Using the Myers-Briggs® Instrument with the Gallup StrengthsFinder 2.0 Instrument

In our ongoing search for the ideal formula for leadership development, we are continually faced with the same initial question: From what point does each person start in terms of his or her development? If we understand the foundation of our clients' personality styles and strengths, it is more likely that we can address what is and isn't working in terms of their achieving their desired development goals.

Psychological type theory holds that there are no "good" or "bad" or "better" or "worse" types; there is the four-letter type a person has verified fits him or her best and the appropriate use and flexing of that type. Similarly, the *Gallup StrengthsFinder 2.0* (GSF) assessment focuses on what a person's core strengths—rather than his or her challenges—say about the way that individual works with people, influences others, and works harder and smarter. If we combine the knowledge we gain from using the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®* (MBTI®) and GSF assessments, we get a wealth of information we can use to examine a client's style and strengths more comprehensively.

Sometimes it is not enough to simply define our strengths. We must also reflect on the natural ways we are inclined to use them. Combining data from the GSF instrument with results from the MBTI instrument gives us a unique opportunity to help clients think about "flow" and the use of their function pairs, or driving motivators, in alternative and more effective ways. Jim Collins describes this process succinctly in his book *Good to Great*: "Leading from good to great *does not mean* coming up with the right answers and motivating others to follow…. It means understanding that you *don't* have all the answers and then *asking the questions* that will lead to the best possible insights" (italics added).[1]

DEVELOPING STRENGTHS: AN EFFECTIVE APPROACH

When we are developing leaders, our role as facilitator is to help direct them toward actualizing their strengths and recognizing their challenges as opportunities for development rather than as flaws to hide or to be ashamed of. Using the Myers-Briggs® and GSF assessments together is an effective approach to creating sustainable behavioral changes that will ultimately benefit the organization and realize a substantial return on investment. The synergy achieved provides a multidimensional view of leadership that can be used at many levels of an organization.

The GSF assessment grew out of the positive psychology movement begun by Martin Seligman (optimism vs. pessimism) and Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi (flow). Donald Clifton studied Seligman's

and Csikszentmihalyi's work and then asked, "What would happen if we studied what is *right* with people?" He believed it is better to start with developing one's existing strengths than to focus on one's challenges. This relates to the type construct that says people focus on developing their preferred functions, the dominant and auxiliary, during the first half of life. Then, in the second half, they move on to developing their less-preferred functions, the tertiary and inferior. GSF strengths are unstable during childhood, become more stable as people develop, and are consistent through adulthood. According to Clifton's theory, it's how one uses a strength that counts; it is impossible to be too talented or too successful. This overlaps with the type construct that type development is about the *appropriate* use of one's type.

Clifton further contends that the extent to which people use their strengths at work is predictive of their level of engagement on the job. His research shows that employees who have the opportunity to tune into and use their strengths on the job are six times as likely to be engaged at work and more than three times as likely to report an excellent quality of life.[2] Our overall strengths are not affected by mood, and under duress they do not become our weaknesses. This finding is different from the type concept of being "in the grip" of the inferior function, which posits that we reverse the order in which we use our preferences when we are under great stress. These data resulted from a study comparing test-retest results from the GSF assessment as well as from a side-by-side comparison of the GSF tool with the 16PF and CPI 260® instruments. The overall story the GSF instrument tells is that the choices people make between the two statements in each item on the assessment parallel the choices they make every day in the real world.

The premise for using the GSF tool with both individuals and teams is that if you focus first on developing your strengths, "you cannot be anything you want to be—but you can be a lot more of who you already are."[3] When we apply this idea to type theory and using preferences in combination with strengths, we can highlight aspects of certain MBTI preferences that will enhance and amplify GSF strengths and enable them to be as effective as possible. Much as with using the MBTI instrument with teams, the goal of using the GSF assessment with teams is to create synergy by pairing individuals with different strengths so they can balance, energize, and challenge one another to achieve their best performance. GSF theory suggests that teams composed of people who have differing top five strengths will have greater diversity, better decision-making practices, and sounder creative processes.

