

Strengths Tip 1: Make a New Year Resolution to Use Your Strengths (4 Jan)

Change Agent: People strong in Change Agent are constantly involved with change, advocating for change and making it happen.



It's naturally the time of year when many of us will have just made our New Year's resolutions about what we want to achieve in the year ahead. This comes naturally for people who have a Change Agent strength. For the rest of us, the New Year period can provide an opportunity to jump start the changes we want to make in our lives. Make your change choices wisely, thinking about what really matters to you and what you want this year.

How can you use your strengths to achieve what you want? New CAPP research shows that people are far more likely to achieve their goals if they are using their strengths. How can you use your strengths to help you achieve your New Year's resolutions this year? Alex Linley

Strengths Tip 2: How Can You Help During the Big Freeze? (11 Jan)

Service - People strong in Service are constantly looking for ways to serve and help others.



For many of us in northern Europe, the Big Freeze has hit over the last week and we have experienced plunging temperatures and heavy snowfall. These challenging weather conditions can render any one of us vulnerable in different ways. Use your Service strength at this time to think about what you can do to help and support others. Can you cover for an absent colleague at work, clear snow from a neighbour's drive, or visit an elderly relative who might not be able to get out for themselves?

The television news abounds with stories of people who have gone above and beyond to help others in their time of need during this Big Freeze - like the kind people who lent the kids and I a sledge yesterday when ours wasn't up to the job! What can you do to help, both during the Big Freeze and beyond? If you have Service as a strength, this will come naturally. If not, what other strengths can you use to help others in what you do? Alex Linley

Strengths Tip 3: Have a Laugh and Beat Blue Monday (18 Jan)

Humour - People strong in Humour see the funny side of almost everything that happens - and make a joke of it.



Monday 18th January is officially the most depressing day of the year, according to psychologist Dr Cliff Arnall at Cardiff University. He uses mathematical equations to reach his verdict that the Monday of the third week in January means you are more likely to feel blue than any other day of the year. This is traditionally due to the Christmas debts, broken New Year resolutions, and bad weather - which particularly applies this year for many of us!

For those with Humour as a Strength, why not try to see ways in which you can use this to lift the spirits of those around you? Can you tell an amusing anecdote or two? Could you try to see the funny side of their situation in order to brighten their day? As someone who has Humour as a strength, but also a bare food cupboard (being snowed in!), I make daily jokes about the 'quality' of my family meals! Are there other strengths you could use to help overcome Blue Monday?

If it helps in your mission, tell your friends that the happiest day of the year, according to Cliff, is Friday 18 June 2010 - 6 months to go and counting! Trudy Bailey

Strengths Tip 4 (bonus): Lift the Spirits of Others Through Positive Words and Action (20 Jan)

Esteem Builder - People strong in Esteem Builder help others to believe in themselves and see what they are capable of achieving.



A friend of mine was recently nervous about a presentation and by simply drawing on a special quality of his and telling him how much I admired this in him, I was able to build up his self-esteem thus giving him confidence.

You could describe it as 'shining their light back at them'. In the presence of someone with Esteem Builder as a strength, people start to feel better about themselves, feel they have something to offer the world and start to see that they are worthy. Suddenly, life is not as bad, buds of hope and optimism for the future start to sprout and their self-esteem improves. The Esteem Builder's catchphrase comes back loud and clear in response, "I knew you had it in you!"

Do you know anyone that currently needs 'picking up'? What are the things that you admire in them and can share with them to benefit themselves? Reena Govindji

Strengths Tip 5: Listen Effectively, and Pay People One of the Biggest Compliments You Can (25 Jan)

Listener - People strong in Listener are able to focus on and listen intently to what people say.



Today heralds the birthday of the celebrated Scottish Bard Robert Burns, author of the famous "Auld Lang Syne". Many people celebrate "Burns night" with a traditional supper of haggis and renditions of Burns' poetry; poetry that displays Burns' love of language. To understand the meaning of his poems we need to listen carefully to the language he used. The same is true in our everyday language today; true understanding comes from listening carefully, from focusing and taking note of the words and subtle ways these words are used. See if today you can use your Listener strength with as many people as you can. In doing so, you will pay them one of the biggest compliments you can.

