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PRESENTS

5 Steps to Kick-Starting Your Top 5



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Awesome Videos!

Why Strengths?

Let's talk about you for a second. Did you know that you have the ability to consistently provide near-perfect performance in a specific activity?

StrengthsFinder But not just any activity. I'm talking about something you already do well. Stop and think for a second about a task that comes so naturally to you, that it almost freaks others out when they see just how good you are. It could be public speaking, organizing your kitchen, making lists of to-do's or being able to enforce rules and create systems.

All of these examples are proof that you are naturally talented. Imagine what would happen if you were able to turn these talents into amazing strengths and then use your newly acquired strengths to be crazy successful?

The concept of Strengths-based development is not solely for those Ph.D.'s who understand the inner working of the human brain. You don't need a massive amount of credentials behind your name to harness the power of strengths to enhance both your personal and professional lives.

All you need is to acknowledge your talents, take the time to develop them into strengths, and then put your butt in gear and start using them to make a difference in the world!

Sounds simple right? It is.

My experience has taught me that people spend gobs of time trying to become OK at things because someone told them that it was better to be well-rounded. This person may have been your boss, parent, grandparent or close friend, and while I believe their heart was in the right place, I'm here to inform you that it will take you a monumental time to go from OK to great if you are working against the grain.

What I suggest, is that you expose yourself to the idea of working in-line with your strengths, shift gears and make a bee line from good to AWESOME in half the time.

As referenced in the book StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath, Rudy Ruettiger was a great individual. He had drive, passion, motivation and a huge amount of heart. But what Rudy lacked, was the ability and physical attributes to be an awesome football player. He spent a ton of time getting whacked around the practice field only to be a part of one play, in only one game, and in his very last season.

Now this scenario makes for a great movie, but what does it reveal about our efforts in trying to become something in which we possess no talent?

Each one of us was born with the blessing of being able to perform certain tasks with little effort. Instead of shrugging those abilities off as "just something I'm good at," why not try nurturing them and fostering growth over time? As you hone those edges of talents, you'll soon find yourself wielding an unbreakable blade of pure strength and performance!

Cont...

The StrengthsFinder assessment narrowed my focus, and provided me with a clearer target. Before my Top 5 Themes were revealed, I was firing in all directions, but at no clue what I was aiming at. Once I began to live a life that promoted my talents, the faster I found success! Trying to be something I wasn't was exhausting.

If you feel like you are being pulled in a direction that's opposite of your desired path, try taking the StrengthsFinder assessment.

It might just be the thing you need to redirect your path toward greatness!

Click [HERE](#) to gain access to the StrengthsFinder 2.0 assessment for \$9.99



Click on image above to be redirected to an awesome video on Strengths!

#1 Focus

So you just received your Top 5...now what?

Staring at that Strengths Action Plan can be a little intimidating. For many strength seekers, it can actually be the intersection that divides two paths. One leads to ignoring the report all together and chalking it up as “just another assessment,” and the other leads to a life full of new possibilities accompanied by a clearer vision of a prosperous future.

To avoid traveling down the road of strengths regret, I'd like to offer up a quick tip that will point you in the right direction every time.

The first thing you need to do when reviewing your Top 5, is to select one of the five themes to focus on each week. Forget the other four, and concentrate on just one at a time.

This method will alleviate the chances of strengths overload!

Invest a single week actively searching for times when that signature theme presents itself in both your personal and professional life. Be sure to document each event in a small notebook, so that you can go back and reference the actions that forced your strengths to shift into overdrive. Also, share your plan with others so they too can be on the lookout, assisting you in a week's worth of strengths discovery.

After five weeks, not only will you be intimately aware of your Top 5, but you'll be fully invested in a new life full of strengths-based success! Doors will begin to open, and you'll find that you no longer lose your sense of direction. Your strengths will act as a compass pointing you in the direction that's best suited for you as an individual with a unique set of talents.

One theme at a time. Just one.

There's no time clock in the game of self-activation.

“Always remember that the future comes one day at a time”

~Dean Acheson



StrengthsFinder should NOT be a “best kept secret!”

