



Strengths-Based Leadership Guide
(with action strategies)

Leader: Michael Maine

The Four Domains of Leadership Strength

As Gallup studied and worked with thousands of leadership teams, we began to see that while each member had his or her own unique strengths, the most cohesive and successful teams possessed broader groupings of strengths. So we initiated our most thorough review of this research to date. From this dataset, four distinct domains of leadership strength emerged: Executing, Influencing, Relationship Building, and Strategic Thinking.

Executing

Leaders with dominant strength in the Executing domain know how to make things happen. When you need someone to implement a solution, these are the people who will work tirelessly to get it done. Leaders with a strength to execute have the ability to “catch” an idea and make it a reality.

Influencing

Those who lead by Influencing help their team reach a much broader audience. People with strength in this domain are always selling the team’s ideas inside and outside the organization. When you need someone to take charge, speak up, and make sure your group is heard, look to someone with the strength to influence.

Relationship Building

Those who lead through Relationship Building are the essential glue that holds a team together. Without these strengths on a team, in many cases, the group is simply a composite of individuals. In contrast, leaders with exceptional Relationship Building strength have the unique ability to create groups and organizations that are much greater than the sum of their parts.

Strategic Thinking

Leaders with great Strategic Thinking strengths are the ones who keep us all focused on what could be. They are constantly absorbing and analyzing information and helping the team make better decisions. People with strength in this domain continually stretch our thinking for the future.

Gallup found that it serves a team well to have a representation of strengths in each of these four domains. Instead of one dominant leader who tries to do everything or individuals who all have similar strengths, contributions from all four domains lead to a strong and cohesive team. This doesn't mean that each person on a team must have strengths exclusively in a single category. In most cases, each team member will possess some strength in multiple domains.

According to our latest research, the 34 Clifton StrengthsFinder themes naturally cluster into these four domains of leadership strength. See below for how your top five themes sort into the four domains. Then, use the chart at the end of this report to plot your team members' top five themes and see how their strengths sort into the four domains as well. As you think about how you can contribute to a team and who you need to surround yourself with, this may be a good starting point.

Your Top Five Clifton StrengthsFinder Themes

Executing	Influencing	Relationship Building	Strategic Thinking
	Maximizer	Individualization	Intellection
			Futuristic
			Input

Followers' Four Basic Needs

Followers have a very clear picture of what they want and need from the most influential leaders in their lives: trust, compassion, stability, and hope. On the next several pages, for each of your top five Clifton StrengthsFinder themes, you will find a brief definition of the theme, strategies for leveraging that theme to meet followers' four basic needs, tips for leading others who are strong in that theme, and illustrations of what that theme sounds like in action.

Intellection

LEADING WITH INTELLECTION

People strong in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

Build Trust

- When you carefully analyze others' thinking and then respectfully give your honest opinion, you can help them avoid pitfalls and mistakes. They will appreciate your forthright willingness to help them succeed, and they will come to depend on you for this.
- Your sheer intellectual capacity will cause some to respect and revere you. Prove yourself worthy by remembering that thought without action is not always particularly helpful. Use your gift of Intellection to make a difference, and your respect will be well-deserved.

Show Compassion

- Engaging others in intellectual and philosophical debate is one way you make sense of things. It is also one way you build relationships. Channel your provocative questions to people who similarly enjoy the give and take of debate. They will seek you out as a friend and colleague who sharpens their thinking — and one they want to spend time with again and again.
- Some people will want you to think with them, while others will want you to think for them. You may be able to build relationships with some people because you look at things from an entirely different angle than they do. For people who are single-minded and action-oriented, you may be the kind of thinking partner who improves their odds for success. Show that you truly care about them by sharing your thoughts with them.

