

Unleash Your
Superpower

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A Hand- & Workbook on the
Strengths-based Approach

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Eline

To my son Ezra, the greatest gift I've ever been given. I feel privileged to watch you develop your unique superpowers from the very beginning. May your journey be one where you feel confident and proud.

Monique

To my Mom, Dad, Philip, and Julle. I wish for you to see your superpowers as clearly as I see them in you.

1 Unleash your superpower

Congratulations on taking the first step towards unleashing your inner superpower! By picking up this book, you've gained access to a well of resources surrounding the strengths-based approach. If you're just hearing about "strengths" for the first time, it's an approach that looks at what's right rather than what's wrong with people. It's helped individuals lead happier lives, helped leaders see and utilize the potential of each colleague, and guided organizations to boost engagement and productivity. Put simply, it's a mind shift that guides people towards excellence, but it takes practice.

Therefore, this is a handbook and workbook in one. We guide you through the theory behind the strengths-based approach, take you through the journey of how to start, and most importantly give you the tools to overcome the obstacles you may face when unleashing your inner superpower and the superpowers of those around you! Finally, we provide questions, exercises, and examples to help you turn theory into practice.

We imagine three situations in which this book is exactly what you need:

Taking the first step

Whether you've been gifted this book or picked it out yourself, it can be the beginning of your strengths-based journey. On this journey, you will learn how to shift your focus towards what is strong, helping you to view yourself through the lens of your strengths. It will be a way to discover and utilize what is powerful about you. We have dedicated a whole section to walk you through the unique tool we use, CliftonStrengths®, so you can use it in partnership with this book. Strengths are an excellent starting point to unlock your potential, heighten your productivity, and give you more energy. Read on to discover what unleashing your superpower will do for you.

● **Diving in to better utilize the strengths-based approach**

If you're familiar with the strengths-based approach, you are likely looking for more ways to integrate it into your life and the teams and organizations around you. In this book, we aim to answer every question you might have about what strengths-based working entails from our experience and how to apply it. We have added examples from the day-to-day experiences of real people, mostly in the context of their work, to provide you with the best advice on how to leverage your and other's strengths, to help you foster strengths-based cultures and become a strengths expert.

● **Going from theory to practice**

One of the most frequently asked questions in our profession is, *"Now that I know more about my strengths, I want to continue working with them; how can I embed strengths-based working in my day-to-day life?"* And it is exactly that question we aim to answer in this book. We have designed it so you can learn from the real-life examples and stories of others and put yourself into action with the practical part, guiding you to unleash your superpower and the superpowers of those around you.

How to read this book

Strengths-based working is all about finding what works for you, and, in the same manner, we've written this book in a way that allows you to freely navigate the sections in correspondence with your journey. You decide which sections are useful and at what point, what parts you want to go back to, and when to jump to the practical part. This freedom is especially useful for those familiar with the approach and who wish to consult the exercises from the beginning.

Broadly speaking, there are five main parts:

1. Introduction
2. Theory
3. How to start
4. Best practices
5. Workbook

We instruct everyone to read the *Theory* to get the terms right from the beginning. We believe language is key in adopting a strengths-

based mindset, so make sure you know the difference between a strength and a weakness, and how this differs from experience, knowledge, and values.

The Guiding Principles are essential to experience the benefits of the approach. They are the backbone that needs to be understood by any individual, leader, and organization that attempts the strengths-based approach. You can find them under *How to start*.

Reading the book from beginning to end will give you a more coherent image of our approach to strengths-based working. This way, you will come across all the valuable stories of our clients and coaches, included to provide you with a wide range of insights on strengths.

Alongside this book, you might want additional expert guidance. Since strengths-based working requires real-life practice adjacent to discovering new insights and knowledge, a strengths coach might be helpful in this journey. You can find strengths coaches in your area through the Gallup network or contact us for support and guidance. We are thrilled to help clients from all corners of the world unleash their superpowers.

Too often, we see people who feel haunted and dominated their whole lives by certain ways of thinking. They ignore their talents, suppress them, or even lie to pretend they aren't there. Others try to change. No matter which of these actions they choose, it won't lead them to success, because they miss out on utilizing their true talents. With this book, we help individuals break free of the idea they have to fix something about themselves to be valuable, empowering people to be more of who they already are and unleashing their full potential.

