



**PEOPLE**

**PERFORMANCE**

**PROCESS**

# Core Strengths: Results through Relationships

## Relationships to the Rescue

When heavy rainfall pounded Austin, Texas, in late May 1981, the creeks swelled over their banks and the city experienced its worst flood in 70 years. For one small grocery store that had been open less than a year, the future looked as dark as the clouds that had brought the storms. Eight feet of water had washed through its 10,500-foot building, and the owners had no savings, no insurance, no inventory, and no hope.

The founders and the employees were devastated, but then something totally unexpected happened: They experienced the positive results of the relationships they'd invested in through the way they had gone about their business. That Memorial Day Weekend became a turning point in the life of what's now a multi-billion-dollar company -- Whole Foods.

At the time, Whole Foods had just 19 employees, and most of them showed up in the aftermath of the flood to assess the damage. They were a close-knit group with a passion for the vision of their owners, but they saw shattered dreams when they looked at their shattered store. Without daily sales, the owners couldn't pay their employees, order new inventory, or replace their equipment.

As they started picking through the mess to salvage something...anything...something incredible happened. Customers from the surrounding neighborhood began showing up. They weren't there to loot. They were there to help. They wore their work clothes and brought whatever equipment and cleaning supplies they had, and they asked a simple question: How can we help?

In Conscious Capitalism, co-founder and CEO John Mackey remembers it this way: "They said to us, in effect, 'Come on guys; let's get to work. Let's clean up and get this place back on its feet. We're not going to let this store die. Stop moping and start mopping!'"

Why? Because they valued the relationship they had forged with the store -- the owners and the employees -- in the short time it had been in business. They didn't want this innovative startup to shutdown. It was part of the community. It mattered to them.

The outpouring of support tipped the scales; it got everyone focused and motivated on the task at hand. But the mopping was just the start. Suppliers, banks, investors, and other stakeholders who valued the relationship stepped up to offer terms, credit, or other assistance to help Whole Foods become, well, whole again. And less than a month later, they reopened.

"Our experience after the Memorial Day flood of 1981 drew our young company together," Mackey said. "It demonstrated to us that all our stakeholders have the potential to form close relationships with us, to care and to commit intensely. Our team members grew closer, and our commitment to our customers was greatly deepened. We understood that we were actually making an important difference in people's lives."<sup>1</sup> Whole Foods has thrived for more than 30 years for the same reason it survived that flood during its first year: Because of the power of results through relationships. You can see it in their organizational values, titled the "Declaration of Interdependence." More importantly, you can experience it in their stores.

Relationships, with all types of stakeholders, are essential to getting results. And if you build strong relationships when the sun is shining, your organization can weather whatever storms come your way.

## Practical and Actionable

Regardless of what industry you are in, or how big or small your company is, Core Strengths gives you a common language and clear plan for developing your most important asset – your people. Core Strengths does this by focusing on relationships and how to improve them.

Relationships are powerful. They define how well your organization performs and how far you go. To see stronger collaboration and results, you need to build stronger working relationships.

The Core Strengths program brings people to the table and gets them talking about how they work together. When people learn in relationship with others, they work better together and get better results. It becomes a memorable shared learning experience, rather a routine seminar or workbook.

Based on more than 40 years of rigorous research and real-world experience, Core Strengths engages learners with cutting-edge technology and teaching methods – and it drives home practical, everyday application.

---

**"This program has increased communication, self-awareness, and the frequency of feedback within our organization. The tools and resources provide a framework and common language for which individuals and teams can easily learn and use comfortably with one another. They also spark curiosity as to the motives behind the behaviors of others, which is more constructive than making assumptions about the behavior of others without deeper examination. I've personally seen it expand perspectives, open minds and drive crucial conversations, which has strengthened the effectiveness of our workforce."**

Julie Jennings Kale  
*Senior Vice President, People & Safety*  
*GEI Consultants, Inc.*

---

When leaders and team members understand what drives them and the people around them, they are better equipped to meet the challenges they face – even when those challenges involve conflict. Core Strengths shows managers how to make the connection between motives and behaviors, and how to use that connection to build productive relationships and a self-managed, engaged workforce.

This overview will help you understand how Core Strengths works, why it works, and how it can transform your organization.

## Results through Relationships

Core Strengths generates results at the **individual** and **organizational** levels.

During the program, the **individual** learner is asked to focus on an important and timely situation at work – something that’s already on their plate and involves other stakeholders. Maybe it’s a high-profile project or a process change. Throughout the course, they apply new insights to the situation and draft a plan for proactively tackling it. They also develop the interpersonal skills necessary to get better results with others. The learner leaves the program energized and equipped to work with their stakeholders.

