

Strengths

Exercise

20-30 min

Client

No



The Strengths Wheel

After a client is aware of his strengths and the way they are manifested in his or her life, the next step is to explore ways to optimize strength use. To optimize strength use, it is important to become aware of the potential for growth in a given context. Individuals may have enough room and opportunities to use some strengths more frequently and/or more intensely compared to others. On the other hand, individuals may experience certain limitations that may prevent them from using some strengths more. The present exercise can be a valuable tool for gaining access to this information.

Author

This exercise was developed by Matt Driver. This tool was included in this toolkit with the author's permission.



Goal

The goal of this exercise is to create a graphical representation of the potential use of the existing strengths that could be used more or less frequently. The advantage of using this approach is that a client can immediately see what strengths are used too little or too much. In addition, this exercise offers a nice starting point for creating plans to increase or optimize strengths use.



Advice

- Clients' indications of the extent to which they currently use certain strengths and the room they believe that exists for using the strength more is subjective.
- For clients, it would be beneficial to receive a copy of this exercise. For instance, they can use it to discuss and explore possibilities with other people who may be involved in the context at hand (e.g., their employer).



References

- Driver, M. (2011). *Coaching positively - Lessons for coaches from positive psychology*. Open University Press/McGraw Hill.

The Strengths Wheel

Instructions

After identifying your clients' strengths, it can be helpful to investigate whether there is room to use those strengths more often. The Strengths Circle on Page 4 can be used to make a graphical representation of the extent to which strengths are used (current use) and the room that exists to use the strengths more (scope). The center of the circle represents a score of '0' and the outer rim, a score of '10'. The circle has 5 segments. In each segment, ask the client to place two marks indicating (1) to what extent, from 0 to 10, they currently use that strength in the chosen context (e.g., work); and (2) how much scope, from 0 to 10, there is for using that strength more in that context. Next, draw create a triangle that connects the two marks. The bigger the gap between the current use and the scope, the bigger the triangle should be, indicating the more potential for using that strength more.

Example

On page 3, you will find an example of a completed graph. In this graph, it becomes immediately obvious that the chosen context (work) is far from ideal for expressing and building the strengths of social intelligence and leadership. This is indicated by the small arrows close to the core of the circle. These arrows indicate that the current strength is not used much and that there is not much potential for growth. Often, when this pattern applies to three or more strengths, it is highly likely that the current context of the client is far from ideal. These patterns are often visible for clients who do not like their jobs. It can be both an eye-opening and confronting experience for clients to plot their strengths in this way.

What is more visible in the graph is that gratitude and love of learning represent areas of growth. Both areas are used to a certain extent, but there is ample room for using them more, as indicated by the bigger grey triangles.

Finally, in this graph, one arrow points in the opposite direction. Some strengths may be overused in a given context. In the case of this client, it seems that he may use humor too much in the workplace. Although humor has been associated with many benefits [such as more active coping styles (Lazarus, 1966; Janis, 1958) and optimism (Carver et al., 1993)], when overplayed, it can become a weakness. Note that this applies to all strengths; every strength that is used too much or used in the wrong context loses its adaptive value. As indicated by the grey arrow that points towards the center of the circle, it appears that humor is used a lot by the client, but the scope is not that big. In this case, it is important to manage this strength by using it appropriately according to the situation and context.

