

# THE STRENGTHS-FOCUSED GUIDE TO LEADERSHIP

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***Reader Downloads – the complete download***

*In our book we refer you to a number of resources which are available to download from our website. This booklet contains the complete pack. Each resource can also be downloaded individually.*

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## Assessing your mindset

**Exercise:** Think of your last week or two at work and everything that happened during that time. In the following **table**, in **each pair of statements**, tick the **one** that you think most describes your attitude or behaviour during that time:

1. I am pleased with what I was able to accomplish.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	1. I didn't manage to achieve very much.
2. I got to do the things that I do best.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	2. I did lots of things but I'm not sure which things I'm good at.
3. My team members were a pleasure to work with.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	3. My team members were difficult, as they usually are.
4. My team members made excellent contributions.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	4. My team members didn't contribute as much as they really should.
5. As far as was possible, the tasks people in the team were occupied with were allocated to them in a way that plays to their strengths.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	5. People did the tasks allocated to their role.
6. I gave each and every one of them feedback on their positive contributions.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	6. I didn't give much positive feedback. It's not something I do all that much.
7. It was clear to me that people in the team are highly motivated and enjoying their work.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	7. Team members didn't look too motivated or enjoying what they were doing. That's the way it usually is.
8. I was able to encourage people to think about where they could perform at an even higher level.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	8. I told a few of them what I was not happy about. I do this regularly.
9. I started off our team meeting with a sharing of achievements and successes since our previous meeting.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	9. I focused our team meeting on the problems in the team. That's what I usually do.
10. I ended our team meeting looking at what we had achieved during it.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	10. I ended our team meeting with a recap on what I need people to do, to ensure the message got through.
11. Where I had to point out weak areas of performance, I communicated my confidence in the person's abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	11. Where I had to point out weak areas of performance, I expressed my dissatisfaction.
12. When we addressed a problem I focused the discussion on describing the solution and how we will get there.	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	12. When we addressed a problem, I ensured we identified the cause and who was responsible.

Assessing your score: *Count the ticks you made on the left hand column and then look at which range your score appears in below:*

- 10-12: Congratulations – you're already very strengths focused.
- 8-10: You lean towards a strengths focus already.
- 5-7: You're about half way there.
- 3-5: You lean towards a focus on weakness/deficit.
- 1-2 Your mindset is very focused on weakness/deficit.

# Your 5 Day Challenge Instructions



Change creates change – small steps often lead to significant changes. To develop a strengths-focused mindset, we offer you the following exercise, our 5-day challenge. The 3 elements involve interactions on three levels – with yourself, in one-to-one conversations with your team members, and in meetings with your team. Use the page to take notes on your experience.

## 1. With myself

*At the beginning of each day:*

Which of my strengths will make most difference to my results today?

*At the end of each day:*

What were my best achievements today? What did I do well? Which achievements or successes did I enjoy most?

## 2. In one-to-one meetings with my team members

*At the beginning of each meeting I will ask them:*

'What have been your successes/achievements since we last met?'

*(Give feedback on strengths on show)*

*At the end of each meeting:*

'What was most useful (in our meeting)?'

## 3. In Team meetings

*At the beginning of the meeting I will ask:*

'What successes or achievements have you each had since our last meeting?'

*(Give feedback on strengths on show)*

*At the end of the meeting:*

Ask 'What have we achieved in this meeting? How can we make the next meeting even better?'



## Your 5 Day Challenge Instructions

These simple exercises encourage a strengths focused mindset. Of course there may be the need to discuss weaknesses or problems. However by beginning regular conversations with a focus on strength, we then 'find the energy to fix what is not working'. Make a note of your experiences during the 5 days below:

### My 5-Day Challenge

What I did	The impact I noticed it have
<i>With myself:</i>	
<i>In one-to-one meetings:</i>	
<i>In team meetings:</i>	

Thinking Strengths
<p><b>Analytical Thinking</b> <i>Using logic, objectivity and critical thinking.</i></p> <p><b>Common sense</b> <i>Taking a practical down to earth approach to thinking through challenges.</i></p> <p><b>Creativity</b> <i>Coming up with new and innovative ideas.</i></p> <p><b>Curiosity</b> <i>Interested to seek out new ideas, ways of thinking and facts.</i></p> <p><b>Detail Focus</b> <i>Focusing on the specific facts and details in a situation.</i></p> <p><b>Reflection</b> <i>Thinking things through in depth on one's own.</i></p> <p><b>Strategic Thinking</b> <i>Focusing on the longer term, bigger picture view; seeing patterns and themes across current and future challenges.</i></p>
Emotional Strengths
<p><b>Courage</b> <i>Taking on difficult and challenging situations.</i></p> <p><b>Drive</b> <i>The motivation to push forward with challenges and goals.</i></p> <p><b>Emotional awareness</b> <i>Being aware in the now of one's own and other's emotions.</i></p> <p><b>Emotional balance</b> <i>Remaining calm in varied circumstances.</i></p> <p><b>Enthusiasm</b> <i>Having energy and passion.</i></p> <p><b>Optimism</b> <i>Seeing the best possibilities in any situation.</i></p> <p><b>Persistence</b> <i>Sticking at it regardless of the challenges.</i></p> <p><b>Resilience</b> <i>Handling continuous pressure in one's stride and bouncing back positively.</i></p> <p><b>Self-confidence</b> <i>A strong belief in oneself and one's ability.</i></p>
Communicating & Influencing Strengths
<p><b>Collaboration</b> <i>Working well with others in joint endeavours.</i></p> <p><b>Communicator</b> <i>Communicating ideas effectively to others face to face.</i></p> <p><b>Developer</b> <i>Developing others well.</i></p> <p><b>Empathy</b> <i>Recognising and appreciating the emotions of others.</i></p> <p><b>Fairness</b> <i>Treating every individual fairly.</i></p> <p><b>Harmony</b> <i>Creating harmony and positive feelings in others.</i></p> <p><b>Humour</b> <i>Generating humour and fun in a way that enables effective interactions.</i></p> <p><b>Inclusion</b> <i>Including others appropriately in a situation.</i></p> <p><b>Leader</b> <i>Stepping into a leadership role in situations.</i></p> <p><b>Listener</b> <i>Hearing the ideas, views and emotions of others in a way that ensures they feel listened to.</i></p> <p><b>Motivator</b> <i>Energising others towards a goal.</i></p> <p><b>Persuasiveness</b> <i>Convincing others towards a particular idea or way of seeing things.</i></p> <p><b>Relationship Builder</b> <i>Building new relationships.</i></p> <p><b>Writer</b> <i>Writing in a way that effectively communicates a message.</i></p>
Action & Execution Strengths
<p><b>Adaptability</b> <i>Changing plans quickly when needed to achieve results.</i></p> <p><b>Decisiveness</b> <i>Taking decisions in a timely manner, when needed.</i></p> <p><b>Efficiency</b> <i>Getting things done in the time frame.</i></p> <p><b>Initiative</b> <i>Stepping up and getting on with what is needed.</i></p> <p><b>Organiser</b> <i>Organising practicalities in complex situations.</i></p> <p><b>Planner</b> <i>Creating workable plans to achieve the desired results.</i></p> <p><b>Problem Solver</b> <i>Solving problems that stand in the way of the desired results.</i></p> <p><b>Results Focus</b> <i>Maintaining focus on the result required and staying headed in that direction.</i></p> <p><b>Self-improvement</b> <i>Improving one's knowledge, skills and ways of thinking to improve results.</i></p>

## Exercise: Your 5 Step Strengths Map

Use the map below to capture your responses to the questions and 'map' your strengths. See if you can identify up to six or seven main strengths, and a similar number of untapped strengths. It is usual to identify no more than three or four weaknesses. If you find more, you're trying too hard!

### Steps 1-3: The activities that energise you:

#### 1. Your strengths

1. What do you love doing in your work? (*Think back to situations you have been most energised at work*)
2. What behaviours and attributes do you enjoy using, demonstrate well and use regularly?
3. When do you use these strengths? What examples can you think of?
4. What do you enjoy about using them? How do they make you feel?

#### 2. Your untapped strengths

1. What do you love doing but just don't get the opportunity to do very often. Perhaps strengths you used in previous jobs or roles?
2. When do you currently use this strength/these strengths?
3. What do you enjoy about using it? How does it make you feel?
4. On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is ideal, how much do you currently use that strength?

