

Play to your Strengths Challenge



For greater success,
focus on what you do

Well

Welcome to the Challenge “Play to your strengths”.

What is a strength, and how does it differ from a talent, skill, knowledge or practice?

Strength = Talent x Investment

Talent = a natural way of thinking, feeling or behaving.

Investment = time spent practising, developing your skills, and building your knowledge base.

Therefore, talent alone does not make a strength, but rather it involves investing your time to make it into a strength.

For example, suppose you had a natural talent for organizing people. That talent would become a strength when you had built a skill set around this talent, with practice and experience.

This challenge will help you to ‘play to your strengths’, by practising them.

What do the research and science say about focusing on your strengths rather than your weaknesses?

According to Gallup, we live in a world that is obsessed with fixing weaknesses. Fixing weaknesses may have originated from historical days when we were focused on survival to remain alive. For example, you would not want to be eaten by a lion, so you would focus on becoming a faster runner if you were the slowest in your tribe. However, in the modern era, the research is conclusive that we are better to focus on our strengths and manage our weaknesses. For example, if you are excellent at generating ideas but poor at executing tasks, it would be better to focus on coming up with great ideas and finding someone to help you achieve these tasks, and surrounding yourself with people who compliment you.

What is unique about the Eight Cognitive/Jungian Function strengths used in this assessment?

The eight Cognitive functions/strengths are part of the Myers Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI). I have found this information on Cognitive strengths *to be the least available but the most useful* in helping individuals understand their cognitive strengths. Most introductory texts focus on the four dichotomies – Extroversion-Introversion, Sensing-Intuition, Thinking-Feeling, Judging-Perceiving. Cognitive Strengths come under the scope of "Type Development."

The Eight Cognitive Strengths.

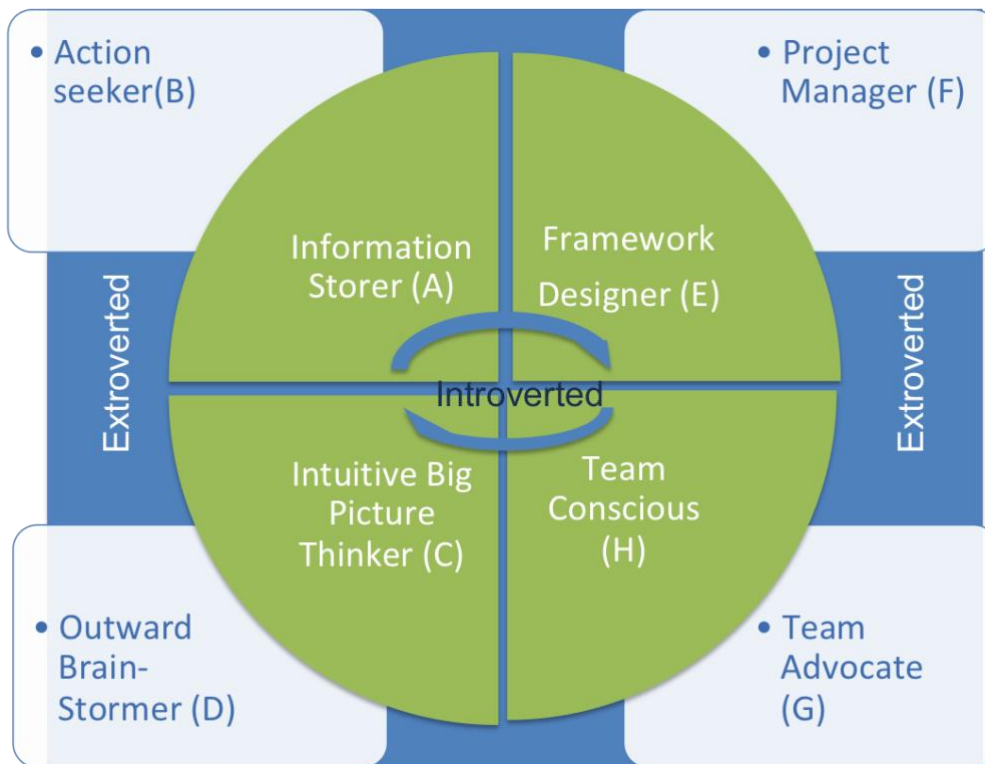
After completing the quiz, you were given a code. So what does this code mean? The code is in brackets. You will notice that some of these function strengths are extroverted (outward focused), while others are introverted (inward-focused).

