

Lean Into Strengths

Growing up we are forced to aim for perfecting all sorts of things, many of which are not our strengths. They may not be our weaknesses, exactly, but they definitely aren't things that could make us shine brighter than anyone else if we went with mastering the areas we are strongest in.

We already talked a bit about StrengthsFinder 2.0 and other such tests you can find online. In my opinion, you are intuitive enough to know where your strengths are. You don't really need a lengthy survey to tell you that you are great at one thing but absolutely suck at another. To me, those are best for large corporations that have hundreds of people to put into teams, yet they don't really know a single person.

You, however, have been living with yourself for a number of years. You may not be sure of everything, but you know what you get a kick out of and what you've gotten praised for over the years. You also know what you've done really bad in and want to avoid. Sounds easy, right?

It IS that easy...but life doesn't always work out that way, does it? That's why we usually work in teams and collaborate with others. They help out where our weak points come in.

The following training exercises are adapted from Tom Morkes' book Collaborate. While he focuses strictly on online businesses, I'm expanding his work to include careers and the educational realm as well as business operation.

Step 1: Defining your strengths.

What skills or activities come naturally to you that others struggle with?

While this may seem easy, the point that it doesn't make is that your skill must be valuable to the project. You might be the world's best underwater basket weaver, but if it doesn't help your project, then that skill is shelved for the duration of the project. Fill out the following chart to define your most valuable strengths for this project.

QUESTION	ANSWERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What comes naturally to you?• What activities feel effortless?• What do you do every day that people find difficult?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you do that people rave about and praise you for?	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What do you do well that other people have asked you to do for them or paid you for?	

METACOGNITION PREP TRAINING

On the other hand, we have weaknesses. In the culture of trying to shore up our weaknesses, many of us don't like to admit we have them. However, our weaknesses may be others strength, and this defines your best collaborators or teammates to look for. Let's look for those weaknesses.

QUESTION	ANSWERS
• What do you struggle with that others find easy?	
• What irritates you to the point of frustration?	
• What activities would you rather pay someone to do for you rather than attempt to do yourself?	
• What particular weaknesses do you need to make sure you manage for the good of the project?	

From here, take a look at what will work with the project at hand. One project might require you to lean on a different strength or fill in a different weakness to get the project done. If you're working solo, as is the case on many projects, think about how you can work around or with weaknesses. For example, with writing papers, many people do well at the actual writing part of it, but they may need to give themselves more time with research to make up for their ability to get distracted while working.

Jot down some notes about what tasks you will keep, what you want to delegate, if possible, or how you will work with your weaknesses if you aren't working with a team.

After Action Review

Everyone on the planet either hates admitting to weaknesses or are very humble in the face of their strengths. The exercises above proved that it's not the time for ego if you want to succeed.

1.) Did you have any surprises with strengths or weaknesses that you acknowledge?

2.) Which was harder for you to recognise: strengths or weaknesses?

3.) What strength do you want to focus on growing into your superpower?

4.) What weakness can you let go of completely in your life?

5.) Where can you find people to help you out when you need it? (Networking is fun!)