At an **organizational** level, the language of Core Strengths takes hold and makes a productive difference in the group culture. The more people who share the same powerful language, the more the results are multiplied – in a variety of situations throughout the organization.

As one military intelligence customer said after training, “What happened to [name redacted] and how can we get everybody to do that?”

Figure 1: Action Planner

## Multiplying Results

If one person in an organization latches on to the Core Strengths approach, that person’s performance and engagement will dramatically improve, and everyone around that person will reap the benefits. Imagine how those improvements multiply when entire teams and organizations adopt the approach.

When people understand and appreciate themselves and the people they work with, the entire group becomes more aware, which allows everyone to more effectively deal with high-stakes situations and deliver stronger results. That’s when you’ll see:

- More clear and respectful communication.
- Higher levels of motivated effort and engagement.
- Reduced costs of interpersonal conflict.
- Stronger commitments and relationships between people.
- A more open, collaborative culture.
- Increased ability to engage in opposition and better decision-making.
- Greater understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of self and others.
- Better self-management and improved resilience in the face of challenges.
- Greater personal authenticity.
- Greater collaboration and the breakdown of organizational silos.
- Increased personal accountability for producing results in relationships.

How does the program produce these results? We take busy people away from work for just one day to develop interpersonal skills that they can put to work immediately. This small investment in time improves their working relationships enough to get that time back — many times over — and improves the quality of work.

The starting point is awareness of self and others. Awareness comes before understanding, which, through structured experiences in the classroom, increases acceptance and appreciation. With newfound awareness and appreciation for others, individuals and teams can make better decisions — better choices about what strengths to use to achieve desired results.

While it's a good idea (and often recommended) to choose situations that fit your strengths, this can be limiting and sometimes unrealistic. It's a better idea to assess the situation you are in — then determine which strengths will produce the desired results.

Core Strengths carries a powerful message of human potential: you have the ability to access any strength; you can develop your strengths and become more effective; you are not limited by what you currently perceive your strengths to be. Making this work is as simple as ABC: Assess, Borrow, Communicate. This simple set of steps helps learners remember and apply their insights back in the workplace.

- **Assess the Situation:** This means that we need to clearly understand the results we want, as well as the motives and strengths of people we work with. We need to know whether we are in, or at risk of getting into, conflict. We need to be aware of the way our strengths are likely to be viewed by others - and how they could react to that.
- **Borrow the Right Strength:** This means that we need to use the right tool for the job. Going further, we need to deploy the right strengths for the right reasons; we need to be clear about our motives, because that enables us to be fully engaged and give maximum effort. When we say “borrow the right strength,” it means that we need to decide what results we want first and then choose the strength that will produce those results. It means that we do not shy away or refuse to do something just because it does not fit our favorite or most comfortable strength.
- **Communicate in the Right Style:** This means that we leverage our awareness of others and our decisions about what strengths to use — and we do so by communicating in a way that other people can understand. To do this, we need to learn the different styles of communication that are most effective with different types of people. Every person has motives and values that influence the way they see the world. With this awareness we can translate what's important to us into language that others can more easily understand. We so often miss the mark when we tell people things the way we want to hear them — especially if they'd be more receptive to hearing them a different way.

The Core Strengths® approach teaches people how to choose strengths in light of motives, which allows them to produce better results for themselves, their team, and their organization. Having a choice of which strengths to use fosters accountability, because people feel responsible for what they freely choose, and they take ownership of their choices, actions, and results.

But what about the flip side? What gets in the way of producing results in relationships? The answer is interpersonal conflict — and the cost is staggering.

## Cut Your Cost of Conflict

Regardless of what motivates us, we all bring certain strengths to work each day. Some of those strengths are technical skills or relate to our expertise on a subject, while other strengths involve our interpersonal or relational abilities.

## Strengths-Based

Some experts say you should “focus on your strengths” and not worry about your weaknesses. Some give you a test that reveals a few of your top strengths. Others tell you that the key to workplace effectiveness is to “encourage the heart”; that is, to focus only on intrinsic motivation or drive. That’s all good, but it’s also incomplete.

Focusing only on a few strengths can be limiting; it can stop people from stretching to achieve their potential, and it’s unrealistic. The world doesn’t deliver only those situations where a person can succeed by using their one or two top strengths. People face all kinds of challenges in their work and personal lives, as well as all kinds of individuals. To respond to each situation and interact with each stakeholder productively, they need to draw from a wider array of strengths.

Focusing on the heart, or on intrinsic motivations, leaves many people wondering exactly how to do that. Tapping into internal motivations is a valuable approach, but it’s difficult because people’s motives aren’t always readily visible.