Provide Stability

- Remember to occasionally back up so others can follow the trail of your thinking. They may not be ready for the pronouncement until they have followed the path. Share the mental steps you executed to arrive at your current conclusions so people don't worry that your thinking lacks foundation.
- Help others understand your need for solitude and space to think. Let them know that this is simply a reflection of your intellectual style and that it results from a desire to bring the most you can to relationships and opportunities. Sharing the fact that you think deeply about what's best for them and for the organization can be a great comfort.

Create Hope

- Encourage others to use their full intellectual capital by reframing questions for them and by engaging them in dialogue. At the same time, recognize that there will be some

who find this intimidating and who need time to reflect before being put on the spot. Help them engage their intellect in the way that is best for them. Then inspire them to use that way of thinking to dream and meditate about the future.

- Others will seek out your opinion because they appreciate the wise scrutiny you give to ideas and efforts. Bear in mind that you are at your best when you have the time to follow an intellectual trail and see where it leads. Get involved on the front end of projects and initiatives so that your thinking can have a greater impact on long-term outcomes.

LEADING OTHERS WITH STRONG INTELLECTION

- Encourage this person to find long stretches of time when she can simply muse. For some people, pure thinking time is not productive, but for her, it most certainly is. She will emerge from quiet periods of reflection with more clarity and self-confidence.
- Have a detailed discussion with this person regarding her strengths. She will probably enjoy the introspection and self-discovery.
- Give this person the opportunity to present her views to other people in the department. The pressure of communicating her ideas to others will force her to refine and clarify her thoughts.
- Be prepared to team up this person with someone who has strong Activator talents. This partner will push her to act on her thoughts and ideas.

INTELLECTION SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Lauren H., project manager: “I suppose that most people who meet me in passing presume that I am a flaming extrovert. I do not deny the fact that I love people, but they would be amazed to know how much time alone, how much solitude, I need in order to function in public. I really love my own company. I love solitude because it gives me a chance to allow my diffused focus to simmer with something else. That’s where my best ideas come from. My ideas need to simmer and ‘perk.’ I used this phrase even when I was younger: ‘I have put my ideas in, and now I have to wait for them to perk.’”

Michael P., marketing executive: “It’s strange, but I find that I need to have noise around me or I can’t concentrate. I need to have parts of my brain occupied; otherwise, it goes so fast in so many directions that I don’t get anything done. If I can occupy my brain with the TV or my kids running around, then I find I concentrate even better.”

Jorge H., factory manager and former political prisoner: “We used to get put into solitary confinement as a punishment, but I never hated it as much as the others did. You might think that you would get lonely, but I never did. I used the time to reflect on my life and sort out the kind of man I was and what was really important to me: my family, my values. In a weird way, solitary actually calmed me down and made me stronger.”

Individualization

LEADING WITH INDIVIDUALIZATION

People strong in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.

Build Trust

- Sometimes you know more than people would like you to know. Keep strict confidences, and only share your insights with a person one-on-one. She should be the one to decide if she wants you to relate those insights to others.
- Others trust your instincts about people's unique qualities. Continue to build on that trust by focusing on the positive as much as you can when you are asked to share your impressions about someone.
- Stand behind your tendency to treat each person individually according to need, strength, and style. Many may see this as “playing favorites” and distrust you. Be prepared to defend your Individualization from a performance-excellence standpoint, as well as from a humane perspective. This will give others confidence in your decisions.

Show Compassion

- Others are often surprised at the depth of your insights about them, especially when you've known them only a short time. You've probably heard “How did you know that?” many times. As relationships develop, others will want to hear in greater depth your thoughts and insights regarding their actions, motivations, and talents. You are a mirror for them, and you offer a valuable perspective. Ask them to tell you more about themselves, and test your insights. Accept and affirm what they have to tell you.
- You may have the gift of gifting — choosing the perfect gift for another person — even someone you don't know particularly well. Finding a small token and giving it at an unexpected time can be a quick relationship builder. Give yourself permission to reach out in this way, and enjoy the rewarding looks of surprise and delight. Who can resist a perfectly chosen gift? Bring joy into others' lives with little surprises.

