

# Top Five Report

for

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**Focus** "Where am I headed?" you ask yourself. You ask this question every day. Guided by this theme of Focus, you need a clear destination. Lacking one, your life and your work can quickly become frustrating. And so each year, each month, and even each week you set goals. These goals then serve as your compass, helping you determine priorities and make the necessary corrections to get back on course. Your Focus is powerful because it forces you to filter; you instinctively evaluate whether or not a particular action will help you move toward your goal. Those that don't are ignored. In the end, then, your Focus forces you to be efficient. Naturally, the flip side of this is that it causes you to become impatient with delays, obstacles, and even tangents, no matter how intriguing they appear to be. This makes you an extremely valuable team member. When others start to wander down other avenues, you bring them back to the main road. Your Focus reminds everyone that if something is not helping you move toward your destination, then it is not important. And if it is not important, then it is not worth your time. You keep everyone on point.

**Focus Sounds like this:**

Nick H., *computer executive*: "It is very important to me to be efficient. I'm the sort of guy who plays a round of golf in two and a half hours. When I was at Electronic Data Systems, I worked out a set list of questions so that I could conduct a review of each division in 15 minutes. The founder, Ross Perot, called me 'The Dentist' because I would schedule a whole day of these in-and-out, fifteen-minute meetings."

Brad F., *sales executive*: "I am always sorting priorities, trying to figure out the most efficient route toward the goal so that there is very little dead time, very little wasted motion. For example, I will get multiple calls from customers who need me to call the service department for them, and rather than taking each one of these calls as they come and interrupting the priorities of the day, I group them together into one call at the end of the day and get it done."

Mike L., *administrator*: "People are amazed how I put things into perspective and stay on track. When people around the district are stuck on issues and caught on contrived barriers, I am able to pole-vault over them, reestablish the focus, and keep things moving."

Doriane L., *homemaker*: "I am just the kind of person who likes to get to the point-in conversations, at work, and even when I am shopping with my husband. He likes to try on lots of things and has a good time doing it, whereas I try one thing on, and if I like it and it is not horribly priced, I buy it. I'm a surgical shopper."

## Strategic

The Strategic theme enables you to sort through the clutter and find the best route. It is not a skill that can be taught. It is a distinct way of thinking, a special perspective on the world at large. This perspective allows you to see patterns where others simply see complexity. Mindful of these patterns, you play out alternative scenarios, always asking, "What if this happened? Okay, well what if this happened?" This recurring question helps you see around the next corner. There you can evaluate accurately the potential obstacles. Guided by where you see each path leading, you start to make selections. You discard the paths that lead nowhere. You discard the paths that lead straight into resistance. You discard the paths that lead into a fog of confusion. You cull and make selections until you arrive at the chosen path-your strategy. Armed with your strategy, you strike forward. This is your Strategic theme at work: "What if?" Select. Strike.

### Strategic Sounds like this:

Liam C., *manufacturing plant manager*: "It seems as if I can always see the consequences before anyone else can. I have to say to people, 'Lift up your eyes, look down the road a ways. Let's talk about where we are going to be next year so that when we get to this time next year, we don't have the same problems.' It seems obvious to me, but some people are just too focused on this month's numbers, and everything is driven by that."

Vivian T., *television producer*: "I used to love logic problems when I was a kid. You know, the ones where 'if A implies B, and B equals C, does A equal C?' Still today I am always playing out repercussions, seeing where things lead. I think it makes me a great interviewer. I know that nothing is an accident; every sign, every word, every tone of voice has significance. So I watch for these clues and play them out in my head, see where they lead, and then plan my questions to take advantage of what I have seen in my head."

Simon T., *human resources executive*: "We really needed to take the union on at some stage, and I saw an opportunity, a very good issue to take them on. I could see that they were going in a direction that would lead them into all kinds of trouble if they continued down it. Lo and behold, they did continue down it, and when they arrived, there I was, ready and waiting. I suppose it just comes naturally to me to predict what someone else is going to do. And then when that person reacts, I can respond immediately because I have sat down and said, 'Okay, if they do this, we'll do this. If they do that, then we'll do this other thing.' It's like when you tack in a sailboat. You head in one direction, but you jink one way, then another, planning and reacting, planning and reacting."

## Ideation

You are fascinated by ideas. What is an idea? An idea is a concept, the best explanation of the most events. You are delighted when you discover beneath the complex surface an elegantly simple concept to explain why things are the way they are. An idea is a connection. Yours is the kind of mind that is always looking for connections, and so you

are intrigued when seemingly disparate phenomena can be linked by an obscure connection. An idea is a new perspective on familiar challenges. You revel in taking the world we all know and turning it around so we can view it from a strange but strangely enlightening angle. You love all these ideas because they are profound, because they are novel, because they are clarifying, because they are contrary, because they are bizarre. For all these reasons you derive a jolt of energy whenever a new idea occurs to you. Others may label you creative or original or conceptual or even smart. Perhaps you are all of these. Who can be sure? What you are sure of is that ideas are thrilling. And on most days this is enough.