We wish you all the best on your journey to unleash your inner superpower. Enjoy!

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Questions, prompts, and exercises. Specific exercises are:

- Studying success
- Aim to succeed
- Strength exploration
- Strengths pitch
- Unproductive vs productive strengths
- Lead with your strengths
- Appreciation card
- Strengths intertwined
- Clues to strengths: yearning and rapid learning
- Clues to strengths: moments of flow
- Clues to strengths: excellence and satisfaction
- Strength introspection
- Strengths intertwined
- Domain exploration
- Seeking strengths-based feedback
- Combat your biases
- Thriving or surviving?
- Strengths-based goal setting

A strengths-based transformation: the story of how it all started

It's hard to comprehend how one person can start a movement.

Yet that's how Eline's story begins and what paved the way for her to become a thought leader on the topic today.

Let's turn to Eline to hear how it all happened.

I was educated as a psychologist, something I always aspired to become. Unfortunately, after my studies, since there were few jobs, I had to seek other opportunities. It felt heartbreaking to leave a field I was so passionate about for somewhere I imagined I would not utilize my talent or education. Little did I know, I would end up doing exactly that.

I was hired at a commercial company and took the job as a means to an end. The company was growing rapidly, and a lot of young people joined to start their careers. The leadership team valued happiness at work and embedded it in their company culture. They not only organized nice parties and daily lunches, but also wanted to give people the opportunity to follow their interests and develop themselves on the job.

I got promoted to team lead a few months after I joined and was soon positioned as operational manager for a new and growing department. We had the challenge of scaling a tiny team of two to almost 100 within a year.

The people on my team, all young, ambitious, and without experience, had no idea what their strengths were. I, too, was young and didn't have a lot of experience to draw on; it was my first real leadership job. So, I was looking for tools to help me develop my leadership and invest in the people around me. Finding the tool, CliftonStrengths®, or StrengthsFinder® back then, gave me the words and a practical method to meet my needs at the time. The tool complimented my own strengths, and it showed.

I hired a wide variety of people. And we established trust. Trust in ourselves and each other. I led with full transparency, commitment, and care. We implemented strengths from the beginning, helping establish our strong relationships and face the many challenges of our rapid growth.

Sometimes, people from other departments came by to openly question how such a varied group could work together productively and effortlessly. The numbers did not lie. We consistently outperformed other departments in productivity, profitability, and scores on employee engagement and happiness.

I attended a profit-and-loss meeting with the executive team one day, and I remember the CEO leaned in to ask me, *“What are you doing, Eline? What’s your secret to making this work so well, consistently?”* Little did we know, he was asking a great question when it comes to strengths-based leadership, helping me examine what exactly worked so well with what I was doing.

After thinking deeper, I realized that I was working strengths-based. I talked to my CEO about strengths-based working and the tool I had come across that helped me invest in my team the right way. He asked if I could implement it in other departments. They decided to invest in proper strengths training for me, to make me a strengths coach for the company.

I went to London to be trained as a Gallup global strengths coach. It was life-changing. After the first day, I was so energized and full of new information that I told a friend, *“For the first time in my life, I feel like I am in the completely right place, and I feel a passionate fire within me about my purpose in life.”* It all fell into place.

When I returned to the Netherlands, my goal was to embed the strengths methodology so it would be solid, simple, and fun enough to further cascade without me present as a strengths coach. The language of strengths enabled me to translate the assessment results into dialogues that unlocked and engaged people’s unique superpowers. The language soon gave people the ability to transform their mindset into a strengths-based one. With more and

more people focusing on what is strong and communicating about strengths, they no longer depended on me alone for their development.

I am proud that working strengths-based is still crucial to their company culture today. From the sidelines, I've witnessed the company change over the years, with many people coming and going, the leadership team reshaped by new managers and CEOs. Still now, strengths-based work is in their company DNA.

Whilst on the journey of implementing a strengths-based culture within this company, I saw many people go through the process of greater self-acceptance, confidence, and empowerment through them discovering their strengths. I knew this was only the first step in my career. Over the course of the years working with the Clifton Strengths Assessment, I've developed my own understanding and definition of strengths-based working.