If you truly want your life to change for the better, you have to share your story. The beauty of strengths is in the massive revealing of your Top 5! Your talents reveal not only what you’re great at, but what you need from others in order to be at your best.

How will they know what you need if you never tell them?

Share your report with those closest to you. Your family and friends make excellent sounding boards! Allow them a chance to express how your talents present themselves. Sometimes it’s insanely difficult to be introspective. As humans, it’s hard for us to see how special we truly are. Talents that come naturally to us are often self-perceived as less than remarkable.

We simply chalk them as something “we just do.” Our outside influencers will be able to more accurately define our unique greatness, and help us develop a solid action plan as we strive to live a life in line with our strengths.

In addition to family and friends, be sure to share your talents with your co-workers, supervisors and bosses. Don’t be overly aggressive about it, and just toss them your report. Explain to them how this new assessment called StrengthsFinder was able to reveal insights about yourself that were freaky accurate. Tell them in detail how over the past few weeks, you’ve embraced your talents and have noticed a huge difference.

And then tell them that they too should try it out. By sharing your story, you define the tool as a key to opening the door to a brighter future rather than just another lame assessment where you’re defined as a color or monkey (P.S. I don’t know what assessment the monkey came from, but a woman told me I was a monkey based on the description she read in a book somewhere...should I be offended?).

People naturally want to follow those who have already tried and succeeded. They then have the luxury of avoiding any concern or second-guessing. Because it worked for you, the chances are better that they too will find success!

After they take the assessment, you can start collaborating to invest in the strengths-based development of the entire workplace. The 34 StrengthsFinder Themes will soon become common terminology spoken around the water cooler. You will be able to share talent insights with them, and they will reciprocate. Your own personal strengths journey will shift itself into overdrive after you surround yourself with other strengths aware individuals.

Trying to embrace strengths on your own is like driving eight hours with a broken radio and only one CD that’s scratched beyond repair. You’ll get one or two clear tracks, and then the rest of the songs start to skip. Pretty soon you’ll give up, and drive mindlessly in the self-deflating silence of a lonely car ride.

Don’t live your life listening to a scratched CD. Embrace your talents, and let others fill in the scratches!

3 Bottom Matters

This is one of the most commonly missed steps in strengths-based development.

Strengths has taught us to focus on the talents that come naturally to us. Given enough time, these talents transform into unique strengths that we can leverage in an effort to become more effective in both our personal and professional lives.

But what is often missed is the action of strengths-based collaboration. How can your talents help me succeed? How can my talents help you reach your goals?

Your lesser talents, also referred to as your “Bottom 5,” are not weaknesses, but talents which would require a massive amount of time to develop into a true strength. Knowing that the commitment level one would have to provide these talents defeats the entire concept of strengths-based development, let’s assume that the only way for you to effectively apply these Bottom 5 to a project or task would be to harness them from someone else. This is what I like to call Smart Strengths Collaboration.

It’s extremely important to be aware of your Top 5, but it’s also equally as critical to be aware of your lesser talents. Having the insight to recognize your short-falls is a total game changer!

Next, you have to seek out those who have what you need. By leveraging the strengths of others, you are demonstrating the ability to recognize their talents. This action serves two purposes.

First, by taking the time to acknowledge the strengths of another individual, you are boosting that person’s overall well-being. People want to be aware of others who observe their natural talents. This invokes a feeling of significance.

Second, you conserve energy when you seek out others who can help you succeed. If you are the type of person who has high Ideation, Futuristic, Communication and WOO (That’s me!)...it makes perfect sense to leverage those who possess Deliberative, Analytical or Arranger. My ideas will go absolutely nowhere without the proper planning, timing, review and structure that these talents will offer. They also act as a safety tether preventing me from jumping the gap towards a new idea too early. And trust me...

I will jump before looking!

While working with teams I’ve noticed that this concept seems simple, but consistently lacks the required follow through. I attribute this to “Strengths Selfishness.” We focus so aggressively on our own talents, that we selfishly void others of the opportunity to mine our strengths and turn them into a resource.