**Ideation Sounds like this:**

Mark B., *writer*: "My mind works by finding connections between things. The other day I was hunting down the Mona Lisa in the Louvre museum. I turned a corner and was blinded by the flashing of a thousand cameras snapping the tiny picture. For some reason I stored that visual image away. Then I noticed a NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY sign, and I stored that away, too. I thought it was odd because I remembered reading that flash photography can harm paintings. Then about six months later I read that the Mona Lisa has been stolen at least twice in this century. And suddenly I put it all together. The only explanation for all these facts is that the real Mona Lisa is not on display in the Louvre. The real Mona Lisa has been stolen, and the museum, afraid to admit their carelessness, has installed a fake. I don't know if it's true, of course, but what a great story."

Andrea H., *interior designer*: "I have the kind of mind where everything has to fit together or I start to feel very odd. For me, every piece of furniture represents an idea. It serves a discrete function both independently and in concert with every other piece. The 'idea' of each piece is so powerful in mind, it must be obeyed. If I am sitting in a room where the chairs are somehow not fulfilling their discrete function-they're the wrong kind of chairs or they're facing the wrong way or they're pushed up too close to the coffee table-I find myself getting physically uncomfortable and mentally distracted. Later, I won't be able to get it out of my mind. I'll find myself awake at 3:00 a.m."

**Achiever** Your Achiever theme helps explain your drive. Achiever describes a constant need for achievement. You feel as if every day starts at zero. By the end of the day you must achieve something tangible in order to feel good about yourself. And by "every day" you mean every single day-workdays, weekends, vacations. No matter how much you may feel you deserve a day of rest, if the day passes without some form of achievement, no matter how small, you will feel dissatisfied. You have an internal fire burning inside you. It pushes you to do more, to achieve more. After each accomplishment is reached, the fire dwindles for a moment, but very soon it rekindles itself, forcing you toward the next accomplishment. Your relentless need for achievement might not be logical. It might not even be focused. But it will always be with you. As an Achiever you must learn to live with this whisper of discontent. It does have its benefits. It brings you the energy you need to work long hours without burning out. It is the jolt you can always count on to get you started on new tasks, new challenges. It is the power supply that causes you to set the pace and define the levels of productivity for your work group. It is the theme that keeps you moving.

**Achiever Sounds like this:**

Melanie K., *ER nurse*: "I have to rack up points every day to feel successful. Today I've been here only half an hour, but I've probably racked up 30 points already. I ordered equipment for the ER, I had equipment repaired, I had a meeting with my charge nurse, I brainstormed with my secretary about improving our computerized logbook. So on my list of 90 things I have 30 done already. I'm feeling pretty good about myself right now."

Ted S., *salesperson*: "Last year I was salesperson of the year out of my company's three hundred salespeople. It felt good for a day, but sure enough, later that week it was as if it never happened. I was back at zero again. Sometimes I wish I wasn't because it can lead me away from a balanced life toward obsession. I used to think I could change myself, but now I know I am just wired this way. This theme is truly a double-edged sword. It helps me achieve my goals, but on the other hand I wish I could just turn it off and on at will. But, hey, I can't. But I can manage it and avoid work obsession by focusing on achieving in all parts of my life, not just work."

Sara L., *writer*: "This theme is a weird one. First, it's good because you live in pursuit of the perpetual challenge. But in the second place, you never feel as though you've reached your goal. It can keep you running uphill at seventy miles an hour for your whole life. You never rest because there's always more to do. But, on balance, I think I would rather have it than not. I call it my 'divine restlessness,' and if it makes me feel as if I owe the present everything I have, then so be it. I can live with that."

**Deliberative** You are careful. You are vigilant. You are a private person. You know that the world is an unpredictable place. Everything may seem in order, but beneath the surface you sense the many risks. Rather than denying these risks, you draw each one out into the open. Then each risk can be identified, assessed, and ultimately reduced. Thus, you are a fairly serious person who approaches life with a certain reserve. For example, you like to plan ahead so as to anticipate what might go wrong. You select your friends cautiously and keep your own counsel when the conversation turns to personal matters. You are careful not to give too much praise and recognition, lest it be misconstrued. If some people don't like you because you are not as effusive as others, then so be it. For you, life is not a popularity contest. Life is something of a minefield. Others can run through it recklessly if they so choose, but you take a different approach. You identify the dangers, weigh their relative impact, and then place your feet deliberately. You walk with care.

**Deliberative Sounds like this:**

Dick H., *film producer*: "My whole thing is to reduce the number of variables out there. The fewer the variables, the lower the risk. When I am negotiating with directors, I always start by giving in on some of the smaller points right away. Then once I have taken the smaller issues out of play, I feel better. I can focus. I can control the conversation."

Debbie M., *project manager*: "I am the practical one. When my colleagues are spouting all of these wonderful ideas, I am asking questions like 'How is this going to work?' 'How is this going to be accepted by this group or that group of people?' I won't say that I play devil's advocate, because that is too negative, but I do weigh the implications and assess risk. And I think we all make better decisions because of my questions." Jamie B., *service worker*: "I am not a very organized person, but the one thing I do without fail is double-check. I don't do it because I am hyper-responsible or anything. I do it to feel secure. With relationships, with performance, with anything, I am out there on a limb, and I need to know that the particular branch I am standing on is solid."