Core Strengths, however, enables people to quickly understand their core motives, and to accurately assess the core motives of others. The Core Strengths approach goes further by showing people exactly how to connect any strength to their core motives. It empowers them to proactively choose the most appropriate strengths – thus fostering responsibility for the outcomes of their actions.<sup>3</sup> It provides a simple, easy-to-remember method for people to identify not just what they do, but why they do it—and how they could do better.

---

**“The training was a powerful catalyst to improved self-awareness among our agency’s supervisors. The materials were high quality and easily interpreted, and the data-driven approach resonated strongly in our group of scientists. The training inspired a commitment among the supervisors to demonstrate key competencies.”**

Scott M. Rumsey, PhD  
*Portland Branch Chief, Protected Resources Division  
Program Manager, Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund  
NOAA Fisheries, West Coast Region*

---

## The Power of Personality

Core Strengths Accountability is powered by the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI) and the Strengths Portrait, two valid and reliable assessments<sup>4</sup> that enable self-awareness. Self-awareness is essential, because it is the prerequisite to self-management, understanding others, and improving working relationships. Personality is enduring; it’s who we are.

The SDI opens a window on personality by making our Motivational Value System (MVS) visible. Simply stated, the SDI shows how three primary motives blend in each person:

- **People** – to help and develop others
- **Performance** – to direct action and achieve results
- **Process** – to establishing clear and meaningful order

Everyone prioritizes these three primary motives differently. The SDI defines seven types – we call these Motivational Value Systems (MVSs) – based on how the three motives work together in different people (Figure 2). They are color-coded, so you might be a Blue (people), a Red (performance), a Green (process) or some combination – HUB (all three), Red-Green (performance/ process), Blue-Green (people/ process), or Red-Blue (performance/people).

Your MVS shows what drives you in any situation, it helps to explain why you use your strengths. People with different Motivational Value Systems can use the same strengths for different reasons – a foundational insight that is the real power behind the Core Strengths approach. For instance, here are four different reasons to use the strength “Inclusive” – each reason connecting to a different Motivational Value System:

- **Blue MVS (people focus):**  
“I want to include others so that each person feels valued.”
- **Red MVS (performance focus):**  
“I want to include others so that everyone will be committed to the task.”
- **Green MVS (process focus):**  
“I want to include others to make sure no vital information is overlooked.”
- **Hub MVS (equal focus on people, performance, and process):**  
“I want to include others so we can explore diverse perspectives.”

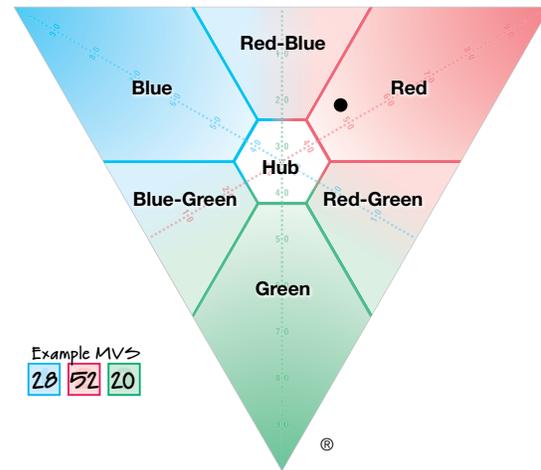


Figure 2: Sample Motivational Value System

Our core motives also influence how we see situations and people. Our motives and values can act as filters that help us navigate situations more quickly. They help us focus on what matters to us and not get distracted by things we deem unimportant. But those same filters can cause blind spots. They can cause us to miss or distort things, and that leads to poor decisions and, in some cases, creates conflict.

Our filters can make it difficult to correctly assess what’s happening in any situation, such as when a key customer defects, a project misses a critical deadline, or a negotiation shuts down. Without an accurate assessment, we can’t identify how we should interact with others to get the results we need. On the other hand, if we are aware of our filters, we’re better positioned to make the right choices – we learn when we need to be forceful with a particular stakeholder and when we should be supportive; we know when we should move forward cautiously with a person and when to take some personal risk.

Our filters also can put false limits on our options. Too often, we mistakenly assume we have only a handful of strengths available to use in a situation when, in fact, we have an entire arsenal. Self-imposed constraints limit our ability to respond productively to situations and interact effectively with others. The individual, their team, and their organizations pay the price in lost potential, mediocre performance, and poor decision-making.

Core Strengths training helps remove self-limiting constraints and empower people to work more productively. The program accomplishes this by teaching people to make more effective choices based on more accurate assessments of situations – understanding what is motivating themselves and others to behave the way they do.

