

TALENTS INQUIRY AND STRENGTHS SCAN EXERCISE

It's crucial that you know your strengths – the key skills, abilities, and behaviors that you use well in your work. Ask others for feedback to help you identify your strengths.

STRENGTHS SCAN

- Ask 5 friends, family members, supervisors (former or current), career mentors, and/or co-workers (former or current) to tell you what they think are your strengths and talents, your most positive or special qualities, and your best personal characteristics.
- If possible, try to include people who know you from different times and contexts of your life and include people in at least the following categories: family member(s), friend(s), co-worker(s).
- It is best to ask them to provide this to you in written form so that you can compare the responses and see patterns.
- Once you have their responses, summarize the themes you see among them.
- Some possible questions to ask:
 1. *What are my standout strengths? (Very few others are as good as I am.)*
 2. *What are my moderate strengths? (I'm good – so are many others.)*
 3. *How would people describe me?*
 4. *What are my overdone strengths? (Things I'm good at, but not interested in using – I'm going to burnout if I keep focusing on these.)*
 5. *What are two skills I should strengthen? How would it help me, given what I want to do?*

TALENTS INQUIRY

1. Make a list of everything that comes naturally to you – things for which you seem to have a “knack”.
 - Include work-related and non-work-related things in your list. Sometimes talents are those things that we consider fun and not “work”, even if we do them in a work-related context.
 - Don't include those things where you think you have developed a skill, but have no real natural talent.
 - Think about times when you are in *flow* – when you lose track of time because you are enjoying what you are doing. These might be times that hold clues as to your talents.
2. Make another list of everything you are not naturally good at.
 - Doing this will help you clarify what your talents are by knowing what they are not.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- Write a “Talents and Strengths” profile of yourself based on the information you gathered from the Strengths Scan and your Talents Inquiry process.
- As you write, describe your strengths and talents *in action*. Use examples from your work and life history.
- Share this with others as a way to refine your understanding of the information. For example, you may share it with your supervisor in a discussion about your work goals and the kinds of experiences and responsibilities you’d like to take on. Or you may share it with your support group as a way of getting clarity about the kind of work that you are best suited for and as a way to prepare for job interviews.