The GSF assessment has four strength domains:

- **Relating themes** (working with people) are Harmony, Communication, Empathy, Includer, Individualization, Relator, and Responsibility
- **Impacting themes** (influencing people) are Command, Competition, Developer, Positivity, Maximizer, and Woo
- **Striving themes** (working harder) are Achiever, Activator, Belief, Significance, Discipline, Adaptability, Focus, Restorative, and Self-Assurance
- **Thinking themes** (working smarter) are Analytical, Arranger, Consistency, Connectedness, Deliberative, Futuristic, Ideation, Input, Intellection, Learner, Context, and Strategic

We can examine where a person's top five strengths fall in terms of these four strength domains. If a person's strengths traverse domains, this is an additional asset. If they are clustered in one domain, this is an opportunity to expand on type flexing and development to enhance the use of existing strengths. The following chart offers suggestions about integrating the GSF and MBTI instruments for ideal use of strengths and type preferences.

Strength Domain	Needs on a Team	As a Leader	In Conflict	MBTI® Preference to Flex or Develop
Relating Themes (Working with People)				
Harmony	To achieve consensus	Promote collaboration	Look for agreement	Thinking (try to be more directive and less diplomatic)
Communication	To tell their story	Are great presenters	Need to be heard	Introversion (reflect on others' viewpoints)
Empathy	To understand others	Tune into others	Sense others' feelings	Thinking (attend to their own needs and ideas)
Includer	To get everyone involved	Accept others	Include others	Introversion (consider that others may not want to be included)
Individualization	To appreciate uniqueness in people	Join people together	Recognize varying viewpoints	Thinking (focus on facts and people)
Relator	To have closeness with others	Enjoy reaching goals with others	Are anxious about distance from others	Thinking (manage anxiety about not being close with everyone)
Responsibility	To see things through	Take ownership	Are honest and loyal	Feeling (establish relationships while also meeting goals)
Impacting Themes (Influencing People)				
Command	To make decisions	Take control	Move conflict forward	Feeling (include others in decision-making processes)
Competition	To be the best	Want to be the best	Need to win	Feeling (collaborate better with others)
Developer	To encourage others	Cultivate growth in others	Recognize improvements	Sensing (attend to details of what exactly needs changing)
Positivity	To engender enthusiasm	Get buy-in from others	Keep things upbeat	Sensing (attend to what is realistic)
Maximizer	To achieve excellence	Focus on strengths	Seek to improve	Thinking (think critically about what may be lacking)
Woo	To meet people	Network with others	Keep people connected	Introversion (reflect on what the connections do for them and others)

Strength Domain	Needs on a Team	As a Leader	In Conflict	MBTI® Preference to Flex or Develop
Striving Themes (Working Harder)				
Achiever	To challenge	Are productive	Make it productive	Feeling (put energy into creating relationships)
Activator	To learn by doing	Make things happen	Can be impatient	Perceiving (pause and reflect on what they are learning)
Belief	To see value	Provide a purpose	Keep things on track	Perceiving (reflect on being in the moment)
Significance	To make a difference	Strive to be important	Need to be recognized	Thinking (reflect on being objective and impartial)
Discipline	To organize	Create order	Add structure	Perceiving (don't make decisions too soon)
Adaptability	To have flexibility	Live in the moment	Go with the flow	Judging (recognize that a decision must be made eventually)
Focus	To finish	Prioritize and follow through	Stay on track	Perceiving (make sure they have all the necessary information)
Restorative	To solve problems	Assess challenges	Help resolve differences	Feeling (allow people to be heard and acknowledge them)
Self-Assurance	To be right	Provide confidence	Influence outcome	Introversion (reflect on the needs and ideas of others)
Thinking Themes (Working Smarter)				
Analytical	To think critically	Assess situations	Can see all sides	Feeling (what do people need to feel engaged?)
Arranger	To design a plan	Configure for productivity	Are flexible	Feeling (does the plan allow for human error?)
Consistency	To have things be fair	Treat people the same	Set up clear rules	Perceiving (what happens when the plan suddenly changes?)
Connectedness	To connect	Provide hope and faith	Supply rationale	Sensing (be realistic about what to expect from others)
Deliberative	To think things through	Anticipate obstacles	Help make decisions	Feeling (allow for emotion to contribute to obstacles)
Futuristic	To have a vision	Inspire others	Focus on what could be	Sensing (think about actual steps in implementation)
Ideation	To see the big picture	Make connections	Are creative	Sensing (think about what is practical)