The quick tip I’d like to offer you in this post, is to not only view your strengths as a way to better yourself, but to spend a majority of your time concentrating on how these strengths can be of service to others.

How can you use your talents to make someone else feel happy, fulfilled, motivated, active and stronger?! If you dedicate more time serving others, you’ll notice that your timely investment will yield massive returns.

At least that’s what my experience has revealed.

"If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle.

*As with all matters of the heart,
you'll know when you find it.*

*And like any great relationship,
it just gets better and better as the years roll on."*

~Steve Jobs



Strengths Mind Map

Whether you know it or not, you've just entered into a relationship with your strengths. They will accompany you through both success and failure. They will be by your side when you need them most.

But as Steve so eloquently phrased it above, this relationship will only grow stronger as the years roll on, time passes and you mature.

Curt Liesveld of Gallup refers to this process as "Raw vs Mature."

A raw talent theme is one that reveals itself in the form of a free-flowing garden hose with no way to control the pressure and duration. While it functions as a natural talent, its force may be too strong for delicate situations that require an adjustment in intensity. Following several years of active relationship building with this theme, it begins to mature. Similar to a marriage, time has allowed both individuals the opportunity to learn more about each other. You are now able to control the aggressiveness of the matured theme, and understand when to sharpen and when to temper.

This stage of maturity is only reached when you choose to acknowledge the rawness of your newly revealed Top 5, and become willing to work each and every day to develop your relationship.

One of the best ways I've come up with to foster the growth of your strengths, is to create a "Strengths Mind Map" focused on reaching a specific goal.

Start by writing your goal in the center of a blank piece of paper. Circle that goal, and draw five lines off of that circle like the strands of a spider's web. At the far end of each new line, write down one talent theme from your Top 5. Now, next to each theme name, create some more lines sprouting off to the side. These will be used to write down ways in which you can use that theme to take action toward reaching your goal.

If this sounds confusing, it's OK. I'll provide an example below.

Strengths Mind Mapping is a great way to harness the power of your Top 5. It also forces you to focus on how those specific talents can be used to make massive strides toward success. Visual references are great for the brain! They're tangible, and can be shared with others to better explain your vision or game plan. There's a reason every successful sports coach uses a white board and a variety of colored dry erase markers to create plays! His players can make quick work of his scribbles. The information is digested and applied in a short amount of time.

All in an effort to attain VICTORY! Nobody plans to lose.

Below you'll see my version of a Strengths Mind Map. My goal is to share my strengths story with one hundred people. I'm going to call upon my talents within each theme to help me along the way. Cont...

MY STRENGTHS MIND MAP





The Magic Pill

I'm sure you've heard people say, "Don't put all of your eggs in one basket." That saying actually drives me crazy, but based on the context of this post, it makes sense.

The StrengthsFinder assessment is a tool, a method of identifying your natural talents and abilities.

Out of all five tips I've authored as part of this series, this one has presented itself time and again as the most important. To some, it may seem counterproductive to reveal on a website dedicated to creating strengths evangelists, but I feel that it has to be acknowledged.

And who better to speak up than a person who is building a profession around the realizations within the content of a simple, yet insanely effective, 174 page book.

QUICK TIP #5

The number one thing I want you to take away from this blog is that StrengthsFinder is not a magic pill, it will not instantly yield massive riches, it will not repair your broken relationships overnight, and it will not instruct you to quit your job in search of greener pastures.

As more and more people accept the realization that Strengths-based development has helped them focus on a clearer path, there in turn pops up the notion that the assessment is a self-prescribed "cure all."

Nothing will stunt your development faster than becoming so narrowly focused that you refuse to acknowledge other useful opportunities for personal growth.

I LOVE STRENGTHS.

It has changed the perception I have of myself as a father, husband, entrepreneur and coach. Over the last six months I've embraced my talents, and have used them to create a quality of life that I didn't know existed. I live every day in an effort to distill my greatest abilities, and focus them on a predetermined goal that will yield massive results! And so far...so good.

But would I say that StrengthsFinder is solely responsible for every ounce of success I've mined thus far?

Nope!