Often people think that they are listening, but they don't pay any attention to the answer, or they are just bursting for you to finish so that they can tell you their story. You can feel their impatience or see their eyes scanning the room. If you recognise yourself doing this: STOP and make an effort to really listen. When we listen effectively, people are drawn to us, they open up and share more of themselves. They feel valued. True communication starts with listening. Janet Willars

Strengths Tip 6: Tell Someone a Story (1 Feb)

Narrator - People strong in Narrator love to tell stories



It is National Storytelling Week this week, which was set up to increase public awareness of the art, practice and value of oral storytelling. The best Narrators I know realise that it is the telling of the story that really matters, not the accuracy of the account. They know how to bend, or should I say 'craft' the facts, in order to transform a mundane event into a delight to listen to. It's all about the way that they draw you in - eyes shining as they set the scene, holding you in suspense and then carefully leading you towards the impending outcome.

Whatever you may be doing today, why not tell someone a story? Could you captivate children's imagination by telling them a book-less fairy tale? Build a bond with colleagues by sharing a personal tale or two? Or pass along an anecdote that someone else passed on to you? Whatever you do, try and make the most of National Storytelling Week by practising your own skills as a Narrator. Emma Trenier

Strengths Tip 7: Deepen Your Relationships - Romantic or Otherwise! (8 Feb)

Relationship Deepener - People strong in Relationship Deepener have a natural ability to form deep, long lasting relationships with people.



Valentine's Day will be upon us this coming Sunday, 14 February. It's difficult not to notice the coverage that it receives in the shops, with cards, gifts and cuddly teddies all claiming to be the way in which we can show our feelings to the people we care about. Yet, there is a wealth of research from positive psychology and beyond showing that it's not material gifts that matter for the long term health of relationships, but our interpersonal qualities and actions.

People with a strength in Relationship Deepener know this and do it naturally. But what is it that they do? They listen carefully, they pay attention, they take note of the small things that matter. They care deeply, they build trust, and they share interdependence. Above all, they invest in the relationship for the long term. So, this Valentine's Week, as well as thinking about your romantic relationships, see what you can do to deepen your relationships more broadly. The benefits will be well worth the effort. Alex Linley

Strengths Tip 8: Take Responsibility - For Something You Believe In! (15 Feb)

Personal Responsibility - People strong in Personal Responsibility take ownership of their decisions and hold themselves accountable for what they have promised to do.



At this time of year followers of Eastern and Western Christianity consider giving up food and other festivities for Lent or 'Great Lent'. As with all religions which fast and give up pleasures for faith, this time of Lent takes great self-discipline and belief. People with a strength in Personal Responsibility may feel more confident approaching a time of fasting, because their commitment to keeping promises increases their will power.

Personal Responsibility is a strength which can help us commit to and deliver tasks and goals that we are striving to achieve. To deepen your own Personal Responsibility, consider the activity or goal for which you would like to take responsibility, but perhaps never have. Think about what you will gain by achieving the goal, at the same time as recognising some of the hurdles that you

may face along the way. What can you do to help yourself commit to overcoming these hurdles and achieving your goal? In the words of Winston Churchill, 'If not now, then when; if not us, then who?' Nicky Garcea

Strengths Tip 9: Get Thinking! (22 Feb)

Incubator - People strong in Incubator love to think deeply about things over time, pondering and reflecting to arrive at the best conclusion.



World Thinking Day, February 22nd, is a good chance to celebrate the sheer pleasure of deep thinking, readily available to those with the Incubator strength. They frequently pause to ponder and sometimes come up with wonderfully creative ideas or useful practical solutions. So how can Incubators make even more effective use of their strength? And what can the rest of us learn about the process of incubation?