Provide Stability

- Your awareness is essential to providing stability. By being attuned to others' desires and needs, you can help them because you can position them in the right place. Their confidence grows because they are being asked to do what they do best.
- “All generalizations are false, including this one” is a phrase you might enjoy. Knowing that you are conscious of each person's special circumstances helps him or her feel understood and secure. Let people know that despite the rules or the classic wisdom, you will take their unique talents and needs into account when making decisions about opportunities they can pursue.

Create Hope

- Sometimes people are more predictable to you than they are to themselves. Use your talent to notice others' consistent behavior patterns to help them see things they can't. You might be able to help them capitalize on talents they seldom use intentionally or avoid pitfalls that repeatedly ensnare them. Kindly give them feedback to help them streamline their dreams and aspirations.
- You are instinctively aware that individuals will be most productive when their environments are suited to their talents. Wherever appropriate, implement organizational policies that allow your associates to work in their own style — policies that allow people to express their individuality in the clothes they wear, how they decorate their offices, and the hours they work. Through these policies, you will engage and inspire your associates and enable them to produce their best work.
- You move comfortably among a broad range of styles and cultures, and you intuitively personalize your interactions. Consciously and proactively make full use of these talents by leading diversity and community efforts in your organization.

LEADING OTHERS WITH STRONG INDIVIDUALIZATION

- Ask this person to serve on your selection committee. She will probably be a very good judge of each candidate's strengths and weaknesses. By figuring out the right people for the right roles using her Individualization talents, she will also help improve the organization's productivity.
- When appropriate, have this person help design pay-for-performance programs in which all employees can use their strengths to maximize their pay.
- Ask this person to teach an internal training class or mentor new employees. She may well have a knack for spotting how each person learns differently.
- Look at this person's other dominant themes. If her Developer and Arranger talents are also strong, she may have the potential to be a manager or supervisor. If her talents lie in Command and Woo, she will probably be very effective at turning prospects into customers.

INDIVIDUALIZATION SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Les T., hospitality manager: "Carl is one of our best performers, but he still has to see me every week. He just wants a little encouragement and to check in, and he gets fired up a little bit after that meeting. Greg doesn't like to meet very often, so there's no need for me to bother him. And when we do meet, it's really for me, not for him."

Marsha D., publishing executive: "Sometimes I would walk out of my office and — you know how cartoon characters have those balloons over their head? I would see these little balloons over everyone's head telling me what was in their minds. It sounds weird, doesn't it? But it happens all the time."

Andrea H., interior designer: “When you ask people what their style is, they find it hard to describe, so I just ask them, ‘What is your favorite spot in the house?’ And when I ask that, their faces light up, and they know just where to take me. From that one spot, I can begin to piece together the kind of people they are and what their style is.”

Maximizer

LEADING WITH MAXIMIZER

People strong in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.

Build Trust

- Admit that you do some things well and others not so well. Allow people to admit that they too have areas where they consistently struggle. Simply being open can give others permission to be themselves in an honest way.
- Others will need to hear your message more than once before they believe that you’re truly expecting them to shine where they shine and that you’re avoiding their “dull spots.” Repeat the message so it is heard, understood, and trusted. Some people may need to know that you’re not going to surprise them later with an accounting of where they are weak or how they have failed. Continually focus on their excellence until they can truly trust that this will always be your emphasis.

Show Compassion

- Use your Maximizer talents to set others free. Too often, people think they have to live up to expectations to be a jack of all trades, a straight-A student, or a well-rounded citizen. Make it clear that you appreciate their unique gifts, their personal brilliance. You don’t expect all things from all people — you expect people to be more of who they already are. You may be the only one in people’s lives who sees their gifts and talents this way.
- Sometimes people don’t recognize their own areas of brilliance. You can be the one who leads them to the light. Point out moments of excellence you see in others’ performance. Tell them that you see the areas where they are truly gifted. We sometimes limit the notion of “talent” to obvious areas like sports or music. Broaden people’s view of giftedness. Tell people if they are a gifted friend, a gifted organizer, or a gifted accommodator. Broaden their view of self. You can change a life and become a personal champion.