#### 3. Your overplayed strengths

1. Where might you be using some of your strengths too much?
2. What's the impact?
3. Where might it be the wrong kind of situation to use them?

### Steps 4-5: The activities that drain your energy

#### 4. Your learned behaviours

1. What things are you good at, but don't enjoy, or that drain you to do them?
2. What sort of things do you struggle to get started with?

#### 5. Your weaknesses

1. What do you perform less well in and also find to be a drain on your energy?
2. How does this weakness currently impact your role and work?
3. How important is it to your success in the role?

## Steps 1-3: The activities that energise you

### 1. Your strengths - REAP

What can you do to use these strengths more?

What sort of work, objectives or activities would help you use your strengths more?

### 2. Your untapped strengths - RELEASE

What can you do to create opportunities to use these strengths more and release this potential?

### 3. Your overplayed strengths - REGULATE

What can you do to regulate any strengths that you use too much?

## Steps 4-5: The activities that drain your energy

### 4. Your learned behaviours - REDUCE

What can you do to reduce and minimise the use of these things you do well but don't really enjoy?

### 5. Your weaknesses - RESPOND

Are these behaviours important in your role? If so, what can you do to develop them – or call on other strengths to help you? How can you make your weaknesses irrelevant? Or manage them?

## Business Objectives Action Plan Template



Objective What is the objective?	Measures of success How will you measure your achievement?	Strengths Which strengths are relevant to achieving this?	Timing When is it to be achieved?	Action Plan What actions will be taken to achieve the objective?

# Development Objectives Action Plan Template



Development ideas (prioritise)

Development goal What do I want to achieve and for what purpose?	Measures of success How will each goal be measured?	Strengths Which strengths can I draw on to help me achieve this goal?	Action Plan What are the specific actions I can take in support of each goal?			Target date
			Work-related opportunities 70%	Others' support 20%	Formal training & self-directed learning activities 10%	

In our book, *The Strengths-Focused Guide to Leadership*, we offer you a simple framework for a two and a half hour session that will enable you to introduce a strengths focus to your team or group in a lively and interactive way. We are confident that individual leaders, not just skilled trainers or facilitators, will be able to lead this session.

If you are not an experienced facilitator or would appreciate some further guidance on how to run the session, we provide here some more detailed facilitator notes.

Introducing a Strengths Focus		
Timing – minutes	Content	Detailed facilitator notes
15	Introduction	<p><b>Why we are here</b> – provide the background and context for why you are running this session with the team now</p> <p><b>Aims of the session</b> - present the aims of the session:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand what is meant by a 'strength'</li> <li>• Understand what is meant by a strengths focus</li> <li>• Have identified some of your own strengths in a 'strengths spotting exercise'</li> <li>• Know how teams can make the most of a strengths approach</li> <li>• Share what you like about the strengths approach and share your concerns</li> <li>• Get answers to any questions you have</li> </ul> <p><b>Content of the session - present the agenda:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction</li> <li>• What are strengths?</li> <li>• What is a strengths focus?</li> <li>• Strengths spotting exercise</li> <li>• Benefits of a strengths approach for teams</li> <li>• Likes and concerns</li> <li>• Questions and next steps</li> </ul>



15	<b>What are strengths</b>	<p><b>Exercise</b></p> <p><b>Ask</b> people to divide into pairs and discuss for a few minutes:</p> <p><i>'One thing that I am not good at, that I don't enjoy, and that drains me'</i></p> <p><i>'One thing that I am good at, that I love doing, and that energises me'</i></p> <p><b>Debrief</b> the exercise, asking: What did you notice? From doing that exercise, how would you define a strength? (Hear ideas)</p> <p><b>Offer a definition of a strength:</b> 'A strength is something that you are good at, that energises and motivates you and gives you great results.'</p> <p>Show the 3 circles model: Success = L+G+R (See Introduction)</p>
30	<b>What is a strengths focus?</b>	<p><b>Ask:</b> Why focus on strengths? (Refer to Chapter 1)</p> <p>Explain that research shows that individuals who play to their strengths are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. More engaged at work</li> <li>2. Experience less stress</li> <li>3. Are more resilient</li> <li>4. Are more likely to achieve their goals</li> <li>5. Perform better at work</li> <li>6. Are more effective at developing themselves and growing as individuals</li> </ol> <p><b>Share information about a strengths approach,</b> using information provided in the book. Choose from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence to support a strengths focus. E.g. Corporate Leadership council, 2002; Rath and Conchie, 2008 (Chapter 1)</li> <li>• The benefits of a strengths approach (Chapter 1):</li> <li>• The business case (Chapter 1)</li> <li>• What a strengths focus is linked to (Chapter 1)</li> <li>• Mindset of a strengths focus (Chapter 2)</li> </ul>

30	<b>Strengths spotting Exercise:</b>	<p><b>Explain</b> that there are on-line tools to help people identify their strengths, but how useful would it be to be able to do it every day conversation as well? Explain that is what we'll do now.</p> <p><b>Exercise</b> Introduce the exercise by asking people to: <i>'Write down 3 occasions when you did something well and really enjoyed doing it.'</i></p> <p>In groups of 3, people take turns to talk about their situations whilst others listen and note the strengths they see/hear. (They can use our dictionary of strengths if they wish) Each individual hears feedback from their colleagues on the strengths that have been spotted</p> <p>Allow 15 minutes to do the exercise</p> <p><b>Debrief</b> in the main group – Ask: <i>What was useful about that exercise?</i></p>
30	<b>How can teams make the most of a strengths approach?</b>	<p><b>Small groups discussion</b></p> <p>Invite people to work in groups to generate their ideas on: <i>'How can we adopt a strengths approach within our team?'</i></p> <p>20 minutes for the discussion</p> <p><b>Debrief ideas</b> - 10 minutes</p>
20	<b>A strengths focus: what do we like?</b>	<p>Divide into small groups to discuss the following:</p> <p><i>'What do we like?'</i> <i>'What are our concerns?'</i></p> <p>Hear ideas in the main group</p>
10	<b>Final questions and next steps</b>	<p>Take any final questions</p> <p>Agree some next steps for the team to take</p>

## Helping Others to identify their strengths using on-line questionnaires

In our book *The Strengths-focused Guide to Leadership*, we suggest four different ways that you can help your team members identify their strengths using an on-line tool.

These are:

1. On-line assessment and line manager debrief
2. On-line assessment with one to one debrief by an external coach/facilitator
3. On-line assessment with group debrief by an external facilitator
4. On-line assessment, one to one coaching debrief, plus an additional day to explore individual strengths and team strengths

With a finite budget for team development a question that you might ask yourself is, “How can I do this in the most effective and economical way?” You may have had one to one feedback from an internal or external coach on your strengths profile, particularly if the tool that you have chosen requires an accredited practitioner. Remember that our 5-Step Strengths Map presented in Chapter 3 of our book offers you an interactive free of charge process for helping someone identify their strengths.

If you decide to use an on-line tool with your team, to help you determine which approach to use, here are some case study examples from our own experience.

### ***1. On-line assessment line manager debrief to individuals***

Claire, who line manages four people had undergone a strengths assessment as part of a one to one coaching programme with me (Kathy) as her external coach. In this instance we used Realise2® and Claire had a detailed one to one debrief from me. She decided that it would be good to let her own team go through the experience of identifying their strengths in the same way, so she invited each of them to complete an on-line assessment and read their own reports, which could be done without the need for a qualified practitioner.

Claire works in a training department within a large environmental services organisation and has a good understanding of psychometric tools, so she felt she could do quite a good job of holding one to one discussions with her direct reports. The one to one discussions were arranged in order to ensure that they got maximum value from the process. As a result of the discussions, the team have become very enthusiastic about using their strengths and incorporating a strengths approach into what they are doing within the training function. For example, they decided to include a strengths assessment in a new format for their appraisal process. Individually, they have also been much more conscious about how they can play to their strengths in carrying out their day to day tasks and objectives.

### ***2. On-line assessment with one to one debrief by an external facilitator***

At the same time as I was coaching Claire, I was also coaching Susan, a manager from the Finance function in the organisation. Susan completed a Realise2® strengths assessment and we debriefed this at one of her coaching sessions. Susan led a team of three. Having done her own strength assessment and seen the value of it, she decided that she would like to introduce a strengths approach to her team using the on-line assessment. Being a little new to tools that describe attributes and preferences, Susan invited me to have a one-hour debrief with each team member to discuss their strengths profile and what it meant to them. Each individual followed this debrief up with a one-to-one meeting with Susan to share their learning from the experience. At a subsequent team meeting, Susan also provided the opportunity for each person to share their strengths with the rest of the team and talk together about how each person's strengths could be used in the team.

