Side...

If overplayed, fairness can lead you to become detached from your work. That is, if you feel your workplace or team are not behaving equitably, you may try to protect yourself by detaching from the choices and actions that happen both around and within you. You may at times also find yourself getting too worked up or upset when you believe something is unfair. To manage this shadow side, consider whether what you're fighting for is worth holding onto in the given context, or whether it might be more appropriate to let go.

Develop By...

- **Being fair to others**
Each week, invest in one action you believe will make your workplace that little bit fairer for one of your colleagues. You might, for example, acknowledge when someone has been unfairly treated and talk to them about it, or even offer some positive feedback to someone who deserves it.
- **Owning your mistakes**
When you make mistakes, don't be afraid to take ownership and admit to yourself that you've done wrong.
- **Being willing to forgive**
Monitor the internal conversation you have with yourself when you or someone around you makes a mistake. Give yourself the space to recognize that we are all allowed to get things wrong sometimes, and that equally we are able to be forgiven. Be willing to forgive yourself as you would be willing to forgive others.

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness describes your preference for moving on after a transgression, and your desire to mend fences with the person who has done you wrong. When you show forgiveness, your motivation to respond negatively following an incident of wrongdoing transforms to the desire to cultivate and preserve a harmonious relationship with the transgressor.

At Your Best...

You excel in environments where the people around you seek your forgiveness when they've done you wrong, because you prefer to preserve your relationships following a transgression. Your ability to avoid excessive negative responses to conflict by forgiving your colleagues enables you to maintain a peaceful workspace when mistakes are made.

Challenged By...

Though you're good at mending fences when others have done you wrong, you falter in situations where the people you work with continually commit the same mistakes. This impedes your ability to move forward in the same way that you'd normally be able to. For example, you would be tested by a colleague who repeatedly forgets to check their emails and consequently always misses important information or who always runs late to meetings.

Shadow Side...

When overplayed, your strength of forgiveness can lead you to become permissive. This means that you can be inclined to allow anyone – including yourself – to get away with anything. You can let people walk all over you, and you may find it difficult to hold yourself accountable for your own actions. To avoid this shadow side, it's important to consider what it is that you respect, and what you don't. Know where your boundaries are, and be willing to recognize and communicate when they've been crossed.

Develop By...

- **Practicing empathy**
When you're feeling annoyed or frustrated at someone, build a bridge of empathy that allows you to understand and respect where they might be coming from, even if you don't entirely agree with their perspective.
- **Showing yourself a little mercy**
Each week, try to find one thing to forgive yourself for. It might be for a mistake you made at work, for not being able to deliver on something you promised, or for saying something without fully appreciating the consequences. Instead of beating yourself up, offer yourself the mercy that you would willingly give to others.
- **Disempowering shame**
When you notice that a colleague is feeling a sense of shame about their work, help them to unwind this negativity. Reach out and ask them how they're feeling, and create a safe space where they can talk about what's happening. Try to normalize their shameful behavior by helping them to bring it back to earth and put it into perspective.

GRATITUDE

Looks Like...

Gratitude is your capacity to experience gratefulness for the good things in your life. You're able to take a moment to notice and appreciate the things that happen to you, or are given to you, which positively influence your life. Furthermore, you're aware that these things are made possible by something or someone beyond yourself, and so it's to this source that you readily express your thanks.

At Your Best...

You're able to thrive in environments where there are regular chances to express gratitude. You appreciate being thanked by others, and relish the opportunity to offer your own expressions of gratefulness to your colleagues. By noticing and appreciating the good things in your life, you're able to experience more positive emotions, and less negative emotions like jealousy and resentment.

Challenged By...

Because you prefer to be thankful for the good things in life, you struggle to work in environments where people focus more on their rights. You feel frustrated when people take good things for granted, rather than recognizing that someone has gone to the effort to do something helpful or kind for them.

Shadow Side...

When gratitude is used as a means of winning someone's favor or persuading them to do something you want, it becomes ingratiation⁵ and is therefore not true gratitude. This shadow side can be avoided by only offering someone your gratitude if it genuinely reflects how you feel, rather than as a means to get something in return.

Develop By...

- **Celebrating what's working well**
Begin meetings at work by discussing what's been going well recently and expressing appreciation for the efforts people are making.
- **Creating a daily gratitude habit**
Genuinely thank one person each day before you leave work for making your day a little better or easier. Be specific in identifying what you're thanking them for, what strengths they were using, and how it positively impacted you.
- **Keeping a gratitude checklist**
Throughout your work day, note down all the things that unfold for which you are grateful. Try to find at least 3 - 5 things each day. This will be especially helpful on those days when things don't seem to be going the way you'd like.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a dandelion seed head. The background is a soft-focus field of grass and flowers, bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise. A white circle is overlaid on the upper part of the image, containing the text "Dream Big" in a cursive font.