Provide Stability

- The surest way to destroy other people’s sense of security is to ask them to repeatedly do something for which they are not adequately equipped. Instead, allow others to do and build on what they do best, and watch their confidence grow.

- Support others in the areas in which they don't excel. Give them confidence by helping them find complementary partners or systems that free them from failure.

Create Hope

- Don't let your Maximizer talents be stifled by conventional wisdom, which says you should find what is broken and fix it. Identify and invest in the aspects of people and organizations that are working. Make sure that most of your resources are spent building up and encouraging these pockets of excellence.
- Explain Maximizer concepts to those who may not have ever considered pursuing only what they do well. Point out the advantages of a life lived by these principles: Capitalizing on the gifts with which you've been blessed is more productive. It sets higher expectations, not lower ones. It is the most effective and efficient use of energy and resources. And it's more fun.
- You will probably not have the opportunity to observe everything people do exceptionally well. So encourage others to be the keepers and tenders of their own talents. Ask them to study their successes: What did they do best in winning situations? How can they do more of that? Inspire them to dream. Tell them they can come to you for these kinds of discussions — that this is one of your great pleasures in life. Transfer the ownership of their gifts to them, and support that ownership.
- As a leader, you have a responsibility to make the most of your organization's resources — and talent is every company's greatest resource. You see talent in others. Use your authority to help your associates see their own talents and to maximize those talents by positioning people where they can develop and apply strengths. For every need, there is a person with a gift to match. Recruit and select carefully, and you'll have an organization full of opportunities for brilliance.

LEADING OTHERS WITH STRONG MAXIMIZER

- Schedule time with this person to discuss her strengths in detail and to strategize how and where these strengths can be used to the organization's advantage. She will enjoy these conversations and offer many practical suggestions for how her talents can best be put to use.
- As much as possible, help this person develop a career path and a compensation plan that will allow her to keep growing toward excellence in her role. She will instinctively want to stay on a strengths path and may dislike career structures that force her off this path to increase her earning power.
- Ask this person to lead a task force to investigate the best practices in your organization. Also ask her to help design a program for measuring and celebrating the productivity of each employee. She will enjoy thinking about what excellence should look like across the organization as well as within in each role.

MAXIMIZER SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Gavin T., flight attendant: “I taught aerobics for ten years, and I made a point of asking people to focus on what they liked about themselves. We all have parts of our body that we would like to change or that we would like to see differently, but to focus on that can be so destructive. It becomes a vicious cycle. So I would say, ‘Look, you don’t need to be doing that. Instead, let’s focus on the attribute you like about yourself, and then we’ll all feel better about expending all of this energy.’”

Amy T., magazine editor: “There is nothing I hate more than having to fix a poorly written piece. If I have given the writer a clear focus and she comes back with a piece that is completely off the mark, I almost can’t bring myself to write comments on it. I’m more inclined to just hand it back to her and say, ‘Just please start again.’ On the other hand, what I love to do is take a piece that is so close and then refine it to make it perfect. You know, just the right word here, a little cut there, and suddenly it’s a brilliant piece.”

Marshall G., marketing executive: “I am really good at setting a focus for people and then building a sense of team spirit as we all march forward. But I am not so good at strategic thinking. Fortunately, I have a boss who understands that about me. We have been working together for quite a few years. He has found people who play the strategic role, and at the same time, stretches me to be even better at the focus and team-building role. I’m so lucky to have a boss who thinks this way. It’s made me more secure and made me charge ahead much faster, knowing that my boss knows what I am good at and what I’m not good at; he doesn’t bother me with the latter.”

Futuristic

LEADING WITH FUTURISTIC

People strong in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.