I've seen how powerful this way of working is, not just for the individual, but also on a business level. I was already convinced that great results go hand in hand with high engagement and happier people, and this implementation has proven it and shown I knew how to put it into practice.

This is why we are here today, and Strengths Consultancy exists.

2 Introduction to the authors

Eline

I often forget to introduce myself, because I'm fascinated by people and love to learn more about them. I prefer to dive deep. Having learned that in order to go deep, it is important to open up, I want to invite you into my thoughts behind this book and my motivation for writing it.

I've always been intrigued by human behavior and people's interactions. I've often noticed, *if I can understand it, I can accept it*. I use that to describe the need I have. I believe it is why I became a psychologist.

I didn't have an easy upbringing. I learned early how to scan the people around me to make sense of what was going on, in order to feel safe. Because I practiced scanning a lot, I developed my observational tendencies into a strength that I tap into every day. It has grown into something I'm proud of; it's given me the ability to really see people. I've learned to use this to help people truly see and accept what's naturally strong about them. I'm aware of what makes the people around me stand out, what behavioral traits they show, and I can sense their moods. People often "complain" that nothing gets by me.

I stand by and live for openness and realness by being quite reserved and introverted. This might not make sense to everyone, but in my world and for those who know me well, it makes perfect sense. That's because I spend a lot of time observing. I have, however, made it my goal to act or speak up whenever a thought or feeling lingers. By being authentic and real when I speak, I can bring transparency to the next level in my relationships and environments. Recently, my mind was going in circles, keeping me awake at night, because I was worried about having the right people in the right places at my company. I decided to open up and talk to my team about this, even before any decisions had been made. It felt better to involve them with honesty and be transparent about what was bothering me than to leave them in the dark. Even though this isn't always easy, it's the only right way for me. The

consequences can be that people feel confronted with things they might not have seen coming. Don't get me wrong, being honest does not mean being disrespectful. In reality, I believe it's me trying to be open, genuine, and vulnerable, helping those around me to reach new heights.

I live in a little house in the north of Amsterdam, and it's the place I love the most in the world. It's where I feel at home, because people here are their true selves and there is plenty for me to observe. In the north of Amsterdam, worlds collide. The other day, while carrying my groceries home, I passed a buff old man who works out extensively in the small tunnels around our home. He enthusiastically greeted me: "*Hey, girl!*" When I got home, my wonderful neighbor stepped out of her retro house, lighting a cigarette. The minute she saw me, she was eager to show me her latest photography. Meanwhile, just across from us, a big group was getting ready to celebrate Eid al-Adha, wearing beautiful dresses and carrying food around. Later that evening, children were having fun on the shared playground in front of my house while I put my six-year-old son to bed. I told him, "*You're the greatest gift I've ever been given,*" because he is. I can only imagine what my neighbors see when they look at me, a petite blonde Dutch woman, with a bit of an edgy style, riding her bright red bike with her son through the typical Dutch rainy and windy weather to get around Amsterdam.

I like it here, because very different people live together in the same neighborhood. There's a story and depth behind each of them, as each perceives the world through their unique lens. I love to observe these differences and see beyond the mere first glance at who they are, either by interacting with them or by observing them interact with one another. I go deeper with some; for example, with my next-door neighbor, who I often engage in conversations with, about where she thrives, where she struggles, and how to navigate the challenges of life. I know her strengths by heart, and she knows mine.

My good friends often highlight the genuine interest and deep care I hold for people. The funny thing is that they often don't know who my other friends are. This is because I prefer meeting one

friend at a time. My power is to connect very deeply with few. Once, my best friend was planning a surprise video for my birthday. I always leave the country on my birthday, but she still wanted to celebrate this day with all my friends. She didn't realize how hard it would be to figure out who should be in the video. When we saw each other again, she asked, "*Did I miss anyone?*" I told her, "*Yes, many.*" She explained that no one knew who to ask, and it made her realize she never sees me at big gatherings.