### ***3. On-line assessment with group debrief by an external facilitator***

We were working with Andy, a leader of a large team of thirty people who were based globally and Andy wanted to introduce a strengths approach to his team and give them an opportunity to think about their own strengths. We discussed the best approach to take and agreed that each member of the team would complete an on-line strengths assessment (Strengthscope™, in this case). They would see their report at a team Away Day when the concept of strengths was to be introduced. At that session individuals were introduced to the idea of strengths and given an overview of Strengthscope™. Individuals had the opportunity to explore their profiles on their own, then with coaching partners, and then in small groups via a variety of experiential exercises. As well as from having a very energising team away day, one of the additional benefits of this approach was that team members began to learn about the different strengths of others.

### ***4. On-line assessment, one to one coaching debrief, plus additional day to explore individual strengths and team strengths***

John was the Managing Director of his organisation and had a team of fifteen senior leaders. When he heard about strengths focused leadership, John felt that this was something that could make a big difference to the success of his team and the organisation, which was going through significant change. After having introduced the strengths approach to his senior leadership team, he gave each individual the opportunity to have a one to one coaching session with us to debrief his or her profile. In this instance we used Strengthscope™, which gave everyone the opportunity to have some 360 feedback, and it also meant that we could produce a team strengths profile. At a subsequent away day facilitated by us, the team explored each other's strengths and how they could be put to best use for the good of the team. They also explored their team strengths and weaknesses and the

## Helping Others to identify their strengths using on-line questionnaires

opportunities and risks that these presented. As a result of this very thorough and also very enjoyable introduction to strengths, a strengths focus is embedded in this team and they are continuing to build a strengths-focused culture and organisation.

Having read these illustrations of how people have used on-line strengths assessment with individuals in their teams, you may be very clear about how to take it forward in your team. If you would like further clarity, take another look at Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of our book. In Chapter 3 there is an unbiased analysis of the similarities and differences between the models, and also the 'dictionary of strengths' that each assessment.

In our book we mention these 6 conversation areas that as a leader you may often find yourself in:

They are:

1. Setting Goals
2. Reviewing progress
3. Addressing problems
4. Addressing weaknesses
5. Exploring and shaping further progress
6. Committing to action

We'll now take them one at a time. The tables below show the question or statement on the left, as well as the purpose or impact of that question or statement on the right. These questions and statements assume a 'coaching' style, where you will encourage the person to come up with their own goals and actions towards them. If you are not clear about when it's best to do this, please read Chapter 11 on strengths focused coaching.

Printing these pages allows you to take them with you to one-to-one meetings with your staff. You can use them to guide you until you become familiar enough with them not to need the notes any more.

## **Setting Goals:**

Question or statement	Purpose or impact of the question or statement
1. <i>What will success look like?</i>	1. <i>Clear description of success.</i>
2. <i>How will you/we measure it?</i>	2. <i>Ditto</i>
3. <i>What will be good about achieving it?</i>	3. <i>Enhances motivation</i>
4. <i>When would you ideally like to be there?</i>	4. <i>Puts success within a specific time-frame.</i>
5. <i>How clear are you about your role and actions.</i>	5. <i>Clarity on how to achieve success</i>
6. <i>How confident do you feel about achieving this? (Competence)</i>	6. <i>Measures and develops confidence/competence.</i>
7. <i>How enthusiastic do you feel about your role? (Energy)</i>	7. <i>Measures and enhances motivation/energy.</i>
8. <i>(If needed) How can we increase your clarity, confidence and enthusiasm?</i>	8. <i>Enhances confidence/competence and motivation/energy.</i>
9. <i>How well does your role play to your strengths?</i>	9. <i>Aligning goal with strengths (if these have been identified).</i>
10. <i>How could we make more of your strengths in achieving this goal?</i>	10. <i>Enhancing alignment between goal and strengths</i>
11. <i>What weaknesses might show up that are important?</i>	11. <i>Identifying important weaknesses.</i>
12. <i>How can we manage these best? What strengths can you use to do it?</i>	12. <i>Plan to manage weaknesses</i>

## Reviewing progress

Question or statement	Purpose or impact of the question or statement
1. What has been going particularly well?	1. Clear identification of successes and generation of accompanying energy.
2. How did you achieve this? What were the key elements in succeeding with this?	2. Builds clarity on ingredients for success and builds confidence/competence.
3. What difference has it made? What's been the positive impact?	3. Identifies important details and enhances motivation/energy.
4. What did you particularly enjoy about it?	4. Identifies alignment with strengths and enhances motivation/energy.
5. On a scale of 1-10, how on track are you?	5. Clear measurement to monitor progress now and later.
6. What else has helped you do this well?	6. Identifying important support, resources or strengths.
7. Summarise the above points with: 'So from what you've told me it sounds like you've been really good at ....' or 'This sounds like another great example of your strength of....'	7. Enhances confidence/competence and motivation/energy.
8. What/who could help you get even further with this?	8. Identifies further relevant support, resources or actions for further success.
9. What strengths do you have that could help?	9. Alignment with strengths.

## Addressing problems

Question or statement	Purpose or impact of the question or statement
1. What has been the problem?	1. If needed, allows the person a space to vent.
2. What's been difficult?	2. Ditto.
3. How has this problem impacted you, and others?	3. Ditto, and identifies relative significance of the problem.
4. What has helped you get through it so far?	4. Identifies strengths and resources or relevant support. Enhances confidence.
5. When you have had difficulties like this in the past, what got you through it?	5. Identifies strengths and resources or relevant support. Enhances confidence.
6. If you could remove this problem, how would things ideally be instead?	6. Identifies a clear preferred future/goal.
7. On a scale of 1-10, how close to that are you now?	7. Clarifies the distance to travel.
8. What progress have you already made?	8. Clarifies distance already travelled. Enhances confidence.
9. How did you achieve this existing progress?	9. Clarifies strengths, resources or relevant support. Enhances confidence.
10. Have you ever been higher on this scale?	10. Identifies any earlier successes/progress.
11. What was different then? How did you do that?	11. Identifies strengths and resources or relevant support. Enhances confidence/motivation.



## Addressing weaknesses

Question or statement	Purpose or impact of the question or statement
1. <i>What has gone less well than you would have hoped?</i>	1. <i>Can identify important performance gaps and motivation issues. May allow useful venting.</i>
2. <i>How do you feel about doing this kind of task? What specifically do you dislike? What aspect of it drains you?</i>	2. <i>May allow useful venting. Identifies draining tasks – i.e. weaknesses.</i>
3. <i>What strengths could you deploy more to improve this situation?</i>	3. <i>Approaches weakness from a strength. Enhances confidence/energy.</i>
4. <i>What other options do we have on improving this situation?</i>	4. <i>Identifies a range of options to manage a weakness. E.g. role sharing, delegation, upskilling etc.</i>
5. <i>Who else can help that has relevant skills, knowledge, strengths?</i>	5. <i>Identifies strengths, resources or relevant support of others that could potentially be tapped into.</i>

## Exploring and shaping further progress

Question or statement	Purpose or impact of the question or statement
1. <i>What would be the signs of a step forward from where you are now?</i>	1. <i>Clear identification of success criteria for progress. Builds personal ownership of solution.</i>
2. <i>When would you ideally like to be there?</i>	2. <i>Puts success within a specific time-frame</i>
3. <i>What are all the different ways you could get there? What other options do you have?</i>	3. <i>Creates options and therefore more potential to succeed. Builds on personal ownership of solution.</i>
4. <i>What else? (repeat)</i>	4. <i>Stretches thinking beyond the obvious first ideas.</i>
5. <i>What would others say you could do? (Stipulate some key stakeholders in their situation or experts in the field)?</i>	5. <i>Stretches thinking beyond the obvious first ideas. Encourages other perspectives.</i>
6. <i>Which of your strengths could you best deploy here? How would you use it?</i>	6. <i>Explores potential for aligning solutions with strengths. Stretches thinking on options. May enhance confidence /motivation.</i>
7. <i>Would you like some further suggestions from me?</i>	7. <i>Offers any useful ideas, but only <u>after</u> the person has built their own. (Maintaining personal ownership of solution).</i>