*Dream
Big*

HONESTY

Your **honesty** describes your ability to be authentic when presenting to both yourself and others, leading you to act and speak in ways that reflect what you really think and feel. You know what your values are and you live by them, preferring not to compromise who you are and what you believe in for the sake of popularity.

At Your Best...

You're at your best when you're involved in a task or activity that aligns with your values and strengths. Under such circumstances, you feel you can act in an authentic way – you're confident that by being yourself you'll get the job done well and without compromising what you believe in.

Challenged By...

Because you value authenticity, you struggle to work under circumstances where you're obliged to be deceitful or be unfaithful to your idea of what's right. For example, you might feel very uncomfortable working in a team that tries to boost sales by not being entirely open with its clients.

Shadow Side...

The shadow side of integrity can emerge in the form of over-righteousness. This is problematic in that it may leave you feeling you're above the people around you, and can render you blind to the shades of grey that exist between honesty and dishonesty. It's important to understand that different people will value directness in different ways, and that sometimes being blunt is not the best course of action. When you feel that someone is being dishonest, take the time to ask them what's happening – avoid leaping to conclusions and making assumptions about their intentions.

Develop By...

- **Saying it like it is**
Each morning, give one person constructive and authentic feedback. It could be about their performance on a current project, or an idea they've recently shared. Be sure that you leave them feeling respected, valued and appreciated.
- **Walking your talk**
Show up at work in the same way that you'd expect the people around you to do. Be a living example of the kinds of behaviors you want to see from others.
- **Delivering on your promises**
Only make commitments that you can keep, and ensure you're timely in your responses to others. If circumstances change in a way that affects your ability to fulfill your end of a promise, go back and reset the expectations by having an open and transparent conversation about what you can deliver and when.

HOPE

Hope is your capacity to devote consideration to what lies beyond the 'here-and-now'. You have goals for the future, you believe they'll be achieved, and you behave in such a way that promotes the realization of this belief. You typically see the glass as half full, enabling you to envision positive outcomes and change plans whenever setbacks get in the way.

At Your Best...

Your hope enables you to form visions for your future that are desirable, but not irrational. It allows you to create clear, plausible and flexible plans to help you achieve these goals. Guided by this planning, you're able to take action to attain your goals – adapting to any challenges that arise and maintaining the energy needed to get the job done.

Challenged By...

Because you have an optimistic outlook, you can be thwarted when working with people who tend to be pessimistic. These people can drain your will-power and interfere with your ability to plan for a positive future.

Shadow Side...

Hope can turn into 'false hope' or 'Pollyannaism', where your expectations become unrealistic. You might ignore genuine limitations to attaining your goals, or chase goals that are too large. If exercised in its ideal form, hope itself is the remedy to false hope. For example, you would use this strength to establish a rational goal that takes constraints into account, and formulate a plausible plan around these constraints.

Develop By...

- **Having a passion project**
Even if it's not directly related to your job, spend at least ten minutes each day working on a 'want to' project that you're passionate about.
- **Spending time with hopeful colleagues**
Hope is contagious, so prioritize your time with hopeful colleagues and notice how they're overcoming the challenges they encounter.
- **Building a hope-map**
Take a sheet of paper, and on the far right-hand side note down a "want to" goal you're trying to achieve. On the far left-hand side, identify at least three pathways that will move you towards this goal. In the middle, note down the obstacles you may encounter for each pathway. Around the edges of the page, note down what you can do to maintain your willpower and motivation.

HUMILITY

Humility refers to your ability to accurately perceive and evaluate yourself – including your strengths, achievements, weaknesses, and mistakes. You locate this concept of yourself within the ‘bigger-picture’ of the world, and present yourself to others in accordance with who you genuinely are. You’re good at seeing the worth in all good things, even if they lay outside of you.

At Your Best...

You’re at your best when working in an environment where you aren’t compelled to regularly advocate your performance and achievements. Whilst you recognize your strengths and successes, you prefer not to publicize these; instead you’d rather go about your work authentically and let this speak for itself.

Challenged By...

Because you’re good at keeping your strengths and weaknesses in perspective, you struggle to work with people who feel the need to regularly boast about their accomplishments. For example, you don’t like working in roles where people keep score or are publically ranked on their performance.

Shadow Side...

In its excessive form, your humility can lead you to engage in self-deprecation. You can speak and think disparagingly about yourself, and may often use humor to put yourself down. To overcome this shadow side, make an active effort to focus on your strengths and understand what you respect and value about yourself. Think about yourself through the lens of your team by asking, “What is it that I have to offer them?” Recognize that by stepping outside of your comfort zone in this way, you’re not beating your own drum. Rather, you’re helping your team get the most value out of your strengths.

Develop By...

- **Owning your stuff**
When you’ve done wrong, be willing to hold yourself accountable and apologise readily. Always be willing to learn something from the experience.
- **Letting others shine**
When having discussions with people, ask them questions to allow them the opportunity to have the floor and present themselves in the best possible light.
- **Celebrating success**
Create a daily habit of celebrating success. Recognize the efforts and accomplishments of yourself and others with at least one other person. Use the language of ‘we’ and ‘us’ rather than ‘me’ and ‘I’ so the celebration feels authentic to your strengths.