I don't usually seek out big gatherings, because, over the years, I have learned I don't have to be someone I'm not. I struggled in situations with groups of friends because I would withdraw or only connect with one or two of them. As a result, I sometimes showed highly extraverted behavior, because I felt that was expected of me. It didn't feel like the real me. Luckily, I realized that this is not my preference. Back then, I was looking at others who were thriving in network situations. I wanted to be more like them, because I believed being able to network would "get me places." People who thrive in group settings sometimes feel bad about not being able to remember names. They sometimes wish they could give their full attention to just one of their friends. If they are unable to, they'll feel guilty. Then, they might suppress the urge to interact with many, leaving them unfulfilled. Their power is to engage and connect with many.

The thing is, there's no right or wrong here. It's just different.

Yet we tell ourselves every day that we should be more of what we're not. One of my motivations for writing this book is to end that.

I am one of two founders of a company I am passionate about. It's a journey I never foresaw. Honestly, sometimes it feels like I was just lucky, and things just "happened." Though, if I examine the start of it all and the journey so far more closely, I see clear and crucial elements in how this came together and how my strengths have played an enormous role.

The company we have built is based on one of the fundamental principles of our understanding of strengths-based working, *People need one another.*

To us, practicing the strengths-based approach is all about collaboration. One thing I discovered in my own strengths journey is that I do not thrive on my own. Never. That doesn't mean I always need others to get things done. Not at all. I actually prefer to work long evenings quietly at home, because it enables me to tick off many to-dos. Rather, it means I cannot truly thrive or utilize my potential if I cannot share my work, journey, or goals with significant others. Relationships are my fuel. Without them, it's meaningless. It makes all the sense to me now that I no longer see myself as a lonely entrepreneur.

I've learned to trust other's perspectives more than my own in certain areas, and I love that. It's hard; don't get me wrong. However, I know that I need people with different strengths than mine to both challenge and complement me. It is in these collaborations we achieve the best results. Nobody is successful on their own; I am no exception. Founding Strengths Consultancy together with my wonderful business partner, Eva, was one of the best decisions of my life. Moreover, building this company with a growing team is a dream come true. In this book, you'll find some examples of our own experiences with working strengths-based.

When are you an expert? I've been interested in people and their interactions for as long as I can remember. Since I discovered CliftonStrengths, I have studied and analyzed the endless dynamics and possibilities of this tool, driven to get the most out of it. Every conversation, every team session, every collaboration I see as opportunities to learn more about strengths dynamics within and between people. I have noticed certain things that work for a lot of people. I love to help people see what's strong about them so they can maximize it.

When it comes to developing a strengths-based mindset I do not believe anyone can go wrong. I haven't seen any negative effects. I am not here to convince anyone; I am here to share with the world

what I've learned and observed time after time in the hopes it can have a positive impact on your life too.

With this book, I hope to help with the most frequent question in my profession: *“Now that I know more about my strengths and want to continue working with them, how can I embed strengths-based working in my day-to-day life?”*

I like to zoom in on how this natural tendency can help two very different people reach the same goal, with different behavior. It just takes two different routes for them to achieve their goal of being a networker. For me, networking means investing in the depth of my relationships and trusting them to help me expand my network one step at the time. In contrast, for people who thrive in connecting with many, networking means investing in interaction with the crowd, by enthusiastically making the first contact.

I am a firm believer that people can do anything, as long as they figure out their *how*. I did not foresee becoming a writer, yet I am writing this book because my *how* involves finding the right partnerships and collaborations.

There's no doubt in my mind about the power of strength-based collaboration and I love to walk the talk. It builds my own strengths-based journey and understanding of what we actually try to do.

This book is no exception to that. I have not written this book on my own. It is the result of a strong and energizing collaboration with my lovely colleague, Monique. She's not only my fuel in this massive challenge, but she also offers instigation and speed when I get stuck. She provides the right questions at the right time to get me started or keep me going. She offers different perspectives and thinks further than I do. She can translate my years of practice and experience on the topic into something understandable for many.

Without her, this book wouldn't be written.

Together, we have combined love, dedication, and passion with stamina and effort to create something we think can change lives.

Monique

I'm the excited and grateful co-author of this book, here to make the point more digestible. It can be a lot to transition into a strengths-based mindset, but I promise you it doesn't have to be hard. My goal is to make it as simple as possible.

