

knowing your strengths

having an understanding of your character traits and skills that are considered positive



At some point in your career, you'll likely be asked: *What are some of your greatest workplace strengths?* Maybe your boss will pose the question in your next performance evaluation; perhaps a hiring manager will ask in a future job interview. Whenever it happens, you'll want to be able to identify them.

Knowing your strengths will help you identify opportunities that would be a good fit for you. One of the best ways to determine the next steps in your career journey is to first *understand who you are*, which includes reflecting on your strengths. The better you know your natural talents, the more you can draw from them to search for and identify opportunities that will give you the chance to do what you do best every day, so you can then turn your raw talents into matured strengths and live up to your full potential.

Applying your greatest strengths will improve your overall quality of life and help you succeed. People who focus on using their strengths are *three times* as likely to report having an excellent quality of life and are *six times* as likely to be engaged in their jobs (Gallup 2020). So the sooner you start identifying, reflecting on, and growing your strengths, the sooner you can experience these rewards for yourself.

Listen to what others say you're good at. What skills do people compliment you on? Others quite likely see strengths in you that you haven't noticed. For example, if you often receive positive feedback on your listening skills, creativity, or command of details, pay attention. Ask a friend or colleague to spend a few minutes reflecting on what she thinks are your greatest strengths. Then, ask yourself if the perceptions ring true.

Know what you love. If you were granted a wish to do anything you wanted for the rest of your working life, what would you choose? This might be an overwhelming proposal, but go for it—dream big!

Look at the things you like to do in and out of work. If you love to write but don't get a chance to do much at work, explore writing opportunities in your current position like an internal blog or newsletter for your department. If you're an extroverted developer who loves to talk about your product, look for technical sales opportunities.

Find your flow state. Contemplate an ordinary workday. What types of tasks do you most like diving into? Do you prefer team scrums or writing technical specs with no interruptions? What are you doing at your desk when the hours seem to melt away?

Know your relationship style. Knowing what kind of relationships bring out the best in you and what kind are the most difficult for you will help you navigate professional waters. If one of your main strengths is executing drama-free negotiation, ask for opportunities to serve on committees or to facilitate informal mediations between team members who don't see eye to eye.

Maximize your specialties. Many job candidates rely on generalizations to find employment, such as being a "people person" or an "organizational wizard." These are great attributes, but you'll stand out more if you give **specifics** when crafting your role. This is where the value of being able to identify your personal strengths at work can really help you shine.

Tell employers you are a "wizard at conference planning" or you can "build out project schedules and make accurate estimations like nobody's business." You might have experience working on a marketing team, but you're really, really excited about SEO and data analytics. This is a unique skill, and if you master it, you can go far. Maximizing your specialty not only helps your career but also makes you more valuable to your team and organization.