



**Strengths Based Leadership: Great Leaders,
Teams, and Why People Follow: A Landmark
Study of Great Leaders, Teams, and the Reasons
Why We Follow**

Tom Rath , Barry Conchie

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In recent years, while continuing to learn more about strengths, Gallup scientists have also been ex....

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Peg says

My new boss had Directors read this, with the personal self-assessment (new book purchase comes with a one-user only code to take the assessment on line - nice gimmick for sales). Basic premise is that you get more out of people in the work place if you emphasize getting them to do what they're already good at and succeed at; and the effort to correct weaknesses or strengthen vulnerabilities rarely pays off much. Very quick read for a management book (a good thing) with practical suggestions for working with, leading and following leaders with different dominant strengths. I turned out to be very strong on strategic thinking with solid doses of achievement-orientation and relationship management skill.

Laura G says

The psych major in me is interested in personality inventories, so the StrengthsFinder assessment was intriguing to me. I can't really judge if the results were absolutely accurate for me; most of my top five "themes" fit me, but I think that I could feel that way about several of the other themes described in the book too. I like the idea of knowing your own and other people's strengths, capitalizing on them, and finding people with different strengths to round out a team. It would be easy to simply move on after taking this assessment and reading this book. I am hoping that discussion with colleagues at LCPS will contribute to a more lasting takeaway.

Alyse says

Ok, nothing groundbreaking or new from the original StrengthsFinders in my opinion. Most of the book is additional resources and short anecdotes from a few business leaders.

Gene Babon says

Strengths Based Leadership is my early candidate for Best Business Book of 2009. This is a companion book to StrengthsFinder 2.0.

The value in both books gets created when you use the unique access code provided and take the time to learn about yourself. This book focuses on providing analysis to those who are in a leadership position or want to be.

If you are in a role that requires you to lead a team or help make a team more productive in some way (who isn't?), then learning more about what makes you and your co-workers tick is vital to enhancing communication and improving productivity. This book provides solutions.

There are 34 themes/strengths/talents. Here are my five most dominant:

Learner | People who are especially talented in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.

Strategic | People who are especially talented in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.

Analytical | People who are especially talented in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.

Focus | People who are especially talented in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.

Significance | People who are especially talented in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.

The single point that resonated with me is that being well-rounded breeds mediocrity. What drives superior team performance is a TEAM that is well rounded with each player on the team contributing different strengths.

Effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and build on each person's strengths. It is incumbent on the leader to uncover what those strengths are.

Also important for a leader is to understand why people follow. Gallup's research indicates that followers have four basic needs: trust, compassion, stability and hope.

By having a clear understanding of your strengths and strengths of each team member you interact with you can help provide for the needs of your followers and create a more productive and positive work environment.

A four step plan for maximizing the contents of this book:

1. Read this book
2. Complete the analysis
3. Have teammates complete the StrengthsFinder 2.0 analysis
4. Meet weekly to discuss moving toward a strengths-based work team

That's the theory. Go forth and implement!

Jennie says

How is this a book? No, I am seriously asking. I have no problems with the material in the book. In fact it seems to be a good follow up to First Break All The Rules. The problem is tht there are about 45 pages of book and the rest is a couple of case studeis and then all about the categories. And not in an indepth way...more in a useless bulleted overview way. This book had potential but ended up feeling like a bloated magazine quiz. This never needed to be anything more than the website with quiz.

Michelle says

My brother is in town and while we were out and about he mentioned that he read this book first within a management program at work and then again within a service group at his church. As he was talking about it, it seemed as if there were many things that would interest me that go along with the themes in the book. Obviously, from the title you can see that the book focuses on finding your personal strengths as a leader. I picked it up and read it very quickly...one night.

Debbie, you would understand...I have highlighter marks, post-its and pencil marks in the margins.

This was such a good time for me to read this book! I have no other responsibilities pulling at me right now, so I could actually spend the time reading and thinking. It affected me a few different ways and in different applications, but all related to how I think about special education (since that is where I spend most of my leadership skills).

First, a friend and I just finished running a "Christmas Camp" for girls with mild to moderate disabilities and their siblings. If this actually turns into something that we continue with, the book would be a great discussion point for us to delineate responsibilities of running camps and activities.