First, capture your results: Keep a notebook of thoughts or a thinking diary in which you record bright ideas and perhaps extend or shape them. Second, test reality: Recruit to your circle a "thinking friend" whose opinions are mostly constructive but occasionally critical. They may help you to continue to develop your ideas once you start to think aloud. Third, prepare the way: A good idea emerges from intense study, robust discussion, or sensitive appreciation. Fourth, disseminate: Plan to share your thoughts with others and ponder how to the spread latest idea. Consider the channel and the audience as aspects of your deep thinking agenda. Above all, enjoy it - happy thinking! Jonathan Hill

Strengths Tip 10: Strive To Do the Right Thing(1 Mar)

Moral Compass - People strong in Moral Compass are guided by their strong ethical code, always acting and make decisions in accordance with what they believe is right.



The media is full of coverage of celebrity transgressions. Whether it's the alleged extra-marital affairs of Ashley Cole or Tiger Woods, the strained staff management of the British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, or the financial manipulations at Enron, the reality is that when people in the public eye do things wrong, they are paraded before us. To avoid this for ourselves, what can we do to develop our own Moral Compass?

First, distinguish between your own absolute values (which are fixed and unchanging) and your relative values (which might vary according to circumstances). Second, stand by your absolute values resolutely. This will take courage, authenticity, and fortitude but your efforts will pay off. Third, hone your strength of Moral Compass through small acts, as well as bigger ones - how we interact with others, how we conduct ourselves, and how we think all play their part. As we work on developing our strength of Moral Compass, we will be serving both ourselves and others. Alex Linley

Strengths Tip 11: Show a Little Gratitude (8 Mar)

Gratitude - People strong in Gratitude are constantly thankful for the positive things in their lives.



Mothers' Day is a perfect opportunity to show your gratitude towards your Mother, or indeed other people in your life who have loved and nurtured you. Demonstrate your gratitude sincerely by taking account of the tastes and values of the person, so that you tailor your gift or action to maximize its impact. Use this occasion to think more deeply about the non-material or original means of expressing your gratitude, rather than following the convention of ideas such as confectionary or mass-produced cards.

You could also use Mothers' Day as a springboard to become more authentic and personal with your gestures of gratitude more generally. Value the human touch and the desirable impact of a personalized card or gift, tribute, donation or even a verse of original poetry. Make sure you deliver thanks in real time and don't forget your colleagues! When did you last take the time to express your thanks to those who support you daily? If time is short, then send a thank you email, text or even give an old fashioned smile! Trudy Bailey

Strengths Tip 12: Find Time For Humility (15 Mar)

Humility - People strong in Humility are happy to stay in the background, preferring others to be recognised and to take credit for their contributions.



This Wednesday, 17 March, is St. Patrick's Day, the Patron Saint of Ireland who was revered for his humility. In a society where we are constantly running the rat race, many people believe that humility can be a disadvantage. Research shows, however, that humility is a key leadership characteristic that distinguishes between leaders who are effective and inspirational, and those who are not. Humble leaders will take a step back, looking around them to see what greatness surrounds them, and from which they can learn. They acknowledge their part in a bigger picture, that success is not all down to them. Jim Collins, in *Good to Great*, described these leaders as 'Level Five Leaders,' while Ed Schein has described the need for the leader of the future to be a 'humble inquirer.'

So, ask yourself today, what greatness surrounds you in others? What have you achieved in your life through the support of others, or indeed through the beneficence of the world at large? Being humble allows us to appreciate and value the good around us. It helps us to recognise the part that others have played, and will continue to play, in our lives. Above all, humility helps us to keep grounded. In doing so, it makes it more likely that we will last the distance to achieve sustainably over the long term. Reena Govindji

Strengths Tip 13: Spring Clean Your Life (22 Mar)



Order - People strong in order are exceptionally well organised in everything they do

Yesterday, the 20th March, was the first day of Spring. If you're like me, you might be itching for a good spring clean! Having spent the whole day re-organising the family filing system, cross referencing our diaries and scrubbing down walls and floors, it was with a satisfied smile that I ended yesterday.