Brian B., *school administrator*: "I am putting together a safe schools plan. I am going to conferences, and we have eight committees working. We have a district-wide review board, but I am still not comfortable with the basic model. My boss asks, 'When can I see the plan?' And I say, 'Not yet. I am not comfortable.' She has a big smile on her face and says, 'Gee, Brian, I don't want it to be perfect, I just want a plan.' But she lets me be because she knows that the care I take now pays big dividends. Because of this pre-work, once the decision is made, it stays made. It doesn't unravel." c

## Brief Descriptions of the 34 Themes of Talent Measured by the Clifton StrengthsFinder

**Achiever** People strong in the Achiever theme have a great deal of stamina and work hard. They take great satisfaction from being busy and productive.

**Activator** People strong in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.

**Adaptability** People strong in the Adaptability theme prefer to "go with the flow." They tend to be "now" people who take things as they come and discover the future one day at a time.

**Analytical** People strong in the Analytical theme search for reasons and causes. They have the ability to think about all the factors that might affect a situation.

**Arranger** People strong in the Arranger theme can organize, but they also have a flexibility that complements this ability. They like to figure out how all of the pieces and resources can be arranged for maximum productivity.

**Belief** People strong in the Belief theme have certain core values that are unchanging. Out of these values emerges a defined purpose for their life.

**Command** People strong in the Command theme have presence. They can take control of a situation and make decisions.

**Communication** People strong in the Communication theme generally find it easy to put their thoughts into words. They are good conversationalists and presenters.

**Competition** People strong in the Competition theme measure their progress against the performance of others. They strive to win first place and revel in contests.

**Connectedness** People strong in the Connectedness theme have faith in the links between all things. They believe there are few coincidences and that almost every event has a reason.

**Consistency** People strong in the Consistency theme are keenly aware of the need to treat people the same. They try to treat everyone in the world with consistency by setting up clear rules and adhering to them.

**Context** People strong in the Context theme enjoy thinking about the past. They understand the present by researching its history.

**Deliberative** People strong in the Deliberative theme are best described by the serious care they take in making decisions or choices. They anticipate the obstacles.

**Developer** People strong in the Developer theme recognize and cultivate the potential in others. They spot the signs of each small improvement and derive satisfaction from these improvements.

**Discipline** People strong in the Discipline theme enjoy routine and structure. Their world is best described by the order they create.

**Empathy** People strong in the Empathy theme can sense the feelings of other people by imagining themselves in others' lives or others' situations.

**Focus** People strong in the Focus theme can take a direction, follow through, and make the corrections necessary to stay on track. They prioritize, then act.

**Futuristic** People strong in the Futuristic theme are inspired by the future and what could be. They inspire others with their visions of the future.

**Harmony** People strong in the Harmony theme look for consensus. They don't enjoy conflict; rather, they seek areas of agreement.

**Ideation** People strong in the Ideation theme are fascinated by ideas. They are able to find connections between seemingly disparate phenomena.

**Includer** People strong in the Includer theme are accepting of others. They show awareness of those who feel left out, and make an effort to include them.

**Individualization** People strong in the Individualization theme are intrigued with the unique qualities of each person. They have a gift for figuring out how people who are different can work together productively.

**Input** People strong in the Input theme have a craving to know more. Often they like to collect and archive all kinds of information.

**Intellection** People strong in the Intellection theme are characterized by their intellectual activity. They are introspective and appreciate intellectual discussions.

**Learner** People strong in the Learner theme have a great desire to learn and want to continuously improve. In particular, the process of learning, rather than the outcome, excites them.

**Maximizer** People strong in the Maximizer theme focus on strengths as a way to stimulate personal and group excellence. They seek to transform something strong into something superb.

**Positivity** People strong in the Positivity theme have an enthusiasm that is contagious. They are upbeat and can get others excited about what they are going to do.

**Relator** People who are strong in the Relator theme enjoy close relationships with others. They find deep satisfaction in working hard with friends to achieve a goal.

**Responsibility** People strong in the Responsibility theme take psychological ownership of what they say they will do. They are committed to stable values such as honesty and loyalty.

**Restorative** People strong in the Restorative theme are adept at dealing with problems. They are good at figuring out what is wrong and resolving it.

**Self-Assurance** People strong in the Self-Assurance theme feel confident in their ability to manage their own lives. They possess an inner compass that gives them confidence that their decisions are right.

**Significance** People strong in the Significance theme want to be very important in the eyes of others. They are independent and want to be recognized.

**Strategic** People strong in the Strategic theme create alternative ways to proceed. Faced with any given scenario, they can quickly spot the relevant patterns and issues.

**Woo** People strong in the Woo theme love the challenge of meeting new people and winning them over. They derive satisfaction from breaking the ice and making a connection with another person.