HUMOR

Humor describes your ability to generate and appreciate the 'lighter side' of the moment, whether confronted with a more difficult circumstance or a regular day-to-day situation. You like to experience laughter yourself, and you enjoy and are good at igniting laughter in those around you.

At Your Best...

You excel when you're able to use your humor to encourage your colleagues and bring them cheer, especially during excessively stressful times. When facing hardships, your humor can work to your advantage by enabling you to remain in a positive mood, rather than becoming overwhelmed by negativity.

Challenged By...

Because you often prefer to appreciate the lighter-side of life, you find it challenging to work in environments that value seriousness at all times, and that prefer to dwell only on the heavy-side of situations.

Shadow Side...

Sometimes humor can be used as a means of deflection. Whether it is used to shield against criticism or to avoid having a difficult conversation. Deflection prevents others from really understanding what you're truly experiencing inside.

Develop By...

- **Starting your day laughing**
As you start work, watch a funny video, read a favorite cartoon, or talk to someone who always makes you smile.
- **Prioritizing play**
Play helps you to connect with others, explore ideas, and create new possibilities. Start meetings with a funny quiz, create a games-area in the office, or just explore an idea with no intentional outcome.
- **Giving yourself permission to have fun at work**
Levity is a valuable and positive business practice found to improve engagement, efficiency and productivity. What can you do to create a little more fun in your culture?

JUDGMENT

Open-mindedness is your capacity to challenge your own personal assumptions and consider alternative explanations before coming to a conclusion. You're able to consider things from different angles and evaluate the various options that are available. As a result, you're very flexible in your beliefs and opinions whenever new evidence presents itself.

At Your Best...

You're at your best when working in an environment that offers opportunities for openness; where you're provided with the time and space to explore decisions thoroughly through examining different options and available evidence.

Challenged By...

Because you like to consider things carefully before making final decisions, you struggle in situations where decisions must be made with limited opportunity for prior examination. Furthermore, if you like to 'maximize' decisions by always searching for the 'best' choice, you may find yourself constantly wondering whether there's a better option available than the option you chose.

Shadow Side...

When you exercise too much judgment, you may render yourself ineffective because you're constantly searching for the perfect answer or overwhelming yourself by asking too many questions. To avoid this shadow side set decision milestones. Plan where you'd like to be along your decision-making pathway at given times, and use this as a guide to reach conclusions that can be acted upon.

Develop By...

- **Seeking out opposites**
When faced with any decision, try to find people or sources of information that take diametrically opposing points of view on the topic. Explore and really hear both sides of the argument before deciding how to act.
- **Weighing up your options**
Before reaching a final decision, explore the potential outcomes of each option by listing the pros and cons.
- **Playing devil's advocate**
Have the courage to ask the tough questions when others are in agreement, especially when you think there could be more to the story than has been explored.

A top-down view of various travel and photography items arranged on a rustic wooden surface. In the upper left, a portion of a map is visible. Next to it is a green notebook with a black compass resting on its cover. Below the notebook is a white sheet of paper with a grid pattern, possibly a calendar or a planning sheet, showing numbers like 22, 23, 76, and 77. To the right, a vintage-style camera is partially visible. In the lower right, a pair of black binoculars with a brown leather strap is shown. A white circular graphic is overlaid in the center, containing the text "Find Pathways" in a cursive font.

*Find
Pathways*

KINDNESS

Kindness refers to the readiness and enthusiasm you exhibit towards doing things for other people, whether they're close to you or more distant acquaintances. You're generous to others for their sake, rather than your own. You believe that people are deserving of kindness, and don't seek any personal benefit when you invest in others.

At Your Best...

You thrive at work when there are plenty of opportunities to do kind things for other people, especially when you know that your actions are having a positive impact on their wellbeing or performance.

Challenged By...

Because of your belief that people deserve kind deeds and consideration, you find it difficult to work in an organization that regards the personal needs and wellbeing of its workers to be a low priority.

Shadow Side...

The shadow side of kindness emerges when you neglect to show kindness into yourself, which can have a detrimental impact on your own wellbeing and performance. To avoid overplaying your kindness in this way, set limits around who you give to, as well as what and when you give. For example, if people are continually asking to "pick your brain for ideas" to the point where you can't get your own work done, try setting one time each week for an open coffee date for anyone seeking this kind of support to meet with you and ask their questions. It's also important to realize you're worth helping just as much as others, so don't be afraid to ask for other people's kindness when required.

Develop By...

- **Being compassionate**
When a colleague is being open about a difficult or challenging experience, try to listen without analyzing or judging what they're telling you. Be there for them and make them feel comfortable and safe.
- **Performing an act of kindness for someone**
Do one kind thing for another person without being asked or expecting a reward.
- **Speaking kindly to others**
Whether it's face-to-face, over the phone, or through emails, use kind words when communicating with other people.

