



CAREER EXPLORATION

LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES

TOPIC: DEVELOPING YOUR TALENTS

Learning Objectives

*****Students need to take CliftonStrengths Assessment prior to this lesson*****

- Teach students more in-depth information about talents and help them to understand how the CliftonStrengths for Students assessment results can be applied to their decisions about majors/careers, as well as used to market themselves.
- Understand why it is important to focus on developing talents into strengths (and managing weaknesses).

Instructor Resources

- MU Strengths Presentation <https://missouri.app.box.com/s/hnshgm4ijqjf9gqyv1f07fbar4imn1b3>
- Consulting Strengths Group Exercise
- 4 Domains of Strength Based Leadership
- Building Strengths
- Refresher- Totally You
- Talent Based Studying
- My Strengths and How I Use Them
- First Reactions
- Strengths Synthesis

Suggested Agenda

- Review of CliftonStrengths assessment and discussion of students' results (possible discussion questions are listed at the end of this document)
 - Be sure to pull in Action Plans and discuss relevance of Strengths to academics and career (you can even have students print off their action plans and bring them to class!)
- Explain the general theory behind the CliftonStrengths assessment. Include the following main points:
 - Career exploration involves examination of field, role, and work environment. Field is a broad category of industry, such as healthcare or education. Work environment includes work setting and other work-related values. Role is the specific function in a job. CliftonStrengths is most helpful in determining a role.
 - The assessment measures talents, or areas of greatest potential. These talents are "raw materials" that occur naturally in every person and can be cultivated into strengths.

- Talents are developed into strengths by adding 1) factual knowledge, 2) experiential knowledge, 3) specific skills, and 4) effort/practice.
- These talents are important because research has shown that top achievers recognize and focus on their strengths, not their weaknesses!
- Have students participate in a Strengths-related activity. Suggestions are listed below.

Possible Activities

- **Consulting Strengths Group Exercise (see Student Handouts):** The goal of this exercise is for students to better understand their talents and strengths, apply them to a “real-life” scenario, and encourage teamwork between students.
 - Give each student a copy of the exercise and chart
 - Read the exercise vignette and instructions to the class
 - Answer any questions regarding the exercise
 - Break class into two groups, with each instructor helping a group complete the chart
 - After 10-15 minutes of discussion, debrief with the whole class
- **Talent Themes in Common Exercise:** The goal of this exercise is for students to discuss their strengths and compare their results with other students with the same/similar strengths.
 - Tally the number of occurrences for each talent
 - Group students by talents, preferably groups of 2-3
 - Allow 10-15 minutes of discussion on for the shared talent(s)
- **Job Analysis Exercise:** A key to helping students utilize their talents is to get them to analyze opportunities based on what they do best. The goal for this activity is to have students review real positions to see how their strengths fit that role.
 - You will need to have two or three job descriptions either from HireMizzouTigers.com or a job board like Indeed.com. Or feel free to write your own. This could be a job, a volunteer project, or a leadership opportunity. The descriptions should be fairly detailed in order to show the responsibilities of the role.
 - The job analysis can be discussed in small or large groups. Have the students read through the descriptions one position at a time.
 - For each of the duties listed for each job, ask them to look at their talent themes and write down the theme or themes that would help them achieve the success described for each job duty. Make it clear that not all of responsibilities match well, so there may be job duties without any talent themes. Depending on time, students can do this activity for one or more job descriptions.
 - *Next*, ask students to consider the answers to these questions in order to think through their fit for the role:
 - Which of my strengths would be utilized in this role? How?
 - Are there some of my strengths that wouldn't get much use if I took a role like this? Which talents are those and how would that make me feel to not use them in this job?
 - Considering my strengths, which tasks would be more difficult for me to do? How could I compensate for this?
 - Overall, how well would this position fit me?
 - What things would I like to have added to this job, if I could?
 - What parts of the role do not fit?
 - How would I feel in this type of a role?

- In a group, have students talk about finding a role that fits their strengths. Discuss if they've had experiences in roles that were not a good fit and what that was like. Encourage students to do this with leadership positions, jobs, internships, or projects in which they plan to play a role.
- **Build- A- Business Activity**: Divide students into 5 teams and have them pick a hypothetical business they would like to establish together. Have the group assign each person a designated role within the company based on their strengths and discuss why their talent themes would make them successful in that position.
- **CliftonStrengths for Students Domain Exercise (see Student Handouts)**: Hand out the 4 Domains of Strength-based Leadership document and have students circle their top 5 talent themes, then break the students into the 4 domains of leadership (students can be grouped into the domain in which most of their talents fall). Have them answer the following questions as a group:
 - What does your domain do well?
 - What does your domain need from the other domains?
 - What is an item in a kitchen that represents your domain?
 - What is an animal that represents your domain?
 - These questions can easily be changed to other fun things! The explanation of their answers are always interesting!!
- **Strengths Energizer**: Without talking, each student in the class must find another student who shares the same strength through non-verbals and actions. Once they have found a partner, they need to stay quiet until everyone has finished. Then have students share how they were able to act out their strength!
- **Final Thoughts**:
 - There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. Let students know that. You may even use yourself as an example to show that not everything in a role may fit you perfectly, but that it is very important to get into roles that best utilize your strengths. You may even talk about roles that did not fit you and why.
 - Encourage students to keep their strengths in mind as they consider taking on new roles in the future. Remind them to look at every role and analyze it based on their strengths.