Faced with a messy house, desk, or life, ask yourself what you can do to take control. What systems and processes can you put in place to make things easier to

find? What routines will keep you on track with personal disciplines such as exercising, reading, or staying in touch with family? How can you introduce some order to the committees and groups that you belong? Being ordered enables us to take responsibility, be efficient, and avoid wasting time. The simplicity of a little ritual and organisation prevents so much panic and confusion later on.

What will you do this Spring? Emma Trenier

Strengths Tip 14: Time to Make the Most of Your Time (29 Mar)

Time Optimiser - People strong in Time Optimiser maximise their time to get the most out of whatever time they have available in whatever situation.



In the UK at least, clocks went forward one hour this week to mark the beginning of British Summer Time. As we effectively lose one hour, it's an appropriate time to think about how we can make the best use of the time we do have. People strong in Time Optimiser will do this naturally. What can the rest of us learn from them?

I use four primary techniques to optimise my own use of time. First, I ask myself "What is the best thing I can be doing at this point in time?" This serves to focus my attention on being optimally effective with the time available. Second, I ask myself "How do I feel?" Knowing this, I select activities that best fit with my mood. Third, as the saying goes, "A change is as good as a rest." I vary what I am doing to keep myself interested and engaged. And fourth, learning from the great Peter Drucker, I carve out blocks of time where I can think and focus on the things that matter. These all help me to be productive - I hope they will serve you as well.
Alex Linley

Strengths Tip 15: Watching for Emotions (5 Apr)

Emotional Awareness - People strong in Emotional Awareness are acutely aware of the emotions and feelings of others.



When you think of Emotional Awareness, who comes to mind? We have asked ourselves this style of question sixty times over as we've worked on the Hall of Fame entries for *The Strengths Book* (released 28 April). You might readily think of your favourite therapist (actual or admired) - we did, and took a look back in history to include the German psychotherapist Karen Horney. We also turned to literature and included Kiran Desai, the Man Booker Prize-winning novelist, and to music, for Robert Smith, lead singer of The Cure.

As you can see, Emotional Awareness can manifest itself in many different ways. How does your own Emotional Awareness play out? To improve it, pay attention to the small nuances of behaviour that may reflect how people are feeling: a knitted forehead, a crinkled smile, a guilty laugh. Remember the patterns of your interactions with people, and be alert for anything that is different. Ask gentle questions to try and confirm your hypotheses - but be emotionally aware enough to hold back when you need to! A growing literature attests to the value of understanding emotions: Emotional Awareness is a social good - we all benefit from it. Alex Linley

Strengths Tip 16: Are You Persuaded? (12 Apr)

Persuasion - People strong in Persuasion are able to bring others round to their way of thinking and to win agreement for what they want to achieve.

The starting gun has been fired on the British General Election, and we'll see numerous persuasion attempts over the next four weeks. Robert Cialdini, the leading social psychologist, identifies six "weapons of influence" used in persuasion. Here we take a quick look at each in relation to the election campaign.



- (1) *Reciprocity* - vote for us now and we'll do this for you in the future.
- (2) *Commitment and consistency* - vote for us because we represent what you believe in, or because you have voted for us before. This is why there is such a strong focus on "getting out the core vote".
- (3) *Social proof* - vote for us because other people who are like you are voting for us (this is why celebrity endorsements are so trumpeted).
- (4) *Liking* - there has been a notable trend to a more "presidential" style of politics in recent years - note the Prime Ministerial debates we will see for the first time - so the likeability of the party leader becomes critical.
- (5) *Authority* - we're unlikely to see this used as much, because we have lost our faith in the integrity of Parliament.
- (6) *Scarcity* - vote for us now or you'll miss out on X (the idea that the offer is time-limited).

Throughout the election campaign, persuasion attempts will surround us. Use the opportunity to see them in action, and to explore how you can harness different persuasion techniques in your own work and life.

In the meantime, if you'd like to have your say on the strengths of the Prime Ministerial candidates, please complete our short survey (less than 10 minutes) at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/VXXW8CG> - Alex Linley

Strengths Tip 17: Are you a Dragon Slayer? (19 Apr)

Courage - People strong in Courage overcome their fears and do what they want to do in spite of them.