I began my strengths journey about two years ago, and after writing about it for around the same amount of time, I'm starting to understand the approach and its value well. However, I'm still a work in progress. You see, something that will be repeated to you is the act of going from awareness to application, and, while I was amazed by the first step, as most are, the application part is proving difficult to master. That's a big reason for writing this book — I want to help everyone get there successfully. I've observed the approach in action, and I see that it works.

To make it a bit easier to understand who is behind all those words you are going to read, I, like Eline, will tell you a few stories about myself.

As I'm writing this introduction, I'm in my new home in Rotterdam. It's an old Dutch house that has one of those smells you can't get rid of. It's my third home in the Netherlands within the span of three years, and I realize that's a lot. I was born and grew up in Denmark and already as a small child I was very future-oriented and full of big dreams, so at age fifteen, I attended an international school to begin opening all those doors I dreamed of. At my current age, twenty-three, I'm part of producing my second book, I've moved abroad alone, I'm an honors graduate at an international university, and I've lived with various people of different nationalities; I see that I have stepped through those doors, and that makes me feel like dreams do come true.

I'm a person who thinks a lot — when I shower, bike to university, lie in bed, or do any other activity on my own. Others would probably call this overthinking, which it can lead to at its worst, but it usually gives me insight and enables me to ask the right questions. At the graduation ceremony, for my international baccalaureate, I received a pin with the school logo and tailored words for my reflective writing. It was the first time I was

acknowledged for this natural ability of mine, and I was surprised to be noticed for something so intuitive and special to me. By now, multiple teachers and superiors have given me special acknowledgment for my ability to reflect. But in everyday life, it can be a bit much for the people around me, especially because I want to address things from every angle. Luckily, I have parents, grandparents, and best friends who listen, which makes every phone call no less than one hour long.

I always want to deliver perfect projects. Some would call this a gift, others a curse. I choose to view it positively. I love organizing a project, giving it my best, and in the end going through everything just one more time to make sure it's perfect. It's been a driving force in my education and career from the very beginning.

When I went to public middle school in Odense, we had "project week." It was completely different from the rest of the year, as we formed small groups and got to fully invest in a topic based on research questions we each formulated.

When project week came around, I was thrilled. I felt it in my core. I sensed others were nervous, intimidated, or even tired of having to embark on this week, and I told myself not to be bothered by it. I wanted to engage fully in the project. At twelve, I researched how people with disabilities feel when others stare at them in public. I wanted to confront people with their prejudices and immediate thoughts. The year after, I interviewed women who got pregnant through artificial insemination. I wanted to know why they choose anonymous sperm donors and how it played out over the rest of their children's lives. The year after that, I researched how people with ludomania keep their behavior in check.

These were all topics on which I saw plenty of opportunities to create an intriguing presentation, by sharing the stories of the people I met. It allowed me to plan, interview, report, discuss, and in the end, share my insights in a well-tuned presentation. When I look back at the projects today, I see how my academic journey has continued to shape me. What I create today looks far from how it did back then. Nevertheless, I delivered the best I could at the time, and it continued to open up new opportunities for me. To this

day, I engage in those same activities when I'm at my best; only the level of difficulty has been raised, drastically.

Did I mention I was working in a group? Every year, groups had to be formed. People wanted to be with their best friends and have a week of fun. The friends I had in the room knew I wanted to give it my all and thus had no time for fun this week. Looking back, it might have been fun to have a week of eating popcorn, drinking iced tea, and hosting sleepovers to "work," but I pursued the things that excited me the most. So, I was always in groups with people who couldn't find another group to join, uninterested classmates, or a few ambitious students who knew that teaming up with me would help bring them good results. I'm happy to say that my collaboration with every one of them was successful. Writing that feels surprising, but it's true. No matter how we acted around each other the rest of the year, in that week, I made sure we shared our expectations, and each took on a role we could perform well in. And it worked. We delivered on time, delivered well, and went our separate ways after the project. Of course, we were still in the same classroom, but I am sure you know what it's like in a public school full of teenagers.