When we see that we can connect specific strengths to the motives within our core, we find it easier to choose strengths that previously felt foreign or uncomfortable because they were so seldom used. This ah-ha moment frees people to take action and more readily draw from a wider array of strengths – while still being authentic and feeling true to themselves.

The SDI also shows how conflict affects the way we see situations and how choose the strengths we use. When we experience conflict, we want to protect or defend our values and commitments. In other words, our motives are different when we're faced with conflict and they continue to change during the three stages of conflict. The motives in conflict stages are to:

- to Accommodate others
- to Assert oneself
- to Analyze the situation

By looking at who we are under two conditions – when things are going well and when in conflict – we get a more full, dynamic and useful picture than if we adopt the faulty assumption that we have only one way of being ourselves. When we understand what motivates us when things are going well – and during conflict, we learn important connections. What gets us into conflict with others – and what gets us to resolve conflict. We see the dynamics of our relationships in living color.

## Relationships in Living Color

The SDI maps our motives on a triangle (Figure 3). Each person's MVS is shown as a dot. The arrowheads represents the way each person's motives change as conflict intensifies.

The sample SDI results in Figure 3 provide insights into how differences in Motivational Value Systems might play out. Chloe's MVS shows a stronger concern for performance than for people or process, while Susan's shows a relatively equal blend of all three – with the concern for people a bit stronger than for performance or process.

In good times, Susan may appreciate Chloe's desire to get things done and Chloe may appreciate Susan's desire to include people and consider multiple perspectives. They may experience conflict, however, if Chloe perceives Susan's option-seeking as a lack of focus or, worse, a lack of loyalty, or if Susan views Chloe's competitiveness as fighting or as an unwillingness to consider others' ideas.

When negative perceptions trigger conflict, Susan will likely want to slow things down and analyze the situation, while Chloe will probably want to speed things up and take action quickly. Awareness of each other's motives when things are going well and during conflict can help them understand each other and appreciate their differing motives so they can get better results.

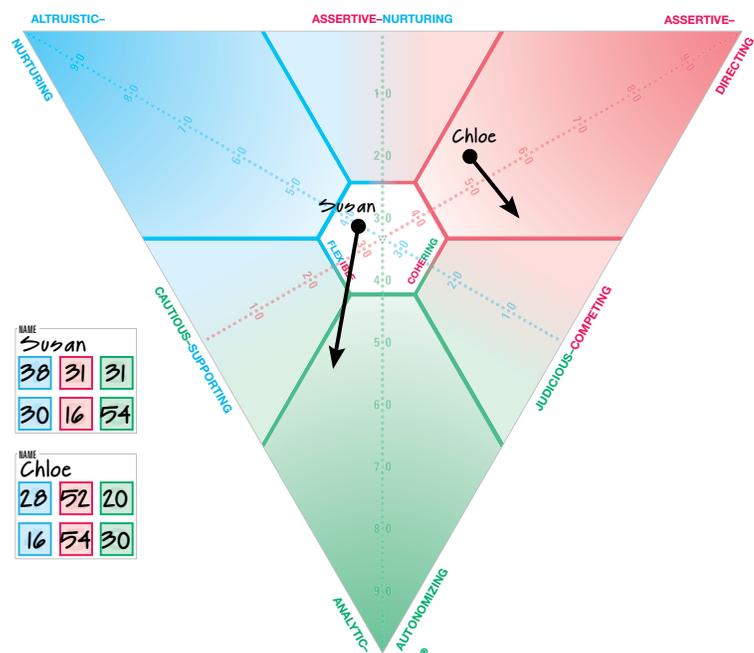


Figure 3: Sample Conflict Sequence results: Two-person relationship

Differences in MVSs also play out in group relationships (Figure 4). For instance, the sample SDI results shown in figure 4 represent several relationships (including the one between Susan and Chloe).

When things are going well, the group has at least one person in each MVS. This does not necessarily mean the group is effectively integrating people, performance, and process. The group’s diversity of motives may serve as a source of productivity, but it may also be the basis for conflict.

When conflict arises, some members start analyzing (arrowheads in green), others begin accommodating (arrowheads in blue), and others start asserting (arrowheads in red). These changes influence which interpersonal strengths each person decides to use. Their choices may help to resolve conflict, or they could make things worse. When members can draw on their understanding of their own and each other’s MVS, and how their motives change during conflict, they can select strengths more intentionally, manage risks, and get better results from conflict.