## Committing To Action

Question or statement	Purpose or impact of the question or statement
1. <i>Which of these options would you like to commit to?</i>	1. <i>Clear identification of preferred options. Builds personal ownership of steps forward.</i>
2. <i>When would you ideally like to have them done by?</i>	2. <i>Puts success within a specific time-frame</i>
3. <i>How confident do you feel about getting them done? 1-10?</i>	3. <i>Measures confidence.</i>
4. <i>(If needed) how could you increase your confidence?</i>	4. <i>Enhances confidence.</i>
5. <i>How enthusiastic do you feel about doing these things?</i>	5. <i>Measures motivation/energy/enjoyment.</i>
6. <i>What will be good about doing this?</i>	6. <i>Enhances energy/motivation?</i>
7. <i>(If needed) how could you increase your enthusiasm?</i>	7. <i>Enhances energy /motivation /enjoyment?</i>
8. <i>What support could you get from others?</i>	8. <i>Can enhance confidence</i>
9. <i>Who else needs to know about your plans?</i>	9. <i>Can enhance support &amp; confidence</i>

## The top 10 features of strengths-focused meetings



From our experience of great meetings, here are ten ways to bring a strengths focus to your meetings:

1. Start on a positive
2. Celebrate and explore successes
3. Always have an outcome focus
4. Focus on solution (as opposed to problem)
5. Get from solution to action
6. Get a good balance. (Between appreciation versus criticism, between asking others for ideas versus telling them yours, and between an inward focus within the team versus an outward focus beyond the team).
7. Listen fully (without interruption)
8. Take turns
9. End on a positive note and acknowledge contributions
10. Evaluate

*Each of these is described in detail in the book.*

# The GROW model in strengths-focused meetings



This adaptation of the GROW model is for team meeting discussions where the aim is to focus and build on strengths and what is already working well, whilst setting a clear compelling goal.

## GOAL

1. What would success look like in relation to this situation?
2. How will we measure our success in a way that is specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time framed?
3. What would be good about achieving this, for others and us?

## REALITY

1. Where are we on a 1-10 scale, where 10 is us having succeeded with the goal?
2. Have we been lower? What progress have we already made? How did we do that?
3. What resources do we have available to us? (time, money, people, skills, knowledge)
4. What obstacles might there be to us moving ahead?
5. When have we succeeded in situations like this in the past? How did we do it?

## OPTIONS

1. What would be the signs of us moving up 1 point on this scale? Where do we want to be with this by our next meeting?
2. What else? (Brainstorm?) And what else (getting multiple options)
3. Who are our key stakeholders? What would they say we could do to take a step forward?

## WAY FORWARD

1. Which of these actions do we definitely want to commit to? (If it is a majority decision let's vote on it.)
2. Who, what, when? - action plan
3. How enthusiastic do we feel about taking this action
4. How confident do we all feel that we can definitely get this done in the time scale discussed?

Working through this structure will give us opportunities to instigate turn-taking without interruptions, when we need to explore any important question in detail, and to gather a variety of different views.

Reviewing the progress of a previously set goal in a strengths focused way will incorporate the ROW of the GROW model, since the Goal will already have been set at the initial discussion. The Reality stage could incorporate the following:

### REALITY

1. What successes or achievements have we had on this since or last meeting?
2. How did we achieve this? What was the impact?
3. What else?  
*(Lots of opportunities here to celebrate and explore individual and collective success and achievements. This allows an on-going process of identifying strengths, and building a common view of best practice). It also positively reinforces helpful behaviours, and builds confidence and motivation.*
4. What strengths did we show/develop in this piece of work?
5. What didn't go so well – what do we usefully learn from that? What strengths/skills/knowledge would have helped us succeed? Where do we have them in the team? How can we develop them more? Who has the best natural fit for that?'
6. Where are we now on our 1-10 scale, where 10 is us having succeeded with the goal?
7. What obstacles might there be to us moving ahead?
8. When have we succeeded in situations like this in the past? How did we do it?

*This review of progress can then move to the O and W of the GROW model shown on the previous page.*

# Strengths-focused coaching with GROW

This adaptation of the GROW model is for applying in coaching sessions where the aim is to focus and build on strengths and what is already working well, whilst setting a clear compelling goal.

<b>G Goal:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What will success look like?</i></li> <li>2. <i>How will you/we measure it?</i></li> <li>3. <i>What will be good about achieving it?</i></li> <li>4. <i>When would you ideally like to have achieved it?</i></li> <li>5. <i>How confident do you feel about achieving this? (Competence)</i></li> <li>6. <i>How enthusiastic to you feel about this goal? (Energy)</i></li> <li>7. <i>(If needed) How can we increase your confidence and enthusiasm?</i></li> </ol>
<b>R Reality:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8. <i>On a scale of 1-10 where are you now, if 10 is the achievement of the goal?</i></li> <li>9. <i>What progress have you already made? How did you achieve this? What were the key elements in the success so far (identifies strengths)?</i></li> <li>10. <i>Have you ever been higher on the scale ? What was different then?</i></li> <li>11. <i>What could help you get even further with this?</i></li> <li>12. <i>What strengths have you used so far that will be useful later?</i></li> </ol>
<b>O Options:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>13. <i>What would be the signs of a step forward from where you are now?</i></li> <li>14. <i>What are all the different ways you could get there? What other options do you have?</i></li> <li>15. <i>What else? (repeat, repeat?)</i></li> <li>16. <i>What would others say you could do? (Stipulate some key stakeholders in their situation or experts in the field)?</i></li> <li>17. <i>Which of your strengths could you best deploy here? How would you use it?</i></li> <li>18. <i>What has helped in in situations like this in the past?</i></li> <li>19. <i>Would you like some further suggestions from me?</i></li> </ol>
<b>W Way Forward:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>20. <i>Which of these options would you like to commit to?</i></li> <li>21. <i>When would you ideally like to have them done by?</i></li> <li>22. <i>How confident do you feel about getting them done? 1-10?</i></li> <li>23. <i>(If needed) how could you increase your confidence?</i></li> <li>24. <i>How enthusiastic do you feel about doing these things?</i></li> <li>25. <i>What will be good about doing this?</i></li> <li>26. <i>(If needed) how could you increase your enthusiasm?</i></li> <li>27. <i>Who else needs to know about your plans?</i></li> <li>28. <i>What support could you get from others? Who else has relevant skills, knowledge, and strengths?</i></li> </ol>

## Progress Review Coaching (ROW)

This adaptation of the GROW model is for applying in follow-up coaching sessions where the aim is to review and build on existing progress and strengths.

<b>Reviewing Progress (Reality)</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What successes have you had so far on this?</i></li> <li>2. <i>What did you do to get that success?</i></li> <li>3. <i>What are you pleased about?</i></li> <li>4. <i>What else? (repeat till all successes are covered.)</i></li> <li>5. <i>What have been the benefits of these successes?</i></li> <li>6. <i>Who else has noticed? What would they say has been the positive impact? (Opportunity for Positive Feedback)</i></li> <li>7. <i>What was your goal? (set at the first coaching session on this topic)</i></li> <li>8. <i>Scale of 1-10? Where are you now?</i></li> <li>9. <i>Where were you last time?</i></li> <li>10. <i>What else has helped you progress?</i></li> <li>11. <i>Have you been higher? What was different?</i></li> <li>12. <i>What has not gone so well?</i></li> <li>13. <i>What do you learn from that?</i></li> <li>14. <i>What strengths have you used so far that will be useful later?</i></li> </ol>
<b>O Options:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>15. <i>What would be the signs of a step forward from where you are now?</i></li> <li>16. <i>What are all the different ways you could get there? What other options do you have?</i></li> <li>17. <i>What else? (repeat, repeat?)</i></li> <li>18. <i>What would others say you could do? (Stipulate some key stakeholders in their situation or experts in the field)?</i></li> <li>19. <i>Which of your strengths could you best deploy here? How would you use it?</i></li> <li>20. <i>What has helped in in situations like this in the past?</i></li> <li>21. <i>Would you like some further suggestions from me?</i></li> </ol>
<b>W Way Forward:</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>22. <i>Which of these options would you like to commit to?</i></li> <li>23. <i>When would you ideally like to have them done by?</i></li> <li>24. <i>How confident do you feel about getting them done? 1-10?</i></li> <li>25. <i>(If needed) how could you increase your confidence?</i></li> <li>26. <i>How enthusiastic do you feel about doing these things?</i></li> <li>27. <i>What will be good about doing this?</i></li> <li>28. <i>(If needed) how could you increase your enthusiasm?</i></li> <li>29. <i>Who else needs to know about your plans?</i></li> <li>30. <i>What support could you get from others? Who else has relevant skills, knowledge, strengths?</i></li> </ol>

In our book *The Strengths-focused Guide to Leadership* we discuss how you can strengthen your appraisal or performance review processes by incorporating a focus on strengths. We offered you some questions that you can use to enhance the process.