The point is that I stayed excited the whole way through, driven by an inner energy to do more. When analyzing it today, I see my strengths at play and how they served me well when used productively.

As an international student, I still work in diverse teams, study in classrooms full of people from all over the world and manage one project after another. As the years progressed, I've tried multiple roles, besides managing, and can say that my main strengths, as mentioned above, are still the ones that bring me success.

In the past year, I wanted to continue all the amazing projects in my life and more. I handled my bachelor, a job, job interviews, extracurricular courses, an apartment, a boyfriend, and life as a young international student in a city full of clubs, contemporary art museums, and cozy cafes all at the same time. And so, I ran out of air, but I didn't notice. Ironically, I was still using and leading with my strengths, but I ignored the needs of my strengths and

simply focused on the output. I felt drained, and when summer came around, I learned my lesson the hard way. With no energy or space left, I lost things that were precious to me. Only when I took a serious break was I able to regain my perspective and find new energy. It was difficult to deal with and even harder to accept that my strengths had led me off-road because I hadn't attended to them.

I'm sure it won't be the last time, but if there's something I have learned from Eline, it's that life is one long learning experience, if you allow it. Personal development is all about gradually increasing your contribution along the way. It never stops, but sometimes it stands still. This knowledge and way of life encourages me to get going, to be honest with myself and others, and lead the kind of life I want.

Yet, I wonder how to stay true to my talents going forward, how to feel driven at work and in life, for the rest of it. How do I make myself thrive? More importantly, what do I need to be able to deliver? Will I run out of air again? How do I make sure I don't?

I came to work at Strengths Consultancy from the outside, embarking on my own strengths journey, and immersed myself in this new world to understand it as well as possible. With a background in communication, I come from a different standpoint than the coaches and founders. Therefore, you will notice more than one perspective in this book. That's one of the unique reasons for my contribution. Most people I communicate with daily have no idea what the strengths-based approach is. Terms such as domains, dominant strengths, and dynamics mean nothing to them, so I'm constantly acting as a communicator of strengths. My view is often more neutral, observant, and from an outside point of view. I ask many questions to clarify the experiences and results of Strengths Consultancy and Eline and extract all the matters you should hear about. You will find all of that information in this book and online.

Eline and I share a strong compassion for people and an ability to see the uniqueness in everyone, and it's exactly that uniqueness we want you to embrace and foster from today onwards.

I've written this introduction, with advice and encouragement from Eline, to be as vulnerable as I dare, with my values, dreams, questions, and experiences at the core. I genuinely hope you will embark on this journey to find your superpower with us, so we can make the world a happier place one superpower at a time.

A note on our introductions

You might be wondering why we've written our introductions in multiple sections dealing with various aspects of who we are. Some things we say about ourselves may even appear contradictory. There's a reason: we've taken our strengths into account when writing about ourselves. The thing is, besides gaining a deeper understanding of yourself through the strengths-based approach, it also enables you to more confidently and precisely describe who you are and how you work. Since the approach allows for a complexity of humans rather than putting people into boxes, contradictions and complications are inevitable, as no one person is as simple as the mere definition of a strength.

If you are familiar with the language of CliftonStrengths, you will most likely be able to name our examples with corresponding strengths. If you're curious about this, check out the end of this book (p. 144) where we've outlined them for you.

And that's the big treat waiting for you in this book: the ability to better define how you work, what you need, and when you thrive. In other words: your superpower!

Strengths Consultancy

With Strengths Consultancy, we guide people in shifting their focus from **what is wrong to what is strong**.

We start by identifying people's natural talents, or, as we like to call them, strengths. Then we help people see and feel their strengths in their day-to-day lives. Once you are able to spot them and accept them as your strengths, you can eventually take responsibility and contribute with your natural superpowers.

When you engage with your natural strengths and let go of the thought that you should be a certain way, we believe you can reach extraordinary results. This will help you live a truly fulfilling life with confidence. It is a process of letting go of old habits and belief systems and replacing them with a strengths-based mindset. This takes investments of time, energy, and practice. It is often life-changing. But it doesn't happen overnight.