LEADERSHIP

Leadership describes your ability to both organize and encourage others in order to help them accomplish group goals. You help the group to find the best pathways to take, and you're able to maintain team unity and cohesion along the way. You can inspire others to step-up, and you connect to each member of the team.

At Your Best...

You thrive when you're given the chance to independently manage a team; especially if you're able to play a large role in articulating the group's ambitions and objectives.

Challenged By...

You find it especially challenging to work in situations where you're not solely in charge of managing the group, or when you're put in a role that under-utilizes your leadership skills.

Shadow Side...

The shadow side of leadership can be observed in circumstances where you rule with an iron fist. In such cases, the wishes and ideas of the people you lead can become manipulated or overruled in favor of your own. Preferring the view from the front seat, you may find it difficult to take on the role of 'follower' by allowing others to have the opportunity to be in charge. It's important to remember that leadership is about bringing out the best in others, not just yourself. Try to model the behaviors of a servant leader by being willing to be a follower on some projects in your organization.

Develop By...

- **Stepping up**
In either a formal or informal capacity, offer to be the leader of a project. Keeping in mind that a leader needs a team, seek out people you would like to invite to join you on the project.
- **Facilitating conversations**
When people are finding it difficult to gather their thoughts or develop their ideas during meetings, offer to help guide the discussion. To avoid facing resentment, remember to offer but not force your leadership upon the group.
- **Getting inspired**
Each day savor one great example of leadership that you observe both inside and outside of your organization. Focusing on what you'd like to emulate yourself, take notes that'll help you to channel these leaders through your own work. Your notes might include points such as how the leader carries themselves, how they handle difficult situations, and how they get people on board.

LOVE

Love is your capacity to foster and value the relationships you have with others. Depending upon the nature of the relationship – whether it be a family member, friend, romantic partner, boss or colleague – love takes on different forms of expression. You place the highest value on those relationships that involve mutuality and closeness, where you feel like you're able to both give and receive love.

At Your Best...

When working in environments where there are a range of circumstances in which you can develop and foster strong relationships with others, you will excel. You care about the people that you lead, and you can use your strength of love to foster better relationships with them.

Challenged By...

Because you place great value on close relationships, you find it most challenging to be in a workplace where the people around you show little interest in caring for the wellbeing and emotional welfare of themselves and the people around them.

Shadow Side...

In its full form, this strength involves both the capacity to give and receive love. However, sometimes you may find yourself giving so much love to others that you leave nothing left for yourself. It is important to negotiate this balance when exercising love, so you can take care of your own needs as much as the needs of those around you.

Develop By...

- **Loving others**
Perform one act of love each day by checking in with a colleague to show them they are respected, valued, and appreciated. You might thank them for something, make them a cup of coffee, or just have a conversation with them about how they're going.
- **Loving yourself**
Find one thing each day that you can do to care for and nurture yourself. This might include some light exercise, a healthy snack, meditation, or listening to your favorite music.
- **Positively resonating with others**
Share an experience of positive emotion with someone, and take the time to invest in the feelings of warmth and trust that naturally arise from this.

LOVE OF LEARNING

Your **love of learning** refers to the willingness you have to acquire knowledge or skills; the joy you experience whilst doing it; and the confidence you feel in your ability to reach particular learning outcomes. You learn for the sake of learning, enabling you to persevere with your quest to find out more whenever the task proves difficult or you experience failure.

At Your Best...

You thrive when you find yourself in situations where you're given the opportunity to utilize a new skill or further develop your knowledge.

Challenged By...

Because you relish the chance to grow your knowledge and skills, you struggle to work in an environment where there is limited possibility to learn new things. For example, you may find it challenging to perform roles that involve business-as-usual situations; where strategies, processes and approaches are set-in-stone and there's limited appetite for improvement.

Shadow Side...

A love of learning can negatively manifest itself in the form of a 'know-it-all' demeanor, where you come across as believing you already know all there is to know about everything. This can be intimidating for others to encounter, and as a result can distance you from them. To avoid this shadow side, it's important to be open to new ideas, and allow others to express their knowledge without trying to show them up with what you know.

Develop By...

- **Keep growing**
Sign up and get involved in new experiences that will enable you to learn something tomorrow that you don't know today.
- **Savoring knowledge**
Experience the joy of learning for the sake of learning itself. Take the time to learn one new thing each day that is relevant to your work. It could be relevant to the organization you work for, or to the industry in a broader sense.
- **Learning about people**
Try to meet one new colleague or client each week. Have a conversation with them about what they do, focusing on which aspects they really enjoy as well as what they are most challenged by. Attend networking events, such as conferences, to learn from others who work in your field.

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance describes your ability to keep at the tasks you set yourself. Even though you confront challenges along the way, you make a choice to keep working towards your goals without letting these discouragements or barriers impede you. Not only are you good at getting things done, you also take pleasure in the accomplishment of your goals.