We again present here the list of useful questions you can use to carry out a strengths-focused appraisal.

You can also download these questions set into in an easy-to-use template that you can use to conduct your performance review discussions. Template for recording the objectives and action plans for both Business Objectives and Development Plans are also available on this website.

### **Reviewing general achievements**

*What do you think are the most important achievements in your role this year?*

Taking each achievement in turn:

*What was good about achieving that outcome?*

*What did you do to get that success?*

*What are you particularly pleased about?*

*What have you learnt from this?*

*What does this success tell you about your strengths?*

*(Opportunity for Positive Feedback)*



### Reviewing previous objectives

*What was your objective or goal? What were you aiming to achieve?*

*What were your measures of success?*

*What have you achieved?*

*How have you performed against each of the measures?*

*What has gone well? What are the reasons for this?*

*(Opportunity for feedback)*

*Which strengths were you able to draw on to help you succeed?*

*What have you not achieved that you intended to? What are the reasons for this?*

*(Opportunity for feedback)*

*What could you have done more of/less of/done differently to have achieved a better result?*

*What does this tell you about your strengths, that you can build on next year?*

*What have you learned?*

*How will you incorporate this learning into this year's objectives/goals?*

*What do you need to do now?*

### Reviewing Behaviours (or Competencies)

*Which behaviours do you **demonstrate well**?*

*Do you enjoy using these behaviours? Are they strengths of yours?*

*What examples have you got of how you demonstrate this behaviour well?*

*How has this success affected the results you have achieved?*

*What would other people say about your performance in this behaviour?*

*How can you build on this behaviour in the future? What would this look like?*

*Which behaviours do you think you **demonstrate less well**?*

*What examples have you got of how you demonstrate this behaviour?*

*How has this level of success affected the results you have achieved/not achieved?*

*What would other people say about your performance in this behaviour?*

*What can you do to turn this around in the future?*

*What would this look like?*

*What impact would doing this have on your success?*

### Reviewing career aspirations

*If you could have any job that you want in 5 years' time what would it be?*

*What would you particularly enjoy about it and how would this help you play to your strengths?*

*What skills, knowledge and behaviours will you need to have gained to get there?*

*What will your ideal job be in 2 years' time?*

*What can you do to develop yourself in that direction?*

*What opportunities are there to build the knowledge, skills and behaviours do you need for that future role?*

### Agreeing inspiring performance objectives

*What are you aiming to achieve? For what purpose? In order that what happens? What will success look like?*

*What will be good about achieving this objective?*

*How will you measure your success? How else?*

*Which strengths will you be able to draw on to help you achieve this objective?*

*Where are you now in relation to this outcome?*

*When do you want to have achieved this? What are the milestones along the way?*

*What ideas have you got for moving forward to achieve this outcome?*

### Interim/quarterly performance reviews

*When have you been at your best over the last three months?*

*When you were at your best, what did you achieve? How did you make those achievements happen? What has been good about achieving these?*

*When have you not been at your best? What is the learning from that?*

*What have you discovered about yourself in the last three months?*

*What are you looking forward to achieving in the next 3 months?*

*Which of your key strengths will you use?*

*What things are you going to find difficult in the next three months?*

*How can you plan to use your strengths to address these difficulties?*

*Which strengths will you align to deliver your goals?*

# Strengths-focused performance review template



## Strengths-focused Performance Review

### Guidelines for Preparation and the Discussion

Name:

Position:

Line Manager:

Period under review:

### Reviewing general achievements

*What do you think are the most important achievements in your role this year?*

Taking each achievement in turn, think about:

*What was good about achieving that outcome?*

*What did you do to get that success?*

*What are you particularly pleased about?*

*What have you learnt from this?*

*What does this success tell you about your strengths?*

# Strengths-focused performance review template



## Reviewing previous objectives

*Taking each objective in turn consider:*

*What was your objective or goal? What were you aiming to achieve?*

*What were your measures of success?*

*What have you achieved?*

*How have you performed against each of the measures?*

*What has gone well? What are the reasons for this?*

*Which strengths were you able to draw on to help you succeed?*

*What have you not achieved that you intended to? What are the reasons for this?*

*What could you have done more of/less of/done differently to have achieved a better result?*

*What does this tell you about your strengths, that you can build on next year?*

*What have you learned?*

*How will you incorporate this learning into this year's objectives/goals?*

*What do you need to do now?*

## Reviewing Behaviours (or Competencies)

*Which behaviours do you **demonstrate well**?*

*Do you enjoy using these behaviours? Are they strengths of yours?*

*What examples have you got of how you demonstrate this behaviour well?*

*How has this success affected the results you have achieved?*

*What would other people say about your performance in this behaviour?*

*How can you build on this behaviour in the future? What would this look like?*

*Which behaviours do you think you **demonstrate less well**?*

*What examples have you got of how you demonstrate this behaviour?*

*How has this level of success affected the results you have achieved/not achieved?*

*What would other people say about your performance in this behaviour?*

*What can you do to turn this around in the future?*

*What would this look like?*

*What impact would doing this have on your success?*

## Reviewing career aspirations

*If you could have any job that you want in 5 years' time what would it be?*

*What would you particularly enjoy about it and how would this help you play to your strengths?*

*What skills, knowledge and behaviours will you need to have gained to get there?*

*What will your ideal job be in 2 years' time?*

*What can you do to develop yourself in that direction?*

*What opportunities are there to build the knowledge, skills and behaviours do you need for that future role?*

## Agreeing inspiring performance objectives

*Taking each new objective in turn, consider:*

*What are you aiming to achieve? For what purpose? In order that what happens? What will success look like?*

*What will be good about achieving this objective?*

*How will you measure your success? How else?*

*Which strengths will you be able to draw on to help you achieve this objective?*

*Where are you now in relation to this outcome?*

*When do you want to have achieved this? What are the milestones along the way?*

*What ideas have you got for moving forward to achieve this outcome?*



## Interim/quarterly performance reviews

*When have you been at your best over the last three months?*

*When you were at your best, what did you achieve? How did you make those achievements happen? What has been good about achieving these?*

*When have you not been at your best? What is the learning from that?*

*What have you discovered about yourself in the last three months?*

*What are you looking forward to achieving in the next 3 months?*

*Which of your key strengths will you use?*

*What things are you going to find difficult in the next three months?*

*How can you plan to use your strengths to address these difficulties?*

*Which strengths will you align to deliver your goals?*

## Why strengths-focused recruitment?

When incorporating strengths into the organisation's systems and processes, one useful place to start is to look at how strengths can be embedded into the recruitment process to ensure that people are recruited into roles that fit them best and allow them to play to their strengths.

We are all familiar with the costs of recruiting the wrong person: low engagement and productivity, disruption to the workflow and the business, and low team morale. In addition, providing a bad experience for job applicants can damage your reputation and your brand, turning away otherwise good candidates out of their own choice.

By adopting a strengths focus you can pass on an early message to potential new employees that you are a strengths-focused organisation, you can add energy to the selection process, and most of all, you will gain an early insight about people's strengths and get the best snapshot of people's authentic selves.

## What is strengths-focused recruitment?

Strengths-focused recruitment involves building into the selection process a mechanism for getting people to talk about and reveal their strengths. In strengths-focused recruitment there is a shift away from "what can you do?" to "what do you enjoy or love doing and therefore, what do you do well?" and because of this, there is more opportunity to learn about the real person and select the individual who is the best fit for the job.

Used to its full potential, strengths-focused recruitment moves away from the traditional competency-based selection process and moves towards a selection process that identifies the strengths required within a role and selects people not just on the basis of whether they will perform well in aspects of the role, but also whether they possess the necessary strengths that mean they will derive energy and fulfilment when carrying out the role.

Some organisations have taken the step of identifying core strengths required for a role, similar to the way an organisation might identify competencies, and then build their selection process around this. They ensure their recruiters are skilled in identifying strengths and are comfortable conducting interviews that are strengths-focused. Assessment centres can also be designed to enable people to demonstrate their strengths as they take part in work-based scenarios and allow the observers to spot both high performance and high energy.