Your top cognitive strength can be best described, as a mode of operating that is natural and easy for you. Using your strength regularly will help you thrive and experience more enjoyment and success in life.

Important Note: As you look at the table of descriptors on the next two pages, you may think that another strength is a better match for you. In this case, go with the strength that resonates best with you; after all, you are the best expert on you.

If you are curious about the meaning behind the letters TI, FE, etc., go to **Appendix I**. This information will help you to understand the Cognitive Strengths theory better.


If you want to find your second top strength, check out **Appendix II**.



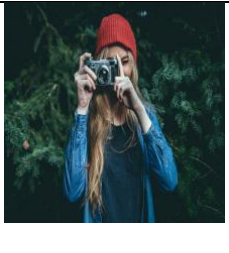
Better People. Better Teams. Better Organizations

Strengths of each Cognitive Function in a Team


Code A: Information Storer (Si) – ISTJ & ISFJ

	<p>Keywords: Dependable and methodical. Practical and concrete, organized and like tradition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses on the present, deals with concrete and practical matters, and tends to be internally focused. • Assists the team in recalling successful past events or data. • Resists making changes without a valid reason, ensuring changes are purposeful. • Preserves important team traditions. • Ensures tasks are completed reliably, as they are typically dependable, responsible, and methodical in their approach.
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Code B: Action Seeker (Se) – ESTP & ESFP

	<p>Keywords: Busy, active, action-oriented, like change, observant, flexible, and resourceful</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides immediate critical information by quickly noticing changes in the physical space through the five senses. • Keeps the team focused on the present rather than dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. • Keeps things real, concrete, and tangible by asking questions to make sense of abstract and theoretical concepts. • Encourages the team to embrace new experiences and changes. • Helps create an energetic environment with plenty of action.
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Code C: Intuitive Big Picture Thinker (Ni) - INTJ & INFJ

	<p>Keywords: Independent thinker, insightful, get to the point, theoretical, see connections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focuses inward and is future-oriented. • Provides meaningful big-picture thinking when given time to process information. • Offers insights and hunches that often prove correct. • Skilled at identifying trends, patterns, and connections when given time to process information. • Brings an original perspective to situations.
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Code D: Outward Brainstormer (Ne) - ENTP & ENFP

	<p>Keywords: Enthusiastic, lively, possibility-oriented, future-focused</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future-oriented and outward-focused. • Assists team members in brainstorming new ideas and exploring future options, as they enjoy discussing ideas with others. • Excellent at spotting trends and patterns. • Proficient at coming up with new ways or angles to look at something. • Helps create a lively and enthusiastic atmosphere.
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Better People. Better Teams. Better Organizations

Continued ...Strengths of each Cognitive Function in a Team


Code E: Framework Designer (TI) - ISTP & INTP

	<p>Keywords: Clear and precise, intrapersonal focused, seeks accuracy and truth, takes a logical approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aids with accuracy by being inwardly focused and readily checking and comparing external information with their internal logical and structured model. • Assists in understanding and developing complex systems/frameworks due to their naturally wired brains. • Encourages the team to take a logical and objective approach to tasks. • Skilled at creating catchy new names that are clear, concise, and accurate. • Assists the team in dealing with tricky problems or situations by focusing on the issue at hand and ignoring emotions.
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Code F: Project Manager (TE) - ESTJ & ENTJ

	<p>Keywords: Organized, logistics and results-oriented, fair, critical analyzer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outwardly focused and attuned to the external. • Keeps the team or project organized and on schedule, emphasizing logistics. • Helps the team stay focused on the outcome, being goal-focused and results-oriented. • Productive, decisive, and focused on task completion. • Does not allow emotional issues to interfere with task completion.
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Code G: Team Harmony Facilitator (FE) - ESFJ & ENFJ

	<p>Keywords: Warm, personal, friendly, supportive, likes group harmony</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports and encourages team members, fostering happiness, as they are outwardly focused on those around them. • Friendly, warm, and social in interactions. • Brings the team together by understanding people and team dynamics well. • Helps maintain harmony within the team. • Keeps the team grounded in the values that are important to them.
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Code H: Team Conscious (FI) - ISFP & INFP

	<p>Keywords: Individual supporter, Curious, tolerant, idealistic, values-driven, caring, compassionate, empathetic, introspective</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inwardly focused on their internal model of subjective feelings and values. • Individually empathetic and supportive to anyone in need of help on the team. • Sensitive and aware of individual moods within the team. • Serves as a conscience for the team, especially when values are at stake. • Brings an idealistic focus to the team, holding a high moral compass.
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Challenge: What does "playing to a strength" actually mean?