I was, and still am, strongly influenced by its teachings, but it's not realistic to give an assessment 100% of the credit. It takes an enormous amount of hustle, belief, mentorship, faith and love to persevere through the journey of life.

Cont...

If your end goal is to create a quality life that's full of new challenges, victories, awesome relationships and a constant forward momentum toward success, then you should take the assessment. Learn from the information that's revealed, add it to your toolbox, keep it close at hand and never let the edge go dull.

I have a knife that I was issued in the military when I deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. It's been with me for over a decade. I maintain the quality of its blade, oil its hinge and never leave home without it. A sharp knife can provide you with sustenance, but a dull knife will only cause you to work harder.

As you progress in your Strengths Journey I want you to remain aware of new opportunities and tools to facilitate your life's travels. Open your mind, embrace your natural talents, be happy and never stop pushing forward!

It's going to take work, time and a massive amount of support. If achieving success was easy, everyone would do it.

It's hard as Hell!

But something tells me that you're prepared. And if you're feeling a little low on confidence, allow me to suggest a great tool to add to your growing arsenal of self-development weapons...

**"STRENGTHSFINDER - HELPING
PEOPLE LIKE YOU ACTIVATE THEIR
STRENGTHS SINCE 2001."**

ANDY SOKOLOVICH

I wish you nothing but the best, and I want you to know that I'm proud of you. I am proud that you've chosen to invest in your life, to establish yourself as a recognized force in this world, and to embrace the talents you were gifted at birth.

Vivir una vida de fortalezas!
(live a life of strengths)

About Me



Name: Andy Sokolovich

DOB: 4/19/82

Height: 6'0"

Weight: 235lbs (ish)

Hair: Brown

Eyes: Blue

Lives in Clinton, IA

Signature Talent Themes:

Strategic – Futuristic – Woo – Ideation – Communication

Past Experience:

Graduated from Schuylkill Valley High School in Leesport, PA in 2000

Enlisted in the United States Air Force in November of 2001

Served 11 years active duty acting as an Air Traffic Controller

Deployed to Iraq in 2008 in support of operations Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom

Managed ATC (Air Traffic Control) facility(s)

Honorably separated from the Air Force in 2011

Recent Accomplishments:

Launched Bent Business Marketing (www.BentBusinessMarketing.com) in August of 2012

Ran for City Council in Clinton, IA in November of 2013 (Garnered 18% of the vote)

Attended the Accelerated Strengths Coaching class at Gallup in Omaha, NE in May of 2014

Launched UnleashStrengths.com in June of 2014

So what now? Why did I bother listing out my past experiences and my most recent accomplishments

In life, we are instructed to become well-rounded, to focus on our weaknesses rather than concentrating on our strengths. The military taught me a massive amount about leadership, values and discipline. It helped mold me into the man I am today.

But while I was serving active duty from 2000 – 2011, I always had this insatiable urge to become an entrepreneur. I can't say exactly what about owning my own business was so appealing, but the idea, along with relentless daydreaming, consumed my every thought. I relished every opportunity I had to speak with business owners, shake hands and grab business cards.

Cont...

So in 2011, my family and I made the decision to leave the life of a military family, and move to the Midwest to plant some roots and raise our family. Once we were settled, I began looking for a job. The search proved to be tougher than I had originally thought. Every opportunity that arose seemed to be “not the right fit” for me. After serving over a decade in the military, it was a hard pill for me to swallow knowing that I was having to start over from scratch! I had accomplished so much while in the uniform, held positions of authority, trained others and even managed multi-million dollar air traffic control facilities.

How could I go from that...to being told that I “just didn’t have the right experience!”

After a short stint working for a small business just north of our home, I spoke with my wife about reigniting my passion for entrepreneurship. Over the past 8-12 months, I had studied, in detail, the concepts and best practices around small business marketing. I became a student of Seth Godin, Mark Joyner, John Jantsch and the late great Zig Ziglar. While I was a far cry from calling myself an experienced marketer, I knew that my next step was to go all-in, and bet the farm (literally) on my ability to build a business. Not just any business, but a Marketing Consultancy smack dab in the middle of America’s Heartland! A place where the internet was just starting to make an impact.