Strength Domain	Needs on a Team	As a Leader	In Conflict	MBTI® Preference to Flex or Develop
Thinking Themes (Working Smarter), cont.				
Input	To get information	Need to know more	Ask for the facts	Feeling (how does the information affect people involved?)
Intellection	To think	Are introspective	Encourage discussions	Extraversion (share their ideas with others)
Learner	To learn	Want to improve	Focus on the process	Judging (make sure they are moving toward a goal)
Context	To know the background	Research history to understand	Think about the past	Perceiving (be in the moment)
Strategic	To see alternatives	Forge the path forward	Quickly name the issues	Perceiving (allow for the unexpected)

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

The chart above illustrates how we can apply the principles of type development to enhance and improve the GSF strengths. As an example, let's look at how we could use the GSF and MBTI instruments together for a team-building workshop. If we recognize what a person on a team needs to feel engaged, then we can examine what he or she most naturally brings to the team first. This is revealed through the GSF strength domain. After we know what the strength is, we can hypothesize, based on the team's composition, how other team members could use this strength and how it might contribute to the team's overall effectiveness. Furthermore, we can encourage the individual to enhance his or her effectiveness on the team by flexing his or her MBTI style to accommodate the styles of other team members. By raising the self-awareness of each team contributor, we can give individuals a choice about which behaviors they will bring to the team in order to achieve the most positive results for themselves and others.

Similarly, we can use these two instruments in concert to make the best of conflict situations. For instance, if you are coaching a leader who is having difficulty with a direct report's conflict style, it will be beneficial to examine each person's MBTI style and GSF strengths. If the leader drives results by focusing on the GSF domain of Striving (working harder) and the direct report is driven by the GSF domain of Relating (working with people), conflict might arise around the amount of time each person takes to develop individual and team relationships and the perceived importance of this time investment. The direct report with the Relating GSF domain might be frustrated at times by the leader's lack of empathy in connecting with other people on the team or, for that matter, with him or her. The leader with the Striving domain might not consider the importance of these relationships in establishing the bottom line. As the coach, if you were to sit down with both people together and have a conversation about differences in function pair motivation (particularly related to Thinking and Feeling) as well as GSF strength domains, you could provide an effective, nonjudgmental way of looking at their differences. Once the differences were understood, a plan could be established to help leader and direct report work together and use each other's strengths to improve team performance.

Feedback is the currency of every individual's development. Sometimes, however, it is difficult for people to integrate feedback if it comes from only one source. When people hear a recommendation from one person, they may take it with a grain of salt. When they get consistent feedback from a number of sources, they may listen more closely. Imagine, for example, that you are working with a high-level executive who has a successful track record of technical proficiency but has received some complaints about her managerial style. We can look at her strengths as identified by the GSF tool and her MBTI function pair to start a discussion about what she does well naturally. Then, when we start to examine her challenges, more than likely we will discover themes from both instruments that will consistently tell the same story about an interpersonal struggle or an opportunity for development. Receiving confirming feedback about a possible behavior from more than one data source may help the executive be more receptive to the information. The use of combined data from these two instruments presents a wonderful coaching opportunity to develop a client at any level in the organization.

We can conceptualize using these two instruments together as taking advantage of our peripheral vision: If we only look forward in one direction we may miss valuable perspectives. Combining the power of the GSF and MBTI instruments gives us the comprehensive view we need to move individuals and leaders to the next level.

NOTES

1. Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap and others don't.* New York: Harper Business Press.
2. Rath, T. (2007). *StrengthsFinder 2.0.* Omaha, NE: Gallup Press.
3. Rath, *StrengthsFinder 2.0*, 9.

About CPP, Inc.

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