When most people think of bravery, their minds naturally turn toward stories of heroism such as soldiers at war, or daring rescues by emergency personnel. Few stop and consider the daily occurrences of bravery in our own lives. We tend to overlook the courage it takes to stick up for an underdog at work, to admit a failing to a colleague, or to take a risk in business.



As people around the globe prepare to celebrate St. George's Day on 23 April, it is timely to stop and consider the story as if it were not allegorical. Imagine what it would be like to face down a powerful and dangerous creature, knowing that the life of an innocent person hung in the balance. Imagine the mix of emotions you would feel: fear, uncertainty, anger, resolve and compassion. Imagine what you would have to tell yourself to steel yourself for the fight.

Of course, like St. George, we all have experience in facing down our personal dragons. For some people, it is confronting their fear of flying, while for others it is confronting a supervisor or spouse. We are all called to rise to the occasion in instances where we would rather run away.

People who are strong in Courage are admirable in that they do not let a little discomfort hold them back from doing what they think is right or from trying something new. Many courageous people link their actions directly to what is

important to them. So, the next time you are confronted with a metaphorical dragon, try taking stock of your values. Instead of focusing on your fear, concentrate on how your action will help you achieve the things you treasure.
Robert Biswas-Diener

Strengths Tip 18: The Power of the Written Word (26 Apr)

Scribe - People strong in Scribe love to write, conveying their thoughts and ideas through the written word.

As I thought about the publication of the various election manifestos, I realised that we had also written a type of manifesto in *The Strengths Book* (watch out for a very special offer if you buy from Amazon on Thursday 6 May - that day only!) We want to help you make the most of your strengths. We want to show you why using your strengths matters. We want to change the dialogues you have about what you can and can't do. That's why we wrote *The Strengths Book*, and we hope you are inspired by it.



To improve your own Scribe strength, you can use a technique we call "upward strengths comparisons". How do you do this?

- (1) Identify someone you admire for their writing skills. It could be William Shakespeare, Agatha Christie, or one of my own writing heroes, Malcolm Gladwell, author of *The Tipping Point*, amongst others.
- (2) Study their style (their tips and tactics, not their whole existence). For example, I read lots of Malcolm Gladwell's work, and particularly studied how he built up characters and imagery to tell a story. Note that I didn't try to "become" Malcolm Gladwell, I just tried to learn specific tips and techniques from him.
- (3) Use your observations to adapt and apply what you pick up in your own writing.

One of the biggest challenges people often face when writing is simply to start. So just start - write anything! And then edit, polish and refine. It's a myth that good writers just write naturally from the first go. Every writer I have met puts in the work of editing, refining and polishing before they get to the finished product. The more you write, the better you'll get - somebody once told me you need to write one million words before you find your voice. I haven't counted, but I'm still trying. And thank you to Malcolm for the lessons I am learning along the way. You'll find him in *The Strengths Book*, under Explainer. Alex Linley

Strengths Tip 19: Plan Ahead - To Receive a Free Gift! (3 May)

Planful - People strong in Planful make plans for everything they do.

When my CAPP colleagues asked me to write the strengths tip on Planful I thought they were joking! I am typically spontaneous and often put things off until the last minute. I do, however, really appreciate the more measured and strategic approach of planners. In fact, I have come to realise that planning is not stifling...it can be liberating to know in advance that you are prepared for a deadline, presentation, or even a date with your spouse. Being Planful can ensure that you are in the best possible position to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.



Unlike other emails where we offer general tips, I want to give you a real life opportunity to try out your Planful strength - and reap the rewards! As you probably know, CAPP released *The Strengths Book* last week. Here's where using your Planful strength comes in: If you purchase *The Strengths Book* online at www.amazon.co.uk on Thursday 6 May (but not on any other day) and send us your e- receipt at tsb@cappeu.com, we will send you a passcode to take the Realise2 strengths assessment free of charge! Being successful will mean planning ahead so

that you can remember this when Thursday 6 May comes around. This is our little way of saying thank you to those of you who show up to life prepared. Robert Biswas-Diener