Now that you are aware of your strongest cognitive strength let's start to build and strengthen it. Like anything else, this takes practice. Once you 'build a strength' you are more likely to feel confident in "playing to that strength". It's the self-management piece.

Your challenge is to practise using your strength differently for five consecutive days and to record its impact. Better still, find a partner to do this with, or do it with your team. Why five days? Well, most people have five days in their workweek. It's as simple as that!

Remember the benefits: more confidence, more meaning and more success in your life. What's not to like about that? Start thriving today!

Your challenge!

For the next five days, I'd like you to utilize your primary strength differently each day. At the end of each day, document your experiences in a log (see next page), detailing:

1. How you applied it.
2. The observed impact.
3. Measure of success (on a scale of 0 to 10, where 10 signifies excellent results).

Appendix I: The meaning behind the letters, Ti, Fe, etc.

The 1st Letter

The 1st Letter could be one of four: S (Sensing), N (INtuition), T (Thinking), or F (Feeling).

Typically we function by doing two things:

1. We take in information (S/N) and then
2. We make decisions on that information (T/F).

These two things need to be balanced to be at our best.

Your strength, therefore, will either be focused on taking in information or on making decisions.

Take in Information functions:

S – Typically, you see the details first and then get to the big picture (being in the trees)

N – Typically, you see the big picture first and then get to the details (looking down at the forest)

Make Decisions functions:

F – Typically, you first think about how it will affect you or others (more personal in nature)

T – Typically, you first think about what is fair for everyone (more impersonal)

The 2nd Letter

Some of the functions are Extroverted (E) and are easy to observe, while others are Introverted (I) and are more internal. These introverted function strengths are harder to observe in others.

Now let's look at a combination of those two letters.

A summary of the four (take in information) functions:

SE – The focus is on getting information from external stimuli using all five senses

SI – The focus is on checking new information against internal stores of information

NE – The focus is on seeing the trends, patterns and the big picture around you

NI – The focus is on internal processing, absorbing and creating the meaning of the information.

A summary of the four (make decisions) functions:

FE – The focus is on applying personal decisions that maintain harmony for the culture or group around you.

FI – The focus is on applying personal decisions based on your internal values and what is important to you personally, rather than “politically” correct.

TE – The focus is on applying logical, objective analysis and making a fair decision for all.

TI – The focus is on applying an analytical analysis and ensuring that your decision is consistent with your internal frameworks.

Appendix II - Your second strength, the Auxiliary Cognitive Function

You will have one dominant function and one auxiliary function. *Your dominant function*, your **quiz result**, or your top strength is likely the most real for you.

It is worth the mention here that you also have an auxiliary function. *The auxiliary function* backs up your dominant function to keep you balanced and healthy. It would help if you spent equal time taking in information and making decisions.

As you look at the table of functions, this auxiliary function will likely be less clear for you but is worth noting.

You could repeat the challenge with your auxiliary function

To find your auxiliary function, simply follow this procedure:

If your dominant function is S or N, your auxiliary function will be T or F, and vice versa. Also, if your dominant function is extraverted, then your auxiliary function will be introverted.

Examples:

Dominant function is F_E.

Your results show S(Sensing) for taking in information and F(Feeling) for making a decision. If your dominant function is F_E, then S_I is your auxiliary function.

Dominant function is F_I.

Your results show N(Intuition) for taking in information and F(Feeling) for making a decision. If your dominant function is F_I, then N_E is your auxiliary function.

About Nicola McCrabbe Coaching

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Nicola has worked for many years in Corporate Software Development and Academia as a Computer Professor. She transitioned from being a Computer Science Junkie to a People Junkie, as she believes Better People make for Better Teams and Organizations. Nicola is an internationally trained coach and holds the Professional Coaching Certification (PCC). The International Coaching Federation (ICF) and the College of Executive Coaching in the US have certified her. She has taken training in Positive Psychology and courses from the Masters in Counselling Psychology. She holds an MSc and a BEd.