Build Trust

- When helping others imagine what could be, make sure that your visions are grounded in reality. Many people do not find it as easy as you do to envision what things will look like decades later, so provide as much detail as you can about what they can do to be a part of the future. A realistic attitude will help build trust and confidence in your visionary ideas.
- Given your natural ability to look ahead, at times you may see disturbing trends on the horizon. Even if you enjoy talking about possibilities more than problems, you may be able to help people see and eliminate potential roadblocks before they cause any difficulties. Others will come to depend on you for this and trust what you see.

Show Compassion

- One of the best ways to make a connection with another human being is to listen. Ask the people you lead about their dreams. Have them describe their ideal future to you. Somewhere in their story, your Futuristic talents are likely to find a connection. Build on that connection by asking questions, helping them find more clarity as they put feelings to words. They will feel closer to you simply because you took an interest in their hopes and dreams for the future.
- You see the future more clearly than others. Do a little dreaming for people. Tell them that these dreams are possible if they set their sights on them. Perhaps you see talents in them that they are blind to, or opportunities they have not considered. Investing your time and energy in thinking about possibilities and what is good for other people shows caring and friendship. It shows you are a leader.

Provide Stability

- People sometimes exaggerate the fear of the present because they cannot see beyond to a future when “this too shall pass.” You have the gift of perspective; your thinking is not bound by present circumstances. Help others share the calm you possess, knowing that another day will come, and all this will be behind them.
- As you think about the future, be sure to “check in” with the people you lead about their emotions. If the visions you have are too distant for them to imagine, or if too much seems uncertain, they may get worried or uncomfortable. Ask people how they see themselves in the scenarios you discuss, and help them know that these are “what if” pictures, not “must be” plans. They are the ones in control of their destiny.

Create Hope

- Because you have the gift of future thinking, it should come as no surprise that people choose you as their sounding board when they seek direction and guidance. You may have been playing the role of a guide for others your whole life. Think through this role. Consider what questions you should be asking. What do others need from you? How do you find out? Having a set of questions to ask when others seek you out may help you match your contribution to their expectations and aspirations.
- You inspire others with your images of the future. When you articulate your vision, be sure to describe the future in detail with vivid words and metaphors so that others can better comprehend your expansive thinking. Make your ideas and strategies more concrete via sketches, step-by-step action plans, or mock-up models so that your associates can readily grasp your intent.

LEADING OTHERS WITH STRONG FUTURISTIC

- Give this person time to think about, write about, and plan for the products and services your organization will need in the future. Create opportunities for her to share her perspective in company newsletters, meetings, or industry conventions.

- Put this person on the organization’s planning committee. Have her present her data-based vision of what the organization might look like in three years. And have her repeat this presentation every six months or so. This way, she can refine it with new data and insights.
- When your organization needs people to embrace change, ask this person to put these changes in the context of the organization’s future needs. Have her make a presentation or write an article that puts these new directions in perspective. She can help others rise above their present uncertainties and become almost as excited as she is about the possibilities of the future.

FUTURISTIC SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Dan F., school administrator: “In any situation, I am the guy who says, ‘Did you ever think about . . . ? I wonder if we could . . . I don’t believe it can’t be done. It’s just that nobody has done it yet. Let’s figure out how we can.’ I am always looking for options, for ways not to be mired by the status quo. In fact, there is no such thing as the status quo. You are either moving forward, or you are moving backward. That’s the reality of life, at least from my perspective. And right now, I believe that my profession is moving backward. State schools are being out-serviced by private schools, charter schools, home schools, Internet schools. We need to free ourselves from our traditions and create a new future.”