Alternatively, organisations dipping their toe in the 'strengths' water, can build strengths focus into their recruitment process by focusing solely on strengths-focused interviews. Strengths-focused interviews that encourage candidates to identify and talk about their strengths create a more positive and engaging experience for the candidates, allowing them to more easily reveal their innate attributes and articulate what it is that energises them and drives their best performance at work.

By identifying people's strengths, this will add further information to feed into the recruitment decision and determine whether someone is a good 'fit' for the job based not just on their experience and competence, but also on their strengths.

## Strengths spotting

Those involved in the selection process need to ensure they are really good at 'strengths-spotting' or noticing the strengths in others. Linley (2008) talks about looking at people through 'strengths-tinted lenses' so that you can really pay attention to the signs of people's strengths.

People can't fake genuine energy and the spark that comes from talking about their strengths, so you will be able to see and sense the energy and enthusiasm that comes from people when they are talking about their strengths, what they love doing and what energises them. You will see it in their animated body language, and hear it in the tone, pitch and pace of their voice, and the words they use. You will hear words such as 'really enjoy', 'love'. You will also see the pride and genuine interest when they talk about situations when they have been utilising or playing to their strengths.

## Strengths based questions

### Setting the scene

When you adopt a strengths approach in your recruitment, candidates will always notice a difference; it won't feel like the sort of interviews that they have experienced in the past. In order to prepare them for something that will feel a bit different, it is a good idea for the interviewer to explain the approach that they will take. For example:

*"We are particularly keen to find out about you as a person, your strengths and attributes, as well as what you are interested in. So, as well as exploring your experience and your skills, we will also be asking you questions about what you find most energising or when you find that you are at your best."*

You might also want to start the interview off on a positive note by asking them a question like:

*"Tell me about a successful and energising day that you have had recently." Or  
"Tell me about something that you have done recently that you were really proud of."*

And then follow up with questions such as:

*"What did you find especially energising and enjoyable about it?"*

*"What did that experience tell you about the sort of things you are really good at and enjoy doing at work?"*

### Exploring strengths

If you would like to generate a clear idea of the candidate's strengths - what they believe they are good at and what energises them - there are a number of very powerful questions you can ask:

- *What are you good at? How do you feel when you do this thing? (Check for energy)*
- *When do you feel like you are most like yourself at work?*
- *When are you at your best?*
- *What do you love doing?*
- *What energises you?*
- *What comes easily to you?*
- *What sort of things do you tend to learn most quickly?*
- *When do you find that you get most engaged and energised in your work?*

Linking this to the job being applied for, and knowing that for a job to be a good 'fit' for someone there must be opportunities within it for the individual to play to their strengths, you can ask:

- *"You have highlighted from what you have said, that you have strengths in ....., is that right? What opportunities do you see to play to your strengths and use them more within the role you are applying for?"*

- *“What could you do to ensure that you have the opportunity to play to these strengths within the role you are applying for?”*
- *“How could you capitalise on these strengths in this new role?”*

## Identifying untapped potential

We all have strengths that we do not find we get enough opportunity to use. Changing job roles is an ideal opportunity for individuals to consider what these untapped strengths might be and to choose a role, or even shape a role, that will provide opportunities to put these strengths to work, thus leading to higher levels of performance, engagement and job satisfaction.

During the interview process, you can reveal some of these hidden strengths by asking questions such as:

- *“What do you love doing at work, and believe you do well, but don’t get the opportunity to do very often at the moment?”*
- *“What do you really love doing at work that you wish you could do more often?”*
- *“What opportunities do you perceive within the role you are applying for that will allow you to use these strengths/do these things more?”*

## Discovering learned behaviours

In work we learn to be good at what we have to do; we believe that we need to strive to be good at every aspect our job role or the organisation’s competency framework. Many of these requirements of the job we find we can do to a very high standard, but we also find that they drain our energy. Being able to do something well but also finding that we dread the thought of doing it, is a sure sign of a ‘learned behaviour’. Learned behaviours do not lead to individuals giving of their best and people should be encouraged to think about how they can minimise their use.

To identify learned behaviours, you can ask questions such as:

- *“What sort of things do people tell you that you are good at, but you actually find that they drain you?”*
- *“What sort of things do you always leave until last? What sort of things are always left on your ‘to do’ list, or left unfinished?”*
- *“What aspects of your work do you do well, but don’t find very interesting or engaging? What do you do to get around this?”*

Linking them to the job being applied for, you could ask:

- *“To what extent do you foresee the need to do such tasks in the role you are applying for?”*
- *“How could you manage this so that you maintain your effectiveness and your fulfilment at work?”*

## Discussing weaknesses

This is always a tricky area in the selection process, since it is questionable how honest people will be about their weaknesses when they really want the job! You could introduce this by saying something like:

- *“We are not all good at everything, and we don’t expect people to be. We notice that the things that we are not good at often de-energise us...”*

You can then ask:

- *“What do you perform less well and that also de-energises you?”*

- *“What have you done in the past to compensate for these aspects?”*
- *“How important do you believe these aspects will be in your new role?”*
- *“If important, what could you do to develop these aspects, or call on other strengths that you have to help you?”*

## Linking strengths to competencies

It is very likely that you will want to talk to people about their skills and experience, and assess their level of capability against critical aspects of the role, or against a set of competencies.

A strengths focus can also be added to traditional competency-based interview questions, by asking further questions about the individual's reaction to the task or situation. For example, when a candidate describes their response to a question such as: “Can you tell me about a time when you have successfully coordinated a team of people towards achieving a challenging goal”, you can ask further follow-on questions such as:

- *“What did you particularly enjoy about that situation?”*
- *“How did you feel about this situation you found yourself in?”*
- *Was there anything you didn't enjoy about it?*

People's responses will help you identify whether the activities described were enjoyable and energising to them. They might give responses that indicate they were in a state of 'flow' when carrying out the task, loving the challenge and losing sense of time. This is a sure sign of a strength that can be re-applied in a future role.

## Next steps

If you want to 'strengthen' your recruitment process, here are some steps to help its implementation in your organisation:

1. Determine how you wish to align your recruitment process with your overall culture and philosophy. If you have a strengths focus at the heart of your organisation's way of being, you already have a head start, and it makes sense to send out this message clearly right from the very start of the recruitment process.
2. Decide how your advertising of the role will capture and communicate your focus on strengths. Once again this is an opportunity for you to 'strengthen' your brand and reputation.
3. Decide the degree to which you want to introduce strengths into your recruitment process. Do you want to start by ensuring that your one to one interviews are strengths-focused? Do you wish to identify a framework of strengths (core strengths and those related to individual roles). Do you want to add a strengths focus to the whole selection process, including Assessment Centres?
4. Dependent upon how you decide to proceed, you may need to create a task team to re-design the selection process, or bring in external expertise to help you with this. Alternatively, you can use some of the questions in this document to add a strengths emphasis to your existing interview material and decide how you want to record strengths identified through the interview process.
5. Determine how you will communicate with all those involved in the selection process and ensure that they are adept at 'strengths-spotting.'

# Strengths-focused recruitment



6. Determine how you will brief candidates about what to expect at their forthcoming interview.
7. Decide how you can enhance the selection process for all candidates by offering feedback that is strengths-focused, and therefore useful even for unsuccessful candidates.
8. Enjoy the experience and notice the results!