At Your Best...

You flourish when you're confronted with a task which entails that you to stay engaged and work hard. It might be that you're given a long-term project to work on that requires an enduring commitment; or perhaps you have to push through several challenges and mishaps in order to execute a project.

Challenged By...

Because you make a concerted effort to get the job done – even in the face of hardships and mishaps – you feel that your efforts are devalued when your competence is not recognized. You feel particularly frustrated when people ignore your hard work or fail to acknowledge the difficulties you had to push through to finish a project or task.

Shadow Side...

Your perseverance becomes overplayed when it leads you to pursue goals and tasks obsessively. Such obsession leaves you feeling like you're unable to stop pushing yourself to reach your target, even when you're exhausted and on the brink of burnout. As such, you'll resist putting on the breaks even when it's actually more beneficial to do so, and avoid taking the time to rest and revitalize when necessary. To manage this shadow-side, always remember that relentless perseverance works to the detriment of the outcomes you're trying to achieve, and that taking a break is beneficial to your goal pursuit.

Develop By...

- **Delivering what matters most**
Each morning, set yourself a few small goals that you will accomplish before the end of your work day. Consider how you'll manage your time to ensure you prioritize the delivery of these goals.
- **Finding your rhythm**
Due to your natural ultradian rhythm, throughout the day you'll experience 90 - 100 minute bursts of alertness. At the end of each cycle, it's important to take a short break in order to maximize your performance and avoid burnout.
- **Set yourself a clear plan**
Determine what you want to achieve over the next six to twelve months, and create a week-by-week plan that will enable you to move from where you are now to where you want to be. Commit to implementing your plan, and monitor your progress as you move from one week to the next.



*Make it
Happen*

PERSPECTIVE

Perspective describes your capacity to view situations in a way that resonates meaningfully for both yourself and the people you share your views with. You're good at looking at a situation from different angles, and as such others appreciate your insights and will often seek your counsel.

At Your Best...

You thrive when you're engaged in work projects or tasks that require you to draw on your experience and expertise. You feel like you're at your best when you can use what you know to inform the way you go about your own work, and communicate your insights with your team members to help them fulfill their role on a project.

Challenged By...

Your appetite to acquire wisdom leaves you feeling frustrated when there's limited opportunity to learn new things, engage in new experiences, and have personal growth. You feel like you're not getting any wiser when you're performing roles that require you to get things done according to a strict formula or manual. When your role is heavily documented and systematized in this way, you feel there is a lack of opportunity to share your views and offer advice to others.

Shadow Side...

Because you have a strong sense of perspective, you may at times look for too many opportunities to impart your wisdom to others and give them advice when it's not welcome. It's important that you recognize that, whilst your perspective might be insightful, there is a right time and place to share your views with others. To help you manage this, ask yourself whether your advice will genuinely be of value to those you share it with.

Develop By...

- **Learning from others**
Read biographies about other business people who inspire you or work in your field. Take note of the key lessons that they present to help guide you on your own career journey.
- **Considering 'in what context, for what outcome?'**
To find the best action to take to achieve the outcome you desire, ask yourself this question before deciding which pathway to choose.
- **Making the complex simple**
Look for ways to translate theories to real-world practice. Think of simple ways to explain complex ideas so that they would make sense to others.

PRUDENCE

Prudence can be defined as your ability to think and act in ways that are conducive to the attainment of your future aspirations and long-term goals. You think about and place value on the future, and like to plan for what lies ahead. You readily consider how your decisions will affect certain outcomes, and are good at regulating your behaviors in the present in line with your goals.

At Your Best...

You thrive when you're given the space and time to think about what your aspirations are, to devise a plan around these goals, and to take the necessary steps to execute your plan.

Challenged By...

Because you like to act in accordance with long-term goals, you can be thwarted when forced to make a spontaneous decision due to the arising of unexpected circumstances. This might occur when you're involved in an ambiguous project, or given a tight deadline to complete an important task.

Shadow Side...

Prudence can at times manifest itself as over-cautiousness. This means you can be afraid to take risks or be spontaneous. Your need to adhere to the plan can make you appear like a 'stick in the mud', where you close yourself off to new and unexpected opportunities. To help you dial down this strength, always keep in mind that your plan is but one path towards your goal. Try to hold your commitments a little more lightly and give things the chance to evolve naturally, keeping an open mind about what could arise and not being so rigid you miss new opportunities.

Develop By...

- **Planning ahead**
Before taking action, make time to consider and picture the potential outcomes of a choice you have to make. Think of what the consequences might look like within a one-year timeframe, as well as in the longer-term of 5 - 10 years.
- **Sticking to the plan**
Whenever you have a goal in mind, set clear milestones that need to be achieved along the way. Create a daily habit to use tools such as project plans – try new online offerings like asana.com - to ensure what you promise is delivered on time and on budget.
- **Thinking before you speak**
When you're in a meeting, give yourself the time and space to pause and reflect on what you'll say next. Once you've taken this moment and feel comfortable, offer up your idea. Don't be afraid to ask for extra time for reflection if you feel that it's needed.
- **Making room for spontaneity**
To help you remain flexible on the journey towards your goal, create a daily habit to step back from your plan and look at the bigger picture. Are there new opportunities emerging you should seize upon? Are there obstacles on the horizon you need to be ready for? Should you slow down any deliverables to ensure better quality?

