

Using Strengths Finder to Get the Job You Love

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Taking the Strengths Finder quiz and finding your top 5 strengths can be very interesting, but it does not tell you how to find a job using that information. That is left for you to determine. In this workbook I will outline how to go from strengths to finding a job that fits your strengths. The process is this:

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1. Understand Your Strengths

Start by getting a copy of the book Strengths Finder 2.0. This costs about \$15 on Amazon and includes a code to take the online quiz to find your top 5 strengths. Buying a used copy will not work because someone else has probably already used the code to take the quiz, and the code can only be used once.

Read the book (it is short) to understand what Strengths Finder is about, then take the online quiz. In return, you will get a detailed report of approximately 19 pages that includes descriptions and an action plan for each of your strengths.

Start by reading the section called Awareness which describes your strengths. There is a lot of information, so the best thing to do is make notes of things that you particularly notice, statements that seem to describe you. Instead of just copying, rewrite the characteristics in your own words.

Also read the final section of the report called Achievement. This section has quotes from people who share one of your strengths. You may find some of the quotes sound just like you. This can be another source of information when writing your brief descriptions.

After reading those 10 pages of the report, this is how I rewrote my strengths:

- Strategic – talented in proposing several alternatives to a goal; enjoys pulling together many disparate elements into a cohesive whole; especially good at finding potential problems in a solution and coming up with ways to overcome those problems.
- Relator – works well with others; enjoys helping other people achieve their goals.
- Communication – excellent verbal and written communicator; engaging presenter; interesting story teller.
- Intellection – continuous learner; deep researcher; voracious reader.
- Input – gets the data to support conclusions; loves the internet because it is so easy to find information.

Notice that I picked a small number of key items from each strength, things that summarized that strength for me. This much smaller amount of information captures the essence and is far easier to work with than 10 pages of description.

Action Items

1. Get Strengths Finder 2.0 book.
2. Use the code in the book to take the online quiz and get your report.
3. Read the sections called Awareness and Achievement
4. Write a short description of each of your strengths

Strength	Description

2. Determine Careers that Use Your Strengths

In part 1, you looked at your strengths and came to understand them better. Now you will start the process of turning strengths into a job. Look at the section of the Strengths Finder report called Application. It is 5 pages, with ideas for each of your five strengths. As you read through the ideas, sometimes a particular career will be mentioned. If that is the case for your strengths, make note of those careers that seem interesting to you. Also make note of careers that come to your mind as you are reading this section of the report.

Particularly note if the same careers are mentioned under more than one strength. Since this part of the report considers each strength independently, if the same career is under more than one strength, it is much more likely to be interesting to you. Also, careers under your first or second strength are much more likely to be interesting to you.

Careers mentioned in my strengths include teaching (twice), sales, marketing, ministry, media, journalism, and research. I have done most of these things and my feeling about each can be summed up as "Yes, but not fulfilling enough for the long term." The problem is that the suggested careers apply to just one or two strengths. If you have the same reaction to the careers suggested in your Application notes, you may be able to determine a career that is a better fit by looking for related items across your strengths and combining them into a career. Pick ideas from each strength that appeal most to you and fit them together into some kind of career.

For example, under Strategic I find "Make yourself known as a resource for consultation with those who are stumped by a particular problem or hindered by a particular obstacle or barrier." and "Make sure that you are involved in the front end of new initiatives or enterprises. Your innovative yet procedural approach will be critical to the genesis of a new venture because it will keep its creators from developing deadly tunnel vision." "Get involved on the front end of projects and initiatives." is also mentioned under Intellection. Under Relator I see "Find people to mentor." Under Input I see "Identify situations in which you can share the information you have collected with other people.", and Communication is all about sharing information with others using a variety of media.

Put all this together and it could describe a career of coaching people who are starting something new such as a new business, new sports team, new political party, new corporate initiative, or new job. I will make a guess that venture capitalists who want to help the companies they fund succeed either have a strength set similar to mine or have people working for them with those strengths. Not coincidentally, this is the kind of work I like the most, and the more complex the situation, the better I like it. This is true because the work specifically uses my strengths, the things I am best at doing.

If you are having trouble putting your strengths together into a career, ask friends and family what careers they think fit you. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (<http://www.bls.gov>) has long lists of different occupations. If you do not see something you like there, you might search the web for "unusual careers" and see if any of those match your strengths. An interesting book for ideas is "Odd Jobs: How to Have Fun and Make Money in a Bad Economy", by Abigail Gehring. You may not like any of the jobs, but these are sources of ideas that can lead you to identify a career. You might know someone who has exactly the job you think you want. Talk with that person about it, and see if the work matches your strengths. If that person has taken the Strengths Finder quiz, you can compare your top 5 strengths to see if 3 or more match. If they do, you probably will like that kind of work.