Discussion Questions

- What did you like or dislike about taking the CliftonStrengths assessment?
- What was your first reaction to your talents?
- Which talents fit you the best?
- Were you surprised by anything on the report?
- Which talents do you recognize from daily life?
- Which talents would you most like to apply toward careers?
- What do your talents suggest about goal setting or getting involved?
- How might you use the CliftonStrengths assessment results in an interview?

Consulting Exercise Vignette

Widgets, Inc. was once an industry leader in the widget industry, but has recently fallen behind several competitors. In response, the president of the corporation has requested a report from the director of each department and learned the following:

Accounting: Recent installation of a new accounting system has caused considerable problems with accounts receivable, accounts payable, and general record keeping.

Advertising/Marketing: Advertising has stagnated; there have been no new advertising campaigns.

Human Resources: Company morale is low and turnover has increased. Cooperation between the departments is non-existent and the overall mood has been described as “tense.”

Manufacturing: Efficiency has dropped significantly and factory accidents have increased.

Research & Development: No new products have been developed for several quarters.

Sales: Salespeople are unhappy because no new products or sales incentives programs have been introduced.

There was no aspect of the company’s operation that could not be improved, as competitors have advantages in each of these categories. With such widespread problems, the president has decided to hire an outside consulting team. With your unique strengths and your extensive knowledge of the widget industry, the president has selected two teams of consultants. Your StrengthsFinder results represent the areas of expertise you bring to the consulting team. Before your team meets with the executive board of Widget, Inc., you will need to determine which strengths you will each use in addressing the company’s problems.

Instructions for Consulting Teams:

- Pay attention to your first reactions. Did any of the problems appeal to you more than others?
- Your Signature Themes (Strengths) provide helpful starting points.
- Each team member must use at least one strength toward the team’s overall goal(s).
- Avoid using the same strength as another team member. Look for ways to pair your strengths with other team members.
- Not all of the company’s problems need to be addressed specifically.
- Assume you have the knowledge required to use your talent(s).
- Your team role can address specific company problems or support other team members.

EXAMPLES:

INPUT: People strong in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often, they like to collect and archive all kinds of information. So, an Input Team Member might gather information on Widget, Inc.’s competitors or research one or more of the specific problems.

DEVELOPER: People strong in the Developer theme see the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements. So, a Developer Team Member might train the Accounting Department on the new system or train Human Resources on implementing a morale improvement project.

COMBINING STRENGTHS: An Input Team Member researches the reasons for low morale, while the Developer Team Member uses this information to train Human Resources staff.

WIDGETS, INC. CONSULTATION PLAN

Team Member	Strength	Role

4 DOMAINS OF STRENGTH-BASED LEADERSHIP

Source: Rath, T, and Conchie, B. (2008). Strengths based Leadership. Gallup Press; New York, NY.
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<i>EXECUTING</i>	<i>RELATIONSHIP BUILDING</i>	<i>INFLUENCING</i>	<i>STRATEGIC THINKING</i>
Achiever	Adaptability	Activator	Analytical
Arranger	Connectedness	Command	Context
Belief	Developer	Communication	Futuristic
Consistency	Empathy	Competition	Ideation
Deliberative	Harmony	Maximizer	Input
Discipline	Includer	Self-Assurance	Intellection
Focus	Individualization	Significance	Learner
Responsibility	Positivity	Woo	Strategic
Restorative	Relator		

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CLIFTON STRENGTHS FOR STUDENTS BUILDING STRENGTHS

TALENT X INVESTMENT = STRENGTH, WHERE INVESTMENT = KNOWLEDGE + SKILLS + EXPERIENCE

Talent: naturally recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied

Knowledge: what you know, either factually or through awareness gained by experience

Skill: the capacity to perform the fundamental steps of an activity

Strength: the ability to provide consistent, near-perfect performance in a specific activity

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REFRESHER

List your Talent Themes	What parts of the theme description are “totally” you?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

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Part 1:

To help you determine how you can best apply your talents to achieve academic success, read the action items for “Applying Your Talents in Academics” for each of your five Signature Themes in your CliftonStrengths for Students textbook. Specifically, look at the second category: “Study Techniques.” Identify one strategy you can use on a specific assignment that you have due in the next week or two.

- Which theme did you choose to focus on?
- What was the strategy that you chose to use and on what assignment?
- What specifically do you plan to do in order to enact this suggestion?

Part 2:

Before you complete the assignment, talk to your instructor. Show him or her the plan you have created by answering the questions above. Describe your Signature Theme to them and ask if he or she has any additional suggestions or direction to help you successfully complete the assignment.

- What did your instructor say?
- Did he or she provide additional suggestions on how you could apply your talents to successfully complete the assignment?

Part 3:

Now, complete the assignment. When you have completed it and received feedback from your instructor, answer the following questions.

- What was the result of having completed this assignment using this strategy?
- How would the result have been different had you not used this strategy?

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MY STRENGTHS AND HOW I USE THEM

Talents	Description/Definition of the Talent	Why It's a Talent and What It Enables/ Empowers Me to Do	When/Where I Recently Used This Talent
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			

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ASK THESE QUESTIONS

1. What are your Top 5 talent themes?

2. What intrigued or surprised you about your results?

3. Which theme fits you like a glove?

4. What is an example of how this theme works in your life?

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SYNTHESIS

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Highlight the words and/or sentences that best describe you on your Talent Theme report
- ✓ List your talent themes below
- ✓ Describe a recent situation in which you used or applied talents found in each theme

List your talent themes	Describe a recent situation in which you used talents found in this theme
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

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