SELF-REGULATION

Self-regulation describes your ability to remain in charge of what you think, which feelings you experience, and what actions you engage in. You live in a disciplined way in order to meet the various goals you've for yourself. Depending on what the situation calls for, you have the ability to overrule your maladaptive impulses; as well as to generate adaptive actions that lie counter to your first inclinations.

At Your Best...

Because you thrive on being disciplined, you excel when you're working in an environment with well-defined rules and boundaries that are stringently implemented. For example, you're good at working on projects that have a well-articulated deadline, and engaging with tasks that can't be completed by taking short-cuts.

Challenged By...

You can struggle during those times where you're exposed to high levels of stress or physically exhausted. When the workload becomes unbearable, or the hours become too long, this can impede your ability to stay in control of your responses with the same level of discipline you normally exhibit.

Shadow Side...

Self-regulation can be overplayed when it causes inhibition. This means you can at times find it difficult to respond spontaneously or act in a way that feels natural to you. To overcome this shadow side, try to consciously play around with some of your routines. By introducing some openness and flexibility to your habits, you'll enable yourself to be in charge of your choices rather than letting your routines control you.

Develop By...

- **Starting early**
Identify the most important tasks you have to do each day, and do these first-thing in the morning when your self-regulation levels are at their highest.
- **Managing your emotions**
Throughout your day, be mindful of how you're feeling and how this is causing you to act. Identify the things that trigger off your worst behaviours, and think of ways you can manage these situations more effectively to get the results you want.
- **Setting small goals**
Start each day by completing one small goal. Whether it involves writing or responding to an email, finishing a presentation, or booking a meeting; the most important thing is that you commit to getting it done. To give you confidence and satisfaction, tick or cross the goal off your list once you've completed it.
- **Mixing up your habits**
Try once a day to break up your habits and routines by taking a different approach. For example, walk a different way to work, eat something unexpected, perform a task with your non-dominant hand.

SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE

Your **social intelligence** refers to your ability to readily notice and understand the emotions and intentions of both yourself and others. In addition, you're able to use this information to navigate your social world more effectively, and regulate your own emotions and behaviors.

At Your Best...

You excel at work when your intelligence can be applied in useful and beneficial ways during group encounters. For example, you enjoy helping colleagues to build or mend relationships, as well as talking to colleagues to help them feel more comfortable when confronting challenges.

Challenged By...

Because you enjoy figuring people out, you get bored in environments where you feel you're surrounded by people who lack complexity in their expressions and relationships, or who are highly similar to each other in these respects.

Shadow Side...

It's important not to use your social intelligence to act as an 'armchair psychologist', where you overanalyze the emotions and motivations of others to prove your own value rather than to form a genuine connection with them.

Develop By...

- **Helping others feel safe**
Notice when people around you are experiencing stress or uncertainty. Consider the emotions they might be feeling and why they're experiencing them. Slow down to help them express and work through their uncertainty more comfortably and productively.
- **Tuning into positive emotion**
Pay attention to when you or those around you are experiencing high levels of engagement and energy. Savor and appreciate these moments, and think about what you can do to build upon and recreate these positive experiences in future.
- **Noticing what motivates your team to act**
Tap into these motivators and use them to frame your desired business outcomes in a way that is meaningful to your team members.

SPIRITUALITY

Your **spirituality** refers to the strong beliefs you hold about the universe's greater purpose, and your personal understanding of your own place in the world. It's these beliefs that influence your sense of meaning and purpose at work.

At Your Best...

You thrive at work when you're able to participate in projects and tasks that connect with your sense of meaning. This connection might be fostered when you feel there is an alignment between your own values and the values promoted by your workplace; when you're able to use the things you believe in to inform your work; or when you feel your work is having a widespread impact.

Challenged By...

You find it difficult to work in situations where you struggle to uncover the meaning in what you're doing; or when you must work on a project which conflicts with your values and sense of purpose. For example, if you have a strong concern for the environment, you might feel frustrated when a project wastes natural resources like paper or energy.

Shadow Side...

If you become too fanatical about your sense of purpose, you may find it difficult to know when to slow down, leading you and your teammates to burnout. You can become so motivated by your sense of meaning and the ambition to execute your desired reality that you lose your sense of perspective. This can lead you to make unwise decisions by taking risks without weighing up the options, and to pursue visions that are unfeasible or not a priority within your organization.

Develop By...