## The questions all in one place

Questions	Responses
<p><b>Opening the interview</b></p> <p><i>We are particularly keen to find out about you as a person, your strengths and attributes, as well as what you are interested in. So, as well as exploring your experience and your skills, we will also be asking you questions about what you find most energising or when you find that you are at your best.</i></p> <p><i>Tell me about a successful and energising day that you have had recently.</i> Or <i>Tell me about something that you have done recently that you were really proud of.</i></p> <p>Follow up with:</p> <p><i>What did you find especially energising and enjoyable about it?</i> Or <i>What did that experience tell you about the sort of things you are really good at and enjoy doing at work?</i></p>	
<p><b>Exploring Strengths</b></p> <p><i>What are you good at? How do you feel when you do this thing? (Check for energy)</i></p> <p><i>When do you feel like you are most like yourself at work?</i></p> <p><i>When are you at your best?</i></p> <p><i>What do you love doing?</i></p> <p><i>What energises you?</i></p> <p><i>What comes easily to you?</i></p> <p><i>What sort of things do you tend to learn most quickly?</i></p> <p><i>When do you find that you get most engaged and energised in your work?</i></p>	

<p><i>You have highlighted from what you have said, that you have strengths in ....., is that right? What opportunities do you see to play to your strengths and use them more within the role you are applying for?</i></p> <p><i>What could you do to ensure that you have the opportunity to play to these strengths within the role you are applying for?</i></p> <p><i>How could you capitalise on these strengths in this new role?</i></p>	
<p><b>Identifying untapped potential</b></p> <p><i>What do you love doing at work, and believe you do well, but don't get the opportunity to do very often at the moment?</i></p> <p><i>What do you really love doing at work that you wish you could do more often?</i></p> <p><i>What opportunities do you perceive within the role you are applying for that will allow you to use these strengths/do these things more?</i></p>	
<p><b>Discovering Learned Behaviours</b></p> <p><i>What sort of things do people tell you that you are good at, but you actually find that they drain you?</i></p> <p><i>What sort of things do you always leave until last? What sort of things are always left on your 'to do' list, or left unfinished?</i></p> <p><i>What aspects of your work do you do well, but don't find very interesting or engaging? What do you do to get around this?</i></p> <p><i>To what extent do you foresee the need to do such tasks in the role you are applying for?</i></p> <p><i>How could you manage this so that you maintain your effectiveness and your fulfilment at work?</i></p>	

<p><b>Discussing weaknesses</b></p> <p><i>We are not all good at everything, and we don't expect people to be. We notice that the things that we are not good at often de-energise us... ...What do you perform less well and that also de-energises you?</i></p> <p><i>What have you done in the past to compensate for these aspects?</i></p> <p><i>How important do you believe these aspects will be in your new role? If important, what could you do to develop these aspects, or call on other strengths that you have to help you?</i></p>	
<p><b>Linking strengths to competencies</b></p> <p>For each example of use of competency discussed:</p> <p><i>What did you particularly enjoy about that situation?</i></p> <p><i>How did you feel about this situation you found yourself in?</i></p> <p><i>Was there anything you didn't enjoy about it?</i></p>	

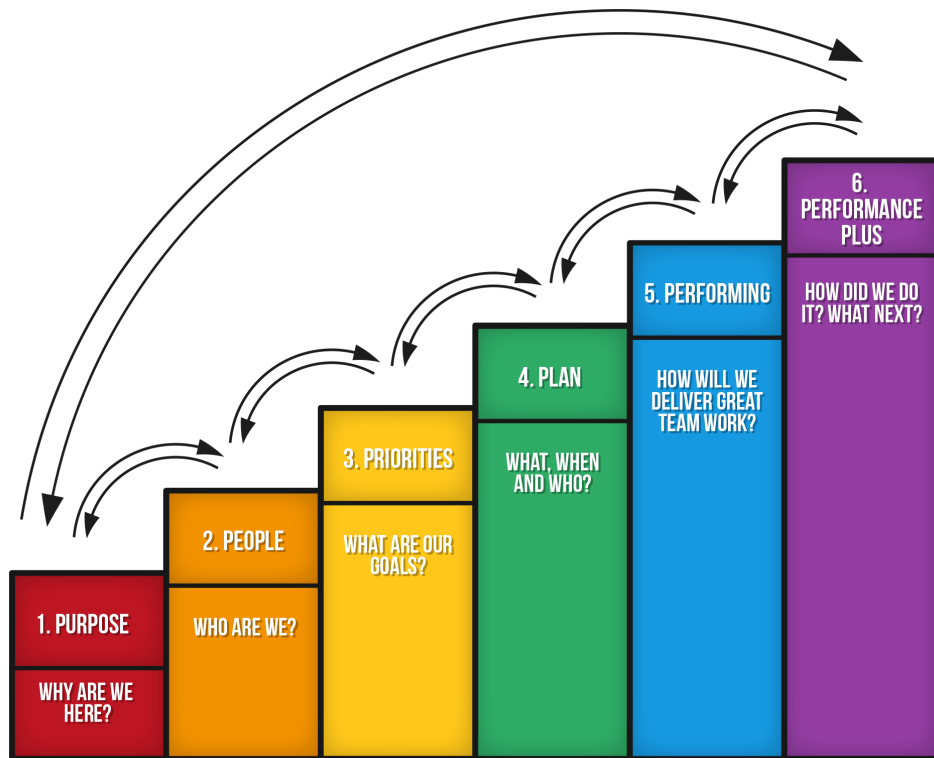
<b>Perceived Strengths map</b>	
<p>Strengths</p>	<p>Untapped Potential</p>
<p>Weaknesses</p>	<p>Learned Behaviours</p>

**Overall comments**



## 6 Step team assessment

The Six Steps to a High Performing Team ©



*A high performing team will have effectively addressed each of these 6 steps:*

<b>1. Purpose</b> – why are we here?	A feature of high performing teams is that team members are very clear and very committed to the aim or purpose of the team
<b>2. People</b> – who are we?	For people to work well together, it is important that they know one another's strengths, values, skills and expertise.
<b>3. Priorities</b> – what are our goals?	To deliver on the purpose of the team, the team needs to clarify what success with the team purpose will look like at some point in the future. What are the priorities? How will we measure our success? It will also be useful for the team to know what individual goals people have, what they want to get from their membership of the team.
<b>4. Plan</b> – what, when and who?	At this stage the individual strengths that team members bring can be aligned with the roles they will take in achieving the team's goals. A clear plan of action to achieve the team's goals is created.
<b>5. Performing</b> – how will we deliver great teamwork?	The team clarifies what processes, systems and behaviours it needs to have in place in the team for the team to succeed. This will include communication, information sharing, decision-making, conflict management etc. How the team will work effectively with stakeholders will also be considered.
<b>6. Performance Plus</b> – how did we do it? What next?	The team will have a process in place to regularly review its achievements, celebrate and reflect on how its success was achieved, and what to learn from it in terms of planning the next steps. It will also address any critical weaknesses or failings, and what to learn from them to create greater success.

For a detailed assessment of your team's effectiveness visit our website [www.sfleadership.co.uk](http://www.sfleadership.co.uk). In the information we provide there on team coaching we provide a sample team report summary based on our 6 step model.

## Strengths focused strategy - how am I doing?

Check how well you are currently applying strengths focused strategy, by doing a self-assessment on each of these questions:

Creating And Implementing Strengths Focused Strategy	Scale 1-5 (1=Not at All, 5 = Fully)				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. <i>As a team/department/organisation we are all clear about what we are passionate about, can do best and can achieve great results in?</i>					
2. <i>The purpose or aim of my team/department/organisation is clear, motivating and understood by all my people and key stakeholders.</i>					
3. <i>My people and key stakeholders have been involved in creating a clear and compelling description of the future we want to create</i>					
4. <i>My people have clear expectations of the results we are aiming to achieve for each of our key stakeholders</i>					
5. <i>There is a clear plan of action in my team as to how short, medium and long term goals are to be achieved, and these play to the strengths of individuals in the team.</i>					
6. <i>My people are clear about how their day-to-day work connects to the vision of the team/department/organisation.</i>					
7. <i>Reports are given on the teams' progress to the team and to relevant stakeholders</i>					
8. <i>Stakeholders report positive outcomes and results</i>					
9. <i>My people and key stakeholders have contributed to the creation of our strategy, and they have been involved in shaping its successful implementation.</i>					
10. <i>We celebrate our successes in achieving the strategic goals.</i>					

This will have given you a clear idea of what you are currently doing well and where to build on it. There is huge value in asking your team and your stakeholders to rate the questions above from their perspective and involve them in identifying what needs to happen to score 5 on all ten of the points. This could form an interesting first session when you are beginning to think about your team's strategic direction.

We thought it would be useful for you to see the action points from the end of each chapter all in one place. You can use this to plan your own and your team's development over the medium to longer term.

### **Ch2 The mindset of a strengths-focused leader**

1. Do the 5 Day challenge and take the time to notice the impact of these strengths-focused habits.
2. Continue using the ones that are making a difference.
3. Notice the impact of these habits on your mindset as a leader.
4. Generally pay more attention to the way you talk about yourself and your team members. Raising your awareness of this will highlight your current mindset, affirm where it is already strong, and show you the opportunities to 'strengthen' it.

### **Ch3 Identifying My own strengths**

1. Use one or more of our 5 methods to get very familiar with your strengths, untapped strengths, overplayed strengths, learned behaviours and weaknesses.
2. Look for opportunities to use your strengths more.
3. Consider how significant your weaknesses are to your performance.
4. Go on and work with the development tools in Chapter 4. These will show you how to optimise your development.