Second, I'd love for my two assistants to read this book and then have the three of us talk about classroom climate and goals. While we typically think of teaching assistants in a "followers" role, the reality is, in the classroom to children, they are leaders. The two ladies I work with are quite talented and compassionate so they no doubt have leadership qualities.

Third, I'd like to e-mail the author and have some discussions on creating a strengths finder for children. The kids in my class are there based on their deficits. At the age they are, (8 and 9) they are starting to become very socially aware that they are in a "special" class. I hate this aspect of my job. I can tell them all of the strengths that I see, but they (much like adults and society) want "proof." I think a strengths finder assessment for children would be beneficial!

There is a quote in the book that struck me: "At a very basic level, it is hard to build self-confidence when we are focused on our weaknesses instead of our strengths." When I think about this in terms of a child who is living with a learning disability or an intellectual disability, it frustrates me. Our current special educational model is based upon what is impeding the child from learning rather than based upon building strengths of a child who is struggling. There's another educational researcher, Torgenson (I think), who through his research has found that the single most influential factor in future reading success is prior positive reading experiences. How do we know and understand the value of strengths based performance and positive experiences and yet we continue to operate on a deficit driven model and pounding away at weaknesses? Crazy!

Perhaps my above rant clearly shows my own inclinations towards "includer" and "maximizer," but I do find the book to be generally valuable to people who have any type of leadership role within a family, community or work environment.

Jennifer says

I would like to preface this review by explaining that I am moving to a leadership position at work, and my manager asked me if I had ever had any formal leadership or management training (I hadn't), and offered to send me to a seminar. As I would rather do just about anything than go to a business seminar (jargon-speak! icebreakers! introvert-torture!), I offered to read a bunch of leadership/management books on my own time and try to find a leadership mentor. This is the first attempt at part one.

The trouble with checking this book out at the library instead of buying a new copy is that mostly this book is a marketing package for the Strengthsfinder 2.0 profile. Which costs \$9.99 without an unused code from the back of the book. Which I came very close to paying for. But then after reading the strengths descriptions at the back of this book, I came up with a list of strengths that I can almost guarantee would be my Top 5. (Belief, Consistency, Input, Learner, Relator). There were a few others that I felt drawn to, but mostly in the "I wish I were better at this" sense. But the majority were clearly not me.

Okay, I've already taken the VIA Signature Strengths survey, so I'm familiar with and appreciate the concept. (Of course those 34 strengths do not seem to have a 1:1 correspondence with Gallup's 34 strengths. (Seriously?! Then how did they both come up with 34?))

I don't know, this book did give me some things to think about as possible areas for future growth as a leader. And I suppose that's what I was looking for. But from the description, I was expecting more tips on assessing the strengths of your team, and what areas are missing, than the insinuation that you should pay to have them all take this test.

A mixed bag, but ultimately unfulfilling.

Erika RS says

I read this books as part of a reading group at work. It is a mediocre book with highly valuable information if you are willing to dig through the business speak and find it. As such, reading it in a group worked well. At our meetings, we were able to weed out the valuable information.

The theme of this book is that people do best when they focus on their strengths. This flies in the face of much popular wisdom which says that you should work to improve in your weakest areas. Instead, the authors of this book are of the opinion that focusing on your weaknesses will, at best, bring you up to mediocre. Focusing on those areas where you have natural talent and passion will bring success. They say that successful teams are balanced, but successful individuals invest in developing their unique talents.

Strengths Finder 2.0 has the word "strength" in the title, but it is actually about talent themes. A strength is what you get when you combine a talent theme with certain skills and knowledge. Strengths change over the years but talent themes tend to be fairly stable. The book has a brief introductory section followed by a catalog of talent themes. The catalog discusses how each talent theme can be applied to leading others.

To help you determine your talent themes, this book comes with a one time use code (i.e., never buy these books used) which gives you access to an online quiz which determines your strengths. Unlike some personality tests, this one is based off of years worth of research by Gallup. The result of the quiz is your

type five talent themes. If you want to know how the other 29 talent themes rank, you have to pay Gallup a whole lot of money. Annoying.