- **Finding your 'why'**
Be clear on what gets you out of bed each morning by completing this sentence; 'everything I do is to _____ so that _____.' For example, 'everything I do is to bring out the best in myself and others, so that the world will be a better place'.
- **Crafting your job**
Re-design your job description so it has more meaning. Focus more of your time on the tasks and people that align with your values and purpose. More at jobcrafting.org.
- **Searching for meaning in small tasks**
Keep asking yourself 'what is the purpose of this task; what will I accomplish?', until you arrive at an answer that makes you feel like you're engaging in something worthwhile.

TEAMWORK

Teamwork refers to your sense of belonging and commitment to a team or a greater good. You exhibit strong allegiance to the teams that you're a part of, and always endeavor to make a fair contribution when working in group contexts. You orient yourself towards helping your team to achieve the best outcomes.

At Your Best...

You excel when you're working towards a well-defined group cause, especially when this means you have to work alongside others to get the job done. For example, you might enjoy putting together a group presentation, or advocating for an idea that you think could make a positive difference in your workplace.

Challenged By...

Because you thrive on being collaborative, you find it challenging to work with people who show more concern for themselves than the group. For example, you get frustrated by people who don't pull their own weight and rely on the rest of the team to do all of the work for them.

Shadow Side...

When overplayed, your strength of citizenship can manifest itself in the form of excessive patriotism. This shadow side can lead you to view your team as superior to others, and to hold the blind belief that your group can do no wrong. In this way, excessive patriotism creates a barrier that restricts you from seeing the value in people outside your team. This causes you to be dismissive of out-group members, and undermines your ability to collaborate with them effectively. To dial down this shadow side, make space to step back from the team from time-to-time. Be willing to ask the tough questions, and make sure that you're not falling into groupthink.

Develop By...

- **Getting involved**
Put your hand up to become part of a team within your organization that you respect and are inspired by. This could be a formal part of your role, or it could be something you volunteer for informally.
- **Offering to coach others**
Formally or informally volunteer to help someone you work with to set a goal. Work with them to design a pathway that will move them forward, and check in with them regularly along their journey to see how they're progressing.
- **Valuing loyalty**
Each day, perform one act of service to a team that you're a member of and hold in high regard. Be a team player by deliberately engaging in behaviours that demonstrate your loyalty.

ZEST

Zest describes the sense of enthusiasm and vigour that you experience when engaging in any activity. You're able to function at optimal levels, and you possess a strong sense of being alive. You fully invest in your experiences and embrace all of the journeys that life takes you on.

At Your Best...

You're at your best when you're given full control of a task or project that you're interested in. In such circumstances, you're able to ride the wave of your own passion and energy and let it take you where you need to go to get the job done well.

Challenged By...

Because you thrive on energy, you falter when you're exhausted due to a lack of basic needs like adequate sleep, regular exercise, or a healthy diet. This might occur, for example, if your job requires you to work long or unusual hours.

Shadow Side...

At times, your zest can be overwhelming to the people around you. When this happens, you'll find you're off-and-running on a new project you're passionate and excited about, whilst the rest of your team has been left behind. Others can be intimidated by your energy, as they wonder how they'll be able to keep-up with you and match your drive and enthusiasm. To manage this shadow side, be mindful that sometimes slowing-down gets you to the finish-line sooner, as it gives you a chance to bring your team along with you.

Develop By...

- **Being well**
Make 'you' time a priority. Spend time looking after yourself by eating, moving and resting throughout your day to ensure you replenish your energy and avoid burnout.
- **Taking a walk near nature**
Make time during your work day to take a brisk walk outside to renew your sense of vitality.
- **Making time to rest**
In the afternoon when you feel your energy depleting, take a short nap or engage in five-minutes of meditation to allow your body to restore itself.

THREE STEPS TO PUT YOUR STRENGTHS TO WORK

1. *Discover your strengths*

Take the free VIA Survey at www.viacharacter.org and discover what your strengths are. Notice how you feel about your results. To help you bring these generic descriptions to life look for the times when:

- You've used your strengths well – these will be the moments that are memorable and stand out when you've felt really engaged, energized, and enjoying what you were doing at work. What were you doing? What makes these moments so memorable? And, most importantly, which of your top strengths were you using (there may be more than one strength in play) in each of these moments?
- You've underplayed your strengths – these will be the times you've hesitated, held yourself back, dimmed yourself down or procrastinated at work. What exactly was happening in these moments? What might have holding yourself back cost you or your team? And, most importantly, which of your top strengths could you have dialed up to make this situation easier, more energizing and enjoyable?
- You've overplayed your strengths – these will be the times when you felt like everything should be going really well, but it's wasn't quite coming together or people didn't seem as appreciative as you'd expect of all your hard work. What exactly was happening in these moments? How did it feel to be working so hard and yet still be unable to deliver the results you wanted to or be appreciated for your efforts? And which of your strengths were you overplaying in this situation that, if dialed back a little, could have helped you get a better outcome?

2. *Dream of a strengths-fuelled future*

As you become clearer on what your strengths are take some time to dream about what might be possible if you were developing your strengths each day at work and doing more of what you do best. Researchers have found that positive images draw us into taking positive actions, so taking the time to get clear on what a strengths-fuelled future looks like for you is an important next step on your journey.