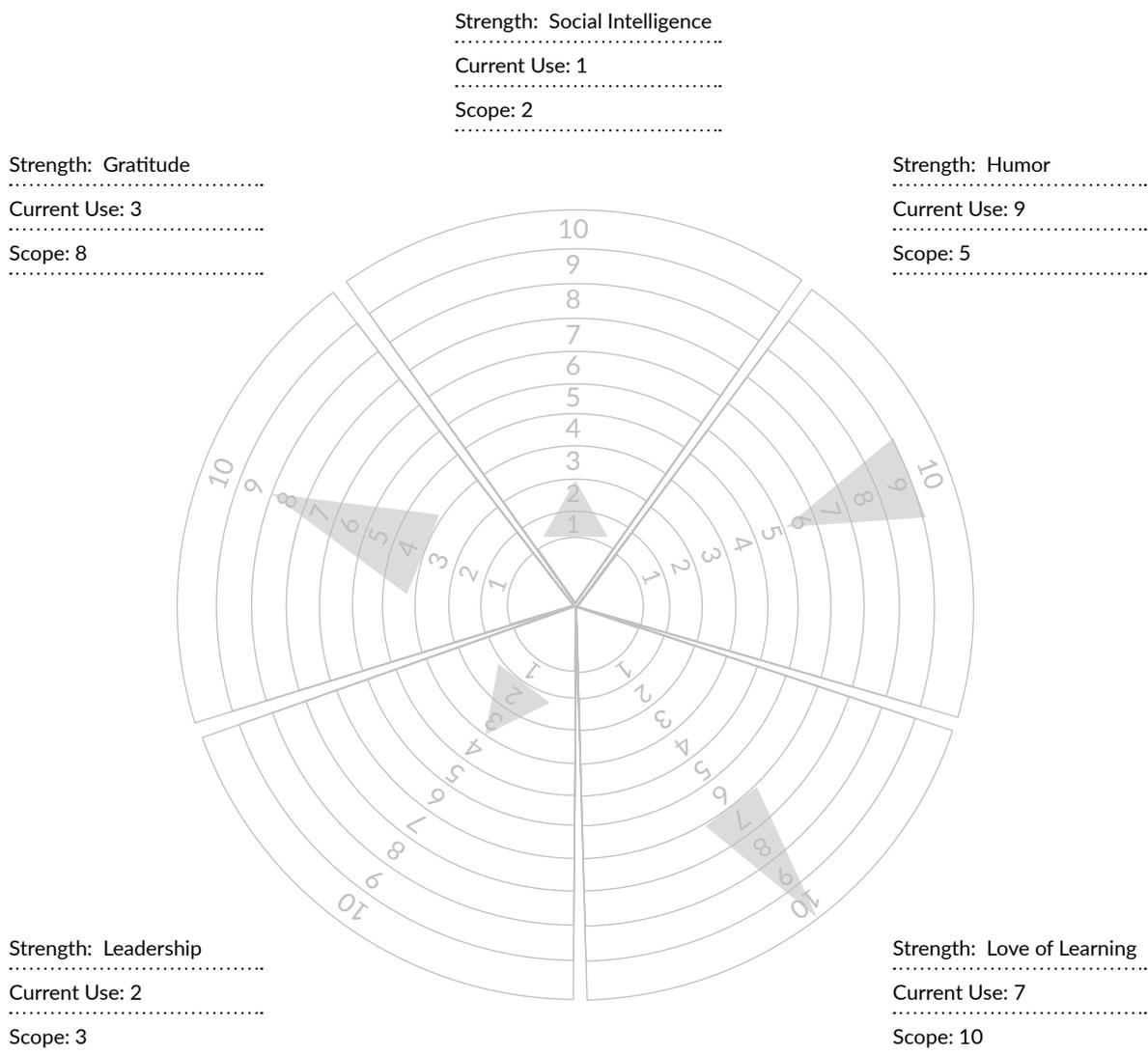
Evaluation

As noted before, this exercise provides a good starting point for creating a plan to optimize strengths use. Here are some questions that you can ask your client when the graph is completed:

- What do you notice when you look at the graph?
- Overall, how would you consider your strengths to be useful in this context?
- Which strengths could be used more?
- Which strengths leave little or no room for expansion?
- What could you do to start using your strengths more in this context?

Example completed Strengths Wheel

Context: **Work**

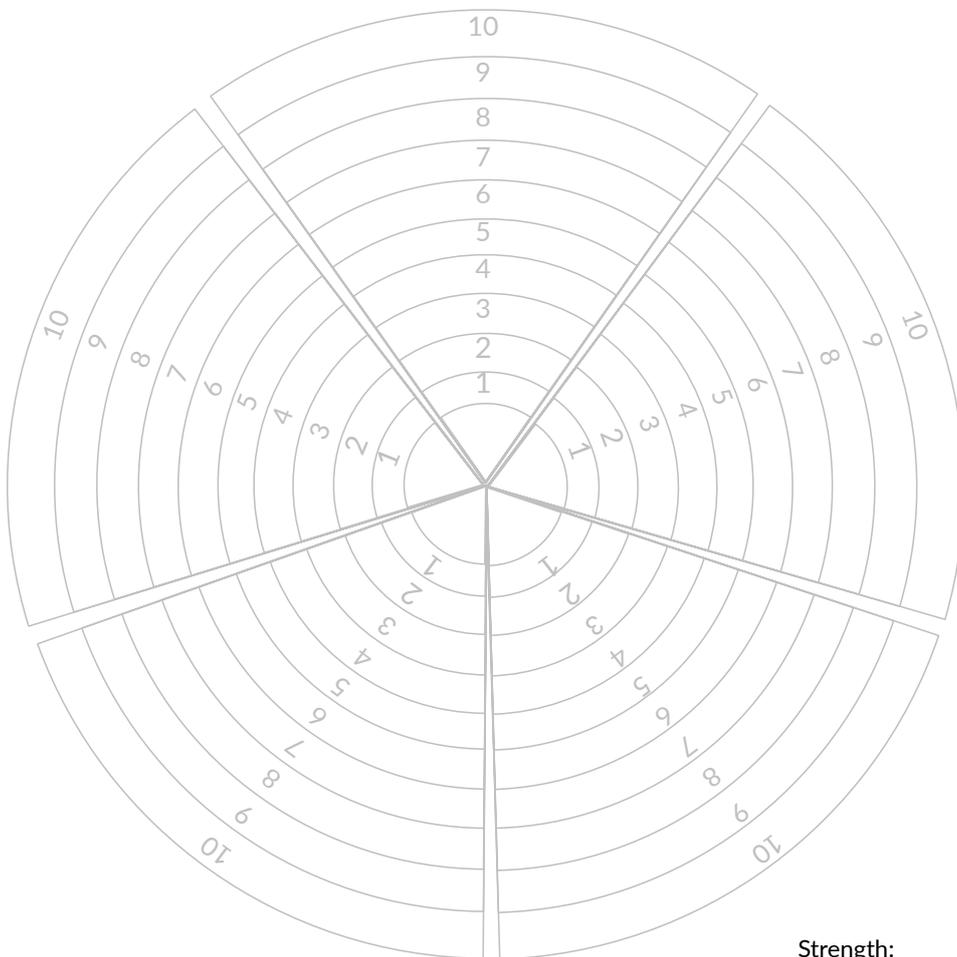


Context:

Strength:
Current Use:
Scope:

Strength:
Current Use:
Scope:

Strength:
Current Use:
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Strength:
Current Use:
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