Society teaches us we need to practice things we're not good at and work hard to succeed. It is ingrained in our brains that becoming "well-rounded" is going to make us successful. The focus is merely on what is wrong. In traditional management, investment in weaknesses is rewarded, and feedback is tailored to point out what you're not doing well, so you can fix this. The strengths-based approach turns this around and teaches people to focus on what's strong instead, to make it stronger.

A big part of what we do as strengths consultants is having conversations with people about their strengths. During one-on-one sessions, we identify and make sense of an individual's superpowers. We analyze the dynamics between strengths and how they show up in someone's life. We also identify potential areas of improvement; however, this is always with the purpose of building on one's strengths. We usually explain this as figuring out why certain things work particularly well for somebody, finding out where people really thrive, followed by practical ways of doing more of that on a daily basis. People often tell us their sessions were insightful, eye-opening, highly motivating, and inspiring.

We've spoken to many people about their strengths over the years. What stands out for us in these conversations is that many people know their flaws and weaknesses but have a hard time pointing out their strengths. Once people learn more about what is uniquely powerful to them, it fuels their passion to contribute, whatever that contribution may be.

It's not improving or managing weaknesses that drives motivation and real change; it's building on what is uniquely powerful to you.

With our company, we are aiming to offer practical support during this process of creating a strengths-based mindset and a strengths-based way of working (or living, actually).

We have a holistic approach in terms of not separating work from life. We believe people do not leave their strengths at work or at home, and you cannot separate the two. Even though people tend to believe they can behave differently or have a different role at work, we know they have the same dominant strengths. We do not argue against them being able to take on different roles or act differently; we're saying their strengths are not contextual. They are stable across a range of situations; however, they show up in different ways.

With this way of thinking, you can learn to copy what works for you in effective grocery shopping and paste it into your project management. You can discover what role your strengths play in how you interact with friends and utilize it in building strong relationships with colleagues or clients.

We aim to make this crystal clear and practical, so people can identify, accept, and work with their strengths.

We love it when we begin a session, and someone tells us they have been working a long time and by now are very self-aware. Sometimes, they tell us they've done many similar "tests," so there won't be any surprises for them. That's great, because we're not here to surprise them. Our goal is simply to help them see something uniquely strong about themselves, so we can turn it into something practical they can use to add value to their life — to their team, personal life, relationships, tasks, or anything else. And we know, with the complexity of this tool and a bit of curiosity or openness to a new experience, we will always be able to identify this.

To us, working with an individual is just the beginning. After individual exploration, we take it to the team. By working with a whole team and not just the individual, we aim to make it easier for individuals to adopt the approach. In the end, it's easier if

you're surrounded by people who are going through the same process in their own unique ways.

Trends we have observed

In our roles as coaches and trainers, we've worked with many leadership teams over the years. Teams generally struggle with similar things. Leaders tend to struggle with helping the team become a "Team" with a capital T, and individuals struggle to collaborate with others. Managers tell us they have a team full of ambitious and talented people who work as a composite of individuals. Becoming greater than the sum of its parts is a struggle for many. Even though many of us can thrive in solo roles and feel fulfilled by getting things done for ourselves, not many of us function solely as an individual contributor. In general, people are driven to add value and like to be part of something bigger than themselves.

In the best teams we've seen, people embrace each other's differences. They trust each other to have good intentions and provide value with their different strengths. There's something particularly strong about these teams; people feel safe, trusted, and are willing to experiment and even fail because they are not afraid of being inadequate, wrong, or labeled as non-valuable. They perform together and know that colleagues who are more talented in particular areas have got their backs, so they are not expected to do everything themselves, let alone everything well. People who are valued for their strengths by their teammates invest in their strengths and use them more often.

Generally, people in thriving teams have clear goals, well-defined responsibilities, and know how and when to collaborate with whom; they build on each other's strengths. They know that this is their best route to success. They also know they need to and can count on each other.

Sometimes, we describe strengths-based collaborations as the type where we know we can trust our colleague's perspectives more than our own. We strongly rely on input from our teammates in areas we don't even realize we're overlooking. We believe we can

learn from everyone and that someone else can contribute with things we could never provide, no matter our experience, skills, or knowledge.

3 Theory

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We also want to note that all real-life examples provided throughout this book have been given new names to ensure the confidentiality of our clients.