Action Items

1. In your Strengths Finder report, read the sections called Application
2. Using that information and other sources, identify a career field that uses your strengths as outlined in this section

Strength	Jobs or Careers for that Strength

Jobs or Careers that use 3 or more of your strengths:

3. Determine Specific Jobs Using Your Strengths

In part 2 you found careers that use your strengths. Maybe you found specific jobs, or maybe you were just able to determine a category of work. The next step is to use your interests, knowledge, and experience to describe specific jobs within that category. You can skip this step if you already know what jobs will use your strengths.

Think about your knowledge and experience: what do you know that points out a specific job within a career.

Think about who; who do you want to work with.

Think about what: what kind of environment do you want to work in.

Think about where: what countries will you work in, will you travel, or stay in one place.

Consider coaching new things as an example.

What do you know that you can coach others in?

I know software development from the small to the huge, corporate business processes, and how to startup a business, including setting up tools, online marketing, social media, and lean startup practices.

Who do you want to coach? You might prefer children, teenagers, adults, seniors, or maybe you will coach anyone interested.

I like working with adult professionals who are decision makers.

What environment do you want to coach in? On a ship, in a theater, in a workshop, in a school, at a corporation, in a conference space, and in your home are just a few places you might go to coach.

I prefer to work at my client's site face-to-face, supplemented with working from home with online tools.

Where do you want to coach? You might only coach locally or you might want to use coaching as a way to see the world.

I like working locally with the occasional trip to other parts of the world. Working with distributed teams is nice for that reason.

Considering my knowledge, experience, and strengths, some job titles for work I would like are CEO Advisor, Corporate Strategy Advisor, Executive Board Advisor, or Special Assistant to the President/CEO. All of these jobs are essentially the same, make use of my top five strengths, and generally have multiple levels of seniority, which allows for career growth.

Avoid picking jobs that are very different. If you have too many options, you will not be able to focus your resume and profile, and that will make it hard for recruiters to know what job you can do. If you do have a broad background, then you will need to make multiple versions of your resume, one for each kind of position. For example, I am an experienced musical theater director, another kind of job that uses my top five strengths. This is not at all related to corporate strategy, so I would not try to have the same resume for both kinds of work.

If you are having trouble describing a specific job or jobs, you can use ideas from the previous section (identifying careers) to also find specific jobs; talk with friends and family, visit the Bureau of Labor Statistics site (<http://www.bls.gov>), or search on "unusual careers" online.

You can also browse job boards looking for job descriptions that include your strengths. Take the descriptions you wrote for yourself in the first section and use the keywords from those descriptions to search job postings. Also, use a thesaurus such as <http://www.m-w.com> to find synonyms for your keywords and try those new words in your search. Think about what the word means to you to discover other words to search on. When I consider strategic, other words I might search on are strategy, strategist, problem solving, integrating, idea generating, or innovating. When I consider relator, other words I might search for are team building, cooperation, consensus-driven, mentoring, or coaching.

When you have an idea of a job title, try a search on it and see what other job titles appear that are similar or related. Some of those might be interesting to you. For example, when I searched on CEO Advisor, I found Corporate Strategy Advisor, Executive Board Advisor, and Special Assistant to the President/CEO.

Remember to look for jobs that include at least the top 3 of your strengths to find jobs that are most likely to be satisfying to you. The more of your top 5 strengths are needed in the job, the more likely you will really like that job.

Action items

1. Using the information you discovered and other sources mentioned in this article, identify one or more specific jobs that use your strengths

If you know a career field, use this table to get more specific about the kinds of jobs you would like to do in that overall career.

Career ->	
Knowledge & Experience: What do you know?	
Who do you want to work with?	
What Kind of environment do you want to work in?	
What countries will you work in? Will you travel or work locally?	

Job Titles for Jobs that use Three or More of My Strengths

4. Determine the Words to Describe Your Strengths

In the last section, you determined the jobs that use your strengths. Now do some searches for those jobs on LinkedIn and other job boards. Read the descriptions. What words are used to describe those jobs? Are the words the same words you picked for your strengths or are they different?

What you want to determine is how other people describe the job you want, and especially what words they use to describe your strengths.

