

Character Strengths 360°

CSI 7

Overview

The 360° form of feedback has become a standard in top organizations across the globe. In organizational settings, this involves each employee receiving feedback from multiple sources and contexts, including their boss/superior, subordinates, fellow colleagues, and customers, and provides the individual with important insights into their performance. Feedback on character strengths can work in a similar way and of course extend far beyond the workplace.

Purpose

Learn the perceptions of others in regard to your core strengths; integrate others' insights into your life; attain new ways of looking at yourself through a strengths lens.

Steps

For this exercise, use the tool on the following page.

1. Distribute this tool to people who know you (they don't have to know you very well). Gather feedback from 10 or more people. Make an effort to gather people across the domains of your life, e.g., personal/home (e.g., parents, siblings, spouse/partner, children), work, school, social, spiritual, community.
2. Ask each person to honestly fill the form out by selecting only those character strengths that they perceive most strongly describe you. It's generally a good idea to limit the quantity of strengths selected to five or seven at the most.
3. Emphasize the second step on the page which invites the person to offer a concrete example or story for each strength they spot.
4. Gather the feedback from everyone. Look for common themes across the stories and character strengths.
5. Compare your VIA Survey results with your Character Strengths 360° results.
 - **Strong signature strengths.** What strengths were highly noted by both you and others?
 - **Possible blind spots.** What strengths were noted highly by others but not you?
 - **Potential opportunities.** What strengths were noted highly by you but not others?
6. Take action: Review your insights and put one of your new insights to use!

Research

This activity is one of the favorite exercises reported by participants in mindfulness-based strengths practice (MBSP; Niemiec, 2014a) because of the insights and sometimes connections it brings about. It has been widely used in workshops and university courses around the globe. It is being used in the education context with students and teachers (Linkins et al., 2015). A more complex version has been studied called "reflected best self-portrait." This exercise involves participants recruiting about 30 people to gather stories about "my greatest strengths" and "how I could improve or grow" from friends, family, teachers, teammates, coworkers, or anyone with extended contact with the individual. The person then collects the stories and examines them for recurring behaviors, values, and character strengths. Then, the individual compiles an integrated portrait of these patterns in the form of a summary of a couple of paragraphs or a more creative form, such as an essay, presentation, video, or set of images. This activity promotes self-development through positive emotion resources, agentic resources (beliefs about our capability to exert control over events in our life), and relationship resources (Roberts et al., 2005; Spreitzer, 2006). In one study with adolescents, researchers compared feedback on strengths only with feedback on strengths plus growth areas from groups of personal and professional contacts or professional contacts only, and the best benefits were found for strengths plus growth areas solicited from the broadest range of contacts (Spreitzer et al., 2009).

Step 1

Below are 24 character strengths. Which of these **most strongly** describes who this person is and how they operate in their life? Check off those strengths that you **most clearly** see in them. Choose about 5 strengths (no more than 7).

- Creativity:** ingenuity; sees & does things in new/unique ways; original & adaptive ideas
- Curiosity:** novelty-seeker; takes an interest; open to different experiences; asks questions
- Judgment:** critical thinker; analytical; logical; thinks things through
- Love of learning:** masters new skills & topics; passionate about knowledge & learning
- Perspective:** wise; provides wise counsel; sees the big picture; integrates others' views
- Bravery:** valorous; does not shrink from fear; speaks up for what's right
- Perseverance:** persistent; industrious; overcomes obstacles; finishes what is started
- Honesty:** integrity; truthful; authentic
- Zest:** enthusiastic; energetic; vital; feels alive and activated
- Love:** gives and accepts love; genuine; values close relations with others
- Kindness:** generous; nurturing; caring; compassionate; altruistic; nice
- Social intelligence:** aware of the motives and feelings of oneself & others, knows what makes other people tick
- Teamwork:** a team player; community-focused, socially responsible; loyal
- Fairness:** acts upon principles of justice; does not allow feelings to bias decisions about others
- Leadership:** organizes group activities; encourages and leads groups to get things done
- Forgiveness:** merciful; accepts others' shortcomings; gives people a second chance
- Humility:** modest; lets accomplishments speak for themselves; focuses on others
- Prudence:** careful; wisely cautious; thinks before speaking; does not take undue risks
- Self-regulation:** self-controlled; disciplined; manages impulses & emotions
- Appreciation of beauty & excellence:** awe-filled; quickly moved to wonder; marvels at beauty & greatness
- Gratitude:** thankful for the good; expresses thanks; feels blessed
- Hope:** optimistic; future-minded; has a positive outlook
- Humor:** playful; enjoys joking and bringing smiles to others; lighthearted
- Spirituality:** religious and/or spiritual; practices a faith; purpose- & meaning-driven

Step 2

On the back of this page, give a brief rationale or example of how you have seen this person display *each strength* you checked off.