

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

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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.