Each talent theme is highly specific and actionable. This list of the short descriptions gives some idea of their specificity, but the descriptions in the book have more information that make it clear that some talent themes fit you well and others are terrible (even though you might want to have it). My top five talent themes are, in order, Input, Intellection, Learner, Harmony, and Responsibility.

Like any program, the real value is proportional to the amount of time you are willing to put into it. The answers the books give you are just a start. I found my talent themes to be valuable starting points in figuring out how I could really apply my strengths to my job.

If you aren't a leader or are interested in exploring the talent themes in more depth, I recommend StrengthsFinder 2.0 by the same group.

(Note, when I wrote this in summary in 2010, I felt it was 1 star. I have not gone back and reevaluated the book since I took on a formal leadership position at work.)

Andy Bernstein says

This is a very good book. It goes along with the Clifton Strengths Finder survey (which is amazing). It gives many good insights into how to use your strengths to be a better leader and how to better lead people based on their specific strengths. Clifton identifies 34 themes/strengths, and the premise is to focus on strengths rather than on weaknesses. Try to focus on amplifying the points of your star rather than trying to be well rounded. That is the pathway to happiness and success. I need to re-read this and start putting it more into practice.

Elena Iulia says

Straight forward analysis of the meaning of leadership, followed by a wide range of types of leaders, this book presents the relationship between leaders and followers, the values that could help you be not only a great leader, but also a great person.

Mckinley says

Why follow leaders?

1. The most effective leaders are always investing in strengths.
2. The most effective leaders surround themselves with the right people and then maximize their team.
3. The most effective leaders understand their follower's needs.

2. Maximizing your team: 4 domains of leadership strength: executing, influencing, relationship building and strategic thinking

NO one is GOOD at all of these; idea is for team to be good at all.

- teams focus on results

- prioritize what's best for org and move forward
- members are committed to private lives along with work
- embrace diversity
- magnets for talent

Follower's 4 basic needs: trust, compassion, stability, and hope

2nd half of book is description of 34 themes of leadership style

effective leaders know who they are (strengths and weaknesses) and are true to that, have effective people around them and get others to follow, and see success as not only personal

Lydia says

An excellent resource. This book and results are great tools, especially when used in a leadership seminar.

Ron says

I am finding it harder and harder to find something new in leadership and personal development books. This one added barely anything to the previous books written on strengths and leadership. The only interesting addition was to break down the 34 core strengths into four leadership domains: Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking. No surprise here, one of my 5 core strengths fell under Execution, the other four were in the Strategic Thinking category. I've always led that way, and surrounded myself with people with the other qualities. There was also a brief piece on why people follow (they are looking for hope, compassion, stability, and trust), but this was covered in previous books on this topic. The last half of the book is a list of the 34 core strengths with advice on how to lead using each one if they are one of your core strengths. If you are new to the language and concept of strengths this would be a benefit, but if you have read the previous books on this subject it will be pretty redundant. Here's how I lead: intellectually, and with ideas. Everybody who has ever known me has said that. So if you've ever gotten any feedback about your leadership style before, this will likely be a letdown. If you haven't, it may be a good first step to self-knowledge.

Margo Kaestner says

I would strongly recommend taking the Strength Based Leadership Assessment BEFORE reading this book. It's a much more valuable read if you already know what your top five strengths are. This allows you to compare the leadership styles of the figures described in the book with your strengths in mind and makes for an intriguing read on how to most effectively lead organizations. Gallup has researched for decades on the specific traits that impactful leaders utilized to inspire, create, and lead. They've come up with 34 strengths that all fit into one of four different domains: Executing, Relationship Building, Influencing, and Strategic Thinking. A fantastic read for anyone looking to develop their leadership qualities!

Read this as part of my MBA Curriculum

Ha Truong says

This book breaks the conventional wisdom that people should fix their weaknesses and become well-rounded.

Rather, it advocates a different approach that people should lean forward their strengths. Great leaders have the acute awareness of their strengths as well as their weaknesses. But they don't struggle to fix their weaknesses, instead they find the complements. This way, they build strong, well-rounded teams.

This book also comes with an extra book about themes of strengths, how to leverage them and even what should do if you have an subordinate gifted with those strengths.