And here’s where StrengthsFinder 2.0 comes in.

After returning from a marketer’s conference in Texas, I was instructed by some of the seasoned guru’s in attendance to join my local Chamber of Commerce. So upon returning home, I did just that. I waltzed into the Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce located in Clinton, IA, and asked to join their organization. I was all decked out in my finest torn camo uniform pants turned into shorts, a black military issued under shirt and some seriously foul smelling lawn mowing shoes. The poster child of professionalism! Not. But back then I was going through a fresh out of the military rebellious phase. Luckily that’s since past.

The Chamber welcomed me with open arms. The Chamber President himself even stepped out of his office and extended a firm handshake welcoming me to the organization. After a few short sentences detailing what had brought me to Clinton, IA, he began to ask me some questions about my goals, direction and what I wanted my business to become.

And this is where I started getting nervous. I had the massive goal of becoming successful in all of the ways people dream, but I had zero ideas about how I was going to get there.

I think he could sense my frustration, because he quickly changed the topic over to a lighter load. But before I made my way back to my tiny office located comfortably in my in-law’s second floor bedroom, he quickly handed me a book titled StrengthsFinder 2.0 by Tom Rath.

That night, I sat down at my makeshift desk and took the assessment. I then read my report and... tossed it in my desk drawer, completely forgetting about it!

I had taken a thousand assessments in the past. Assessments to see what job I was suited for after high school, assessments that determined if I was crazy or not after returning from deployments in Iraq and assessments that would even reveal my perfect mate! All of them were subjective and under personalized.

Cont...

And in my opinion...a waste of time!

Fast forward almost a full year. My business, Bent Business Marketing, was sort of working. Money is coming in, but not on a consistent basis. My office has since been moved out of my in-law's home, and was now nestled inside the welcoming arms of the Chamber of Commerce. I had decided to rent some space there in an effort to meet with clients in an actual office setting rather than the local coffee shops. All-in-all, things were moving in the right direction, but at a half-dead snail's pace.

And now begins the story StrengthsFinder 2.0 reincarnated!

The same gentleman who first introduced me to StrengthsFinder was now working right down the hall within the reach of a soft yell or quick walk. One day, while talking to him about my professional journey, he queried as to what my "Top 5" were. I looked him in the eye, angry at myself for not taking full advantage of this tool he cared about so deeply, and I replied, "I don't know. I took it, but never paid much attention to the results." Without a single sign of disappointment, he said, "Look at your report, and I guarantee you'll find some of the answers as to why you've been struggling. You're working on your weaknesses instead of harnessing the power of your strengths."

STRATEGIC-FUTURISTIC-WOO-IDEATION-COMMUNICATION

That statement was so attractive, that I immediately unearthed my Strengths Insight and Action Planning guide provided by Gallup after taking the assessment. As I read through the descriptions of each theme and my individualized action plan, I was amazed at how accurate and somewhat creepy the report was. In less than twenty pages, this same assessment that I initially perceived as being a waste of time, was describing me more accurately than I could have described my own self!

From that moment on, my world became totally Strengths focused.

And the results that followed were simply amazing!

I acted as an evangelist for both the StrengthsFinder tool and the Gallup organization which designed it. Over four decades of research went in to creating StrengthsFinder 2.0. Thousands of man hours were invested scouring endless amounts of data resulting in 34 Themes, or bundles of talent, that had the power to effectively explain why we do what we do, what we need to do it and why acknowledging our individual strengths is so important to our long-term success.

In May of 2014 I attended the Accelerated Strengths Coaching course at Gallup in Omaha, NE. The training was intense, mind-numbing, insightful, and crazy fun!

And now I am able to bring that same experience to you. By understanding how Strengths based development works and how it can be used to catapult your organization to that next level, you first have to buy into its effectiveness. As my story has proven, simply taking the assessment is only the first step in your journey. If you wish to become a Strengths-minded organization, you have to learn how to operate like one.

And that's where I come in.

[Click here for a full list of our coaching packages](#)

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