When you're ready sit down somewhere quiet with a pen and paper and selecting a future point in time – it might be six months, one year, three years or more depending on how far you want to stretch – try to capture as vividly as possible what would be happening at work if everything had gone as well as it possibly could and you were using your strengths each day to create the kind of career and life that you love. You might like to think about:

- Why you'd be leaping out of bed to get to work each morning? What would you be spending your time on and how is this creating opportunities for you to learn, grow and support others in ways that feel meaningful to you? Why are you proud to be doing more of this kind of work?
- How are you using your strengths each day to make your "why" a reality? How does it feel to be developing your strengths regularly? What do your colleagues say about working with you now?
- What are you prioritizing to do each day at work? What are the tasks you really look forward to undertaking? Who is working on them with you? What do your clients or bosses say now about the quality of your work?

Try to spend at least fifteen to twenty minutes journaling this down as a stream of consciousness exercise. Don't judge, don't edit, just let it flow out.

Researcher Laura King, who created this exercise, suggests you try to repeat this exercise for three days in a row. You'll find on the first day all the obvious ideas you've already been toying with are captured. On the second day you'll start to step outside your comfort zone a little more. And by the third day you'll find ideas emerging that you've only ever dared whispered in the deepest parts of your heart.

3. Design strength pathways forward

When you look back on the ideas you've written about what might be possible in your strengths-fuelled future, notice the ones that really grab hold of you and fill you with hope. Now let's find some simple, busy-proof ways to take these ideas forward.

- Set a clear 'want-to' goal – Imagine a ladder with steps numbered from zero at the bottom to ten at the top. The top of the ladder represents the strengths-fuelled future you want. The bottom of the ladder represents a life in which your strengths are not drawn on at all. On which step of the ladder would you say you stand at this time? Now on which step would you be excited to stand on twelve months from now? What clear, specific, additive goal does this suggest you should set yourself?

For example, while “I want to stop doing work I don't enjoy” is clear enough, it's negative focus will make it hard for you to find the energy to keep taking action. Instead try something like, “I want to connect a network of credible, inspiring, and collaborative people to work with” so it's clear what it will add to your life

Choose at least three pathways forward – What are the on-the-job learning opportunities, formal training, or the coaching/mentoring support that would help you to reach your goal? How can this help you to develop the strengths you would most like to work with? Researchers recommend having a plan A, B, and even C in place when it comes to realizing your hopes. This way, even if you encounter insurmountable obstacles on the path, it doesn't mean you have to forego the goal you're trying to reach.

- Maintain your willpower – Change happens in small moments so be clear on the small, busy-proof steps you can take over the next week to advance your goal. Little victories lead to big successes because they build up your confidence over time. Track and celebrate your progress as you go by being accountable to someone – a strengths buddy, manager or formal coach – so you can become more mindful of how you're developing your strengths and create the changes you really want.

ABOUT MICHELLE

Michelle McQuaid is a best-selling author, workplace well-being teacher and playful change activator. She is passionate about translating cutting-edge research from positive psychology and neuroscience, into practical strategies for health, happiness, and business success.

An honorary fellow at Melbourne University's Graduate School of Education, her work has been featured in Forbes, the Harvard Business Review, the Wall Street Journal, Huffington Post, Boss Magazine, The Age, Women's Agenda, Wellbeing Magazine and more.

She holds a Masters in Applied Positive Psychology from the University of Pennsylvania and is currently completing her PhD in Appreciative Inquiry under the supervision of David Cooperrider.

Michelle lives to help people discover their strengths, move beyond their fears, and finally discover what it truly takes to flourish with confidence.

To learn more about Michelle visit www.michellemcquaid.com.



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It is my heartfelt belief that this eBook, and the resources it connects you to, provide a simple roadmap to move you from functioning to flourishing, but if you'd like a little extra help on your journey it's my pleasure to also offer you:

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Are you ready to make your work a little bit easier... and a lot more enjoyable? Well, the latest research suggests that one of the quickest and easiest ways is to use your strengths – those things you're good at and like doing – more. This book shows you how. Learn how to discover your strengths, embed them into your everyday life, and use them create exciting new opportunities at work.

PUT YOUR STRENGTHS TO WORK & CREATE A CAREER YOU LOVE

In partnership with Happify, the world's leaders in bringing positive psychology practices to life through technology, we have created a guided track that makes discovering and developing your strengths at work easy and engaging. If you prefer to learn online we highly recommend this simple step-by-step approach to putting your strengths to work and creating a career you love.

APPRECIATIVE COACHING

Wanting a more personal experience when it comes to developing your strengths? If so, I work one-on-one with a small group of extraordinary people (like you) to help them build their confidence, get clear on what success looks like, define the pathways forward and take the next steps to create powerful change in their work and in their lives.

For more information visit www.michellemcquaid.com

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