You may find that job titles are not very accurate. For this article, I went looking for jobs with Strategist in the title. A large percentage of them had nothing to do with strategy. This is one reason that looking for keywords is so important; the job titles themselves may be meaningless to your search.

Here is an example of my strengths using words from an ad for a Corporate Strategist:

- Strategic – responsibilities are novel and cross-functional; select best pieces from experts and use them as input to your own ideas; can handle new, uncertain situations; see the big picture and the details.
- Relator – manage people; exceptional interpersonal skills
- Communication – make good use of abilities with language and numbers
- Intellection – consult leading experts; expect to be challenged and learn new things
- Input – become familiar with all elements required for strategic analysis; exceptional analytical skills

Compare that to my original descriptions:

- Strategic – talented in proposing several alternatives to a goal; enjoys pulling together many disparate elements into a cohesive whole; especially good at finding potential problems in a solution and coming up with ways to overcome those problems.
- Relator – works well with others; enjoys helping other people achieve their goals.
- Communication – excellent verbal and written communicator; engaging presenter; interesting story teller.
- Intellection – continuous learner; deep researcher; voracious reader.
- Input – gets the data to support conclusions; loves the internet because it is so easy to find information.

These two descriptions are very different, and yet refer to the same skill set. You can see how important it is to use the words from the job ads to describe your strengths. In a world where software scans your resume looking for keywords, you need the right keywords. Also, Recruiters and Hiring Managers will search using their own words to find people who match their jobs, not the words you use.

Doing this step is important. When you know how other people describe the job you want, you can use their keywords in your LinkedIn profile, resume, and cover letter to make it easier for people with those jobs to find you.

One of the advantages of LinkedIn is that recruiters do searches to find good people for the jobs they have. They do not just post ads and wait. This is particularly true for higher paying and high demand jobs. So determining what the recruiters are looking for and presenting yourself that way will make it more likely that they will find you.

Action items

1. Search job postings for the jobs you identified and identify key words that describe your strengths in those job postings

Strength	Keywords other people use to describe this strength

5. Tune Your Resume and Profile

In the last section, you found the keywords that other people use to describe your strengths. Now we need to put those keywords to use.

First, look over your resume. For each job, describe things you did using as many of the keywords as you can.

In an example from my resume, I was a Director of Object Technologies and Web Development. How can I describe that using words from the Corporate Strategist job description which looked like this? I'll just use strategic for an example.

- Strategic – responsibilities are novel and cross-functional; select best pieces from experts and use them as input to your own ideas; can handle new, uncertain situations; see the big picture and the details.

Everything in this description does not fit the Director job, but in this job I had to handle new, uncertain situations, and I had to see the big picture and the details. So I might write this in my resume:

"As part of the executive team developing corporate policies and procedures, I helped create the big picture and then translated it into detailed policies and directions for my division. Being responsible for client relationships in a fast changing high tech startup market, every day brought new situations I had to address with sometimes very creative solutions."

It is probably true that you cannot describe every job using all your keywords. That is OK. Use as many as you can while being honest about the work you did.

This whole approach is pretty straightforward if you are seeking one kind of job, such as a Project Manager or a Software Architect. The challenge is for generalists who are very effective at a lot of different jobs. I found I had to create multiple resumes, each targeted to a different kind of job. If I put everything I have done in one resume, it is far too long and confusing to people who are reading it. They just want to know if I can do their job; they don't care about anything else I am able to do.

There can be another challenge when your strengths are described many different ways in different job ads. You may find you need to somewhat tailor your resume for each job you apply for to match the keywords the job poster used for your strengths.

Now look at your LinkedIn profile. This does not have to match your resume. I do not list every job I have ever had in my LinkedIn profile, because some of my previous work is not relevant to the kinds of jobs I am looking for today. Keep your LinkedIn profile targeted to the kind of job you are looking for. Copy and paste the sections of your resume that are relevant into your LinkedIn profile. Write a nice summary at the top outlining your strengths and using your keywords.

Again the challenge is for generalists. It would be lovely to have different profiles targeted to different audiences, the same way you target your resume, but LinkedIn allows only one. So the generalist profile on LinkedIn will have to allow for any of the work you want to do. Try to use your targeted resume when applying for jobs, and definitely use a cover letter to point out your specific experience that relates to a particular job.