Jan K., internist: “Here at the Mayo Clinic, we are launching a group called the Hospitalists. Rather than having patients handed off from one doctor to another during their stay in the hospital, I envision a family of providers. I envision fifteen to twenty MDs, of various genders and races, with twenty to twenty-five nurse practitioners. There will be four to five new hospital services, most of which will work with surgeons and will provide para-operative care as well as care for the hospitalized elderly. We are redefining the model of care here. We don’t just take care of the patients when they are in the hospital. If a patient comes in for a knee replacement, a member of the Hospitalist team would see him before the surgery, follow him from the day of surgery through the days of hospitalization, and then see him when he comes in six weeks later for his postoperative check. We will provide patients with a complete episode of care so that they don’t get lost in the handoffs. And to get the funding, I just saw the detailed picture in my head and kept describing this picture to the department chair. I guess I made it seem so real that they had no choice but to grant me the funds.”

Input

LEADING WITH INPUT

People strong in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

Build Trust

- Become a trusted authority by making sure that the information you provide is both current and accurate. Check multiple sources just to be sure, and help others distinguish between fact and opinion.
- You earn respect by doing your homework and providing others with the information they need to succeed. When they see that you have put in the time and taken the responsibility to do thorough research, they can't help but appreciate your desire to do good work and trust your comprehensive findings.

Show Compassion

- People will be attracted to you as a leader because they see your resourcefulness and your awareness of the most recent developments and information. Let others know that you love to answer their questions and research their most pressing issues. Use your Input talents to connect with others, and make yourself available as someone they can depend on for help.
- When you meet others who share your interests, think beyond the learning opportunity at hand, and consider the relationship possibilities. Could this be the start of a friendship? Invite this person along when you discover opportunities to pursue your mutual interest, such as an exhibit or an upcoming speech. Use your Input talents as a stepping stone to relationships, and extend the first invitation.

Provide Stability

- Your knowledge base can be a foundation for stability. When others know that you have researched the topic at hand with your characteristic thoroughness and depth, they will feel confident that your decisions are well thought out. Share with them the extent of your research efforts.
- You don't merely collect information, you store it for a time when it might prove useful. By producing the backup and documentation for efforts that might seem risky to some, you assure them that they are moving in the right direction.

Create Hope

- Your mind is like a sponge — you naturally soak up information. But just as the primary purpose of a sponge is not to permanently contain what it absorbs, neither should your mind simply store information. Input without output can lead to stagnation. As you gather and absorb information, be aware of the individuals and groups that can benefit from your knowledge, and be intentional about sharing it with them.
- Expose yourself to the written thoughts and ideas of other people. Then engage in serious discussion about them. Through this process, you will become a learner who also teaches.

LEADING OTHERS WITH STRONG INPUT

- Focus this person's natural inquisitiveness by asking him to study a topic that is important to your organization. Or position him in a role with a heavy research component. He enjoys the knowledge that comes from research.
- Pay attention to this person's other strong themes. If he is also strong in Developer, he may excel as a teacher or trainer by peppering his lessons with intriguing facts and stories.
- Help this person develop a system for storing the information he collects. This system will ensure that he can find it when he and the organization need it.

INPUT SOUNDS LIKE THIS:

Ellen K., writer: "Even as a child, I found myself wanting to know everything. I would make a game of my questions. 'What is my question today?' I would think up these outrageous questions, and then I would go looking for the books that would answer them. I often got in way over my head, deep into books that I didn't have a clue about, but I read them because they had my answer someplace. My questions became my tool for leading me from one piece of information to another."

John F., human resources executive: "I'm one of those people who thinks that the Internet is the greatest thing since sliced bread. I used to feel so frustrated, but now if I want to know what the stock market is doing in a certain area or the rules of a certain game or what the GNP of Spain is or other different things, I just go to the computer, start looking, and eventually find it."

Kevin F., salesperson: "I am amazed at some of the garbage that collects in my mind, and I love playing Jeopardy and Trivial Pursuit and anything like that. I don't mind throwing things away as long as they're material things, but I hate wasting knowledge or accumulated knowledge or not being able to read something fully if I enjoy it."

Team Name: _____

Custom Team Distribution Chart

Team Members	Executing	Influencing	Relationship Building	Strategic Thinking