### **Ch4 Developing My strengths and managing My weaknesses**

1. Choose 3 – 5 strengths that you would like to develop and stand out for.
2. Create a strategy for developing these strengths and identify some actions you want to take. Use the R5 Action Plan.
3. Notice the impact on your energy and performance as you work on developing these strengths.
4. Identify any significant weaknesses that need to be addressed.
5. Create a strategy for responding to the area(s) of weakness.
6. Notice the impact on your performance as you work on improving the weakness.

### **Ch5 Aligning My goals & objectives with My strengths**

1. If you already have business goals, go back and look at how you are playing to your strengths in the achievement of these goals. What more can you do to ensure that you are drawing on your strengths?
2. If you do not have business goals in place, use the template provided (Appendix 1) to design some SMARTIE goals that are aligned with your strengths.
3. If you already have some development goals, check how much these goals are focused developing your strengths rather than your weaknesses. What can you do to make your development goals more focused on developing your strengths and only addressing significant weaknesses?
4. Use the template provided (Appendix 2) to design some new development goals that focus on developing your strengths and responding only to significant weaknesses.

### **Ch6 Introducing a strengths focus to Others**

1. Introduce the concept of a strengths focus at a team event and see whether this is something the team would like to explore more (a suggested process for this is offered below).
2. Invite your team members to identify their strengths using one of the many methods outlined in Chapter 3 and offer them feedback/individual one-to-one coaching.
3. Hold a one-day event where people are introduced to strengths and can find out about their own strengths, having previously completed a strengths assessment.
4. Hold a further one day event where the team can understand each others' strengths and explore the strengths of the team as a whole.
5. Develop a common vocabulary around strengths – start using the language of strengths.
6. Focus on strengths when agreeing business and development objectives (see Chapters 5 and 13).
7. Include a focus on strengths in recruitment processes (see Chapter 14)

8. Include a focus on strengths in performance management processes such as performance reviews/appraisals (see Chapter 12).
9. Build a team that focuses on strengths (see Chapter 15).
10. Introduce a strengths focus to a team that is managing a specific change (see Chapter 16) or developing strategy (Chapter 17).

### **Ch7 Identifying & developing strengths in others**

1. Ensure that your team are open to exploring their strengths.
2. Ensure that there is a high level of trust and rapport between you and your team members. If not, think about what you need to do to build this trust.
3. Revisit what you know about a coaching approach – you will need to draw on these skills to explore people's strengths with them.
4. Decide on the approach you want to take to help you team members identify their strengths, using one of the methods described in Chapter 3.
5. Set aside time to have conversations with each of your team members about how they can develop their strengths. Start by using the *R5 Action Plan* (See Chapter 4) and if needed, explore some of the other options for developing strengths.
6. Remember to always take a coaching approach!

### **Ch8 Supporting others to Manage Their Weaknesses**

1. Take some time to consider each of your team members. In your view, what are their strengths and do they have any significant weaknesses? What is the impact of these significant weaknesses?
2. Consider how aware each team member is of any significant weaknesses. Dependent on their current level of awareness, decide on the most appropriate way to discuss these weaknesses and create a plan to address them.
3. Work with each team member to create a plan to address any significant weaknesses.
4. Check in regularly with your direct report and offer feedback on progress and changes that you have observed.

### **Ch9 Day-to-day conversations**

1. Strengthen your mindset by building the habit of:
  - i. *Start with an outcome focus*
  - ii. *Focus on what's working*
  - iii. *Manage weakness from strength*
2. If you think you are not already doing it, make a habit of focusing on what you want and what's working rather than what you don't want and what's not working.
3. To get the most from one-to-one conversations with your team members, use the 6 scripts until you can have these type of conversations without them. Download them from our website [www.sfleadership.co.uk](http://www.sfleadership.co.uk)

### **Ch10 Strengths-focused meetings**

1. Have a copy of the 10 features of strengths-focused meetings to hand at each team meeting:
  - i. Start on a positive
  - ii. Celebrate and explore successes
  - iii. Always have an outcome focus
  - iv. Focus on solution (as opposed to problem)
  - v. Get from solution to action
  - vi. Get a good balance. (Between appreciation versus criticism, between asking others for ideas versus telling them yours, and between an inward focus within the team versus an outward focus beyond the team).
  - vii. Listen fully (without interruption)
  - viii. Take turns
  - ix. End on a positive note and acknowledge contributions

- x. Evaluate
    - a. What was good about this meeting?
    - b. How could we make it even better next time?
2. Use the strengths-focused version of GROW model as an effective problem solving, or solution creating, tool.
3. Use ROW to review progress on previously set goals
4. Follow the suggestions for actions before and after the meeting.

### **Ch11 Strengths-focused coaching**

1. Create a regular diary slot for each member of your team. This will make coaching a regular habit and more strongly embed the tool and its behaviours.
2. Download our 2 coaching scripts (Strengths-focused GROW and Progress Review Coaching) from our website at [www.sfleadership.co.uk](http://www.sfleadership.co.uk). Have these with you at each coaching session until you become so familiar with them that you don't need them anymore.

### **Ch12 Strengths-focused performance appraisals**

1. Take a look at your existing performance appraisal documentation. What opportunities do you have to introduce a strengths focus in to your existing documents and processes?
2. Decide how you want to incorporate a strengths focus into your appraisals and do the necessary preparation. For example revising the documentation, 'strengthening' the structure of your conversation, becoming familiar with how to use the *5 Step Strengths Map*
3. Ensure your team members are clear about what the 'new' approach to appraisals will look like and what benefits they will get from focusing more on their strengths than their weaknesses
4. Brief your team about how to prepare for their strengths-focused performance appraisal
5. Use the 10 tips provided in this chapter to bring a strengths-focused approach to your appraisal discussions. Download the template of questions from our website at [www.sfleadership.co.uk](http://www.sfleadership.co.uk)
6. Gather feedback from your team members about what they liked about the new approach to appraisal discussions. Ask them what suggestions they have for enhancing the process even further.

### **Ch13 Strengths-focused development discussions**

1. Take a look at your existing processes for identifying development needs and writing development plans. How strengths-focused are the existing processes?
2. Determine what you need to do to introduce more of a strengths approach to your development conversations.
3. Download the templates on our website for some useful guidance on structure and content of strengths-focused development discussions.
4. Plan in time with each of your team members to either review existing development plans or construct new ones, ensuring that the emphasis is on developing strengths and addressing only significant weaknesses.
5. Practise having some strengths-focused development conversations and notice the results.
6. Review development plans regularly with your team members, emphasising what has been achieved.

### **Ch14 Strengths-focused recruitment**

1. Take a look at your existing recruitment processes. How strengths-focused are they?
2. Determine what you need to do to introduce more of a strengths approach to your recruitment processes. Is this something you can do on your own, or do you need to enlist the help of your Human Resources team?
3. Download the templates on our website for some useful strengths-focused questions that you can use in the interview.
4. Liaise with your Human Resources team or those responsible for the organisation's recruitment processes and let them know what changes you would like to make.
5. Practise having some strengths-focused interviews and notice the results.

## Ch15 High Performing Teams

1. If they would be happy to do so, involve your team members in assessing how well the team has done each of the 6 steps.
2. For a more detailed assessment of the effectiveness of your team, visit our website at [www.sfleadership.co.uk](http://www.sfleadership.co.uk).
3. Involve your stakeholders in giving you 'team' feedback so that you have a more balanced external and internal view of your team's effectiveness.
4. To build higher performance in the team focus on each step sequentially, using our suggested activities.
5. Use all the suggestions of the book so far to 'strengthen' your team.

## Ch16 Leading Change

1. Follow our suggestions for:
  - i. Preparing yourself and your mindset
  - ii. Launching a change project
  - iii. Progress reviews
  - iv. Ending a change project
2. Build energy and involvement in the change by focusing on what's working and strengths. Use that energy and involvement to tackle what could be working better, as well as any significant weaknesses.

## Ch17 Developing Strategy

1. If developing strategy is your strength then play to it.
2. If developing strategy is not your strength, and is a significant weakness use our suggestions in Chapter 4 to manage it. This could be about tapping into your other strengths or the strengths of others that relate to strategy, eg Creativity, Analytical Thinking, Strategic Thinking, Planner, Common Sense, Detail Focus etc.
3. Use the assessment to highlight areas for action.
4. Follow our SPIRE process to build strategy around strengths.