Action items

1. Create one or more versions of your resume using the keywords you previously discovered to describe the work you did
2. Based on the kind of work you are looking for today, copy and paste the relevant sections of your resume into your LinkedIn profile
3. In your LinkedIn profile, write a summary of your strengths using the keywords relevant to the work you are looking for

6. Find Your Ideal Job

You have put in a lot of work to this point. You know what kinds of jobs to apply for, you know what to look for in the ads, and your experience is described in your resume and LinkedIn profile using key words that match the ads. Now you are ready to actually find the job that is best suited to your strengths.

You can take several different approaches to finding jobs that may interest you using LinkedIn's search capability. I like using the advanced search because it gives me more options.

If you have a specific job title you are looking for, then in advanced search put that title in the title field. If you want the job to be in a particular area, then be sure to complete the location section. Run the search to get a list of possible jobs.

You might prefer to put some of your keywords in the keywords field. Again, fill in location if that is important, then run the search to get a list of possible jobs.

Of course you can put both a title and keywords. The more fields you complete in the search, and the more keywords you use, the smaller the number of jobs that will be returned. But those jobs should be very close to what you want, so that is a good thing. If you get no results, try using fewer keywords, change the keywords to something similar, or use either title or keywords but not both.

Once you have some ads, read through them. I usually right click on the job posting and open in a new tab for each of the results. That way I can work through them one by one and just close the tabs for those that do not interest me. We have been focusing on strengths not skills or experience, so as you read the ads you may find you do not have the right education or experience for one or more. Just close those tabs and continue looking at the rest. You are looking for jobs that are a close fit for your strengths as well as your experience.

When you find a job that interests you, read the ad carefully and make note of the things that you have in your resume. For example, if a job ad says the job requires managing people, I know that I should mention directing a division of a company in my cover letter because that was people management. My experience managing projects is a different skill set. Whatever your skills and strengths are, in the cover letter that you write you will discuss the things in your resume that make you a great fit for this job. Stay focused on that; do not try to repeat your resume in the cover letter. For some really great tips on creating a cover letter, see this blog post by Jenny Foss:

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/the-cover-letters-that-make-hiring-managers-smile-then-call-you>

In the job ad, if you click on the company name (or right click and open a new tab), the top right of the page will show you people you know at that company. LinkedIn will also show you people who work for the company who are two degrees from you. One of your first degree contacts may be willing to introduce you to someone inside the company. Many employers give preference to people referred by other employees.

Review the company's job application policies if they are available. Some companies will not allow anyone to talk with you if your resume is not in the system. For those companies, an inside referral is not enough; you must also submit your resume through LinkedIn or the company's website. At other companies, if your resume is already in the system, the employee does not get credit for referring you. In that case, you do not want to apply online. Ask your contact inside the company for the best approach.

If you do not get an inside referral, definitely apply through LinkedIn or the company website. Also, if there is a job poster indicated, look at that person's LinkedIn profile. If you are connected, then send a message letting him or her know you are interested in the job. If you are not connected, try to get an introduction from a mutual acquaintance, and then send your message indicating interest. The

job poster may have received a hundred applications; you want yours to get noticed (in a good way).

Do not stop with applying for one job. It is possible you will get it, but usually you will apply for many jobs before you finally get an offer.

With all this preparation, you are also ready to expand your search outside of jobs that are advertised. This article has some really good advice on how to find jobs that are not posted in ads: <http://www.businessinsider.com/tips-for-penetrating-hidden-job-market-2014-6>

My final advice: When you are called for an interview, do your homework. Go to the company website and be sure you know what they do. If they have a blog, read it. Write a list of questions you have about the company, department you will work in, or the job itself and take those questions with you to the interview. You may be a perfect fit for the job, but if you do not show interest in the company, they will be much less interested in hiring you.

Action items

1. Find a job that suits your strengths, knowledge, and experience
2. Identify what to highlight in your cover letter
3. Write a cover letter for that job outlining how you are the best fit for this job
4. Discover if it is better to apply online or have a friend refer you from inside the company (or both)
5. Send your resume and cover letter to your friend or use them to apply online as appropriate

What to Highlight from my Resume in the Cover Letter

Contact Geri

Geri Schneider Winters is a consultant in the areas of business, management, and software engineering. Using software and project management techniques from Agile, Scrum, XP, OO, Architecture, and Design Patterns, business techniques from Analysis, Marketing, Lean Startup, and Joy Inc., and taking advantage of what science teaches about how the human brain works, she has helped her clients realize productivity gains of 25% or more in their operations. Her strengths of Strategic Thinking, Relationship Building, Communication, Research, and Analysis make her a particularly valuable consultant.

Visit <http://www.geriwinters.com> to contact Geri to help you achieve these productivity gains for your organization.