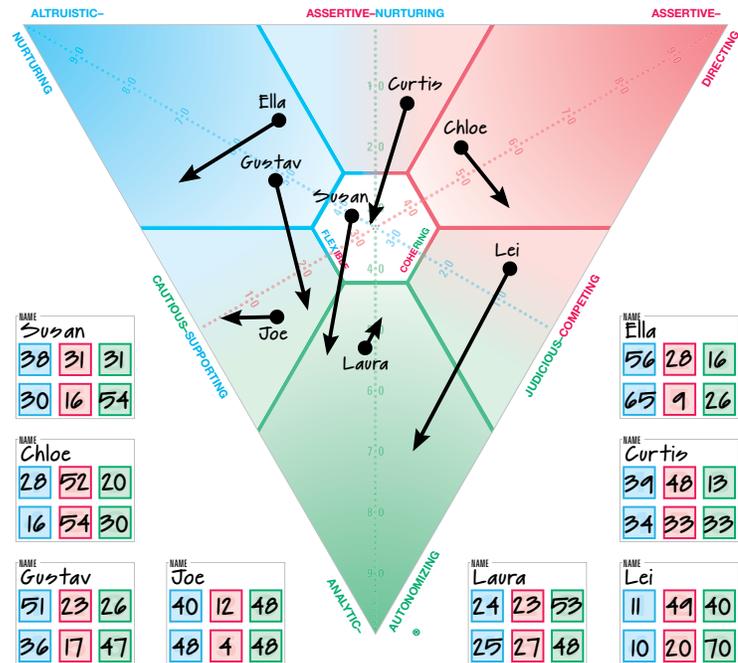


Figure 4: Sample Conflict Sequence results: Group relationship

## Experiencing Core Strengths – Results Through Relationship

The people who show up for our public workshops generally fall into one of two categories: learners and facilitators. Let’s look first at the training experience from the perspective of learners — because every successful facilitator is also a learner.

### Learners

Learners spend a full day (6.5 instructional hours) in the workshop, which features interactive lessons and training tools for developing self-management and relationship-management skills – so they can get better results through relationships.

Learners also —

- Engage in challenging and insightful discussions with peers
- Use comprehensive, powerful learning tools, including the SDI and Strengths Portrait
- Apply the concepts of motives, strengths, filters and conflict through group exercises
- Practice the ABCs – how to assess, borrow, and communicate effectively

All of these techniques strengthen the learning experience by helping learners connect the key concepts with real-life situations and important relationships.

---

**“This is not your run of the mill, sit in a classroom for 8 hours, and do self-exploration while seated; this is getting up and interacting and learning to appreciate our differences by doing.”**

Programs Integration Manager, NASA

---

Two pre-work assessments prepare the learners for the workshop, and they leave with ongoing reinforcement, job aids, and learning opportunities that make Core Strengths memorable and useful long after the initial classroom experience.

### **Preparation**

Learners are invited to the program and provided with links to the SDI and Strengths Portrait online assessments. They get the results during the course and use them in multiple activities.

### **Modules**

The course is presented in three main segments, which follow the skill model of Assess, Borrow, Communicate.

#### **1. Assess the Situation**

You'll learn to accurately assess the situation, including the motives of people involved. You will be able to answer questions about your situation and the people involved, such as:

- What's driving me and why does this matter to me?
- What's driving them why does it matter to them?
- What do we disagree about and how can we stay engaged without causing conflict?

You will get the results of your Strength Deployment Inventory and see the result of others in the program. You'll participate in fun and insightful exercises that bring the results to life. You'll become skilled at assessing motives – and you'll become more resilient in the face of conflict.

During this module, you will begin using the Action Planner. This will help you apply everything you learn to a situation you're currently facing with a key stakeholder at work.

#### **2. Borrow the Right Strength**

Not only will you discover your strengths, your Strengths Portrait will help you see and deploy more strengths. You'll be able to choose and use the most effective strengths – the ones that will produce desired results in your situation. You'll be up and active. You'll learn how your strengths come across to others – and you'll have ample opportunity to test ideas in structured learning experiences.

You'll also see how strengths that you value can get overdone, getting in the way of the results you want. But you won't stop there – you'll be able to recover strengths from things that you might currently think are weaknesses.

You'll make more progress on your action planner by applying your insights to your situation.

#### **3. Communicate in the Right Style**

With an accurate assessment of the situation, including the desired results and an understanding of others, it's easier to borrow the strengths that will produce results. That's self-awareness,

situation-awareness, and self-management in a nutshell. Now you need to make it work with others – and that means communication will be essential.

You'll practice applying communication strategies in the workshop so you'll be ready to succeed on your first attempt when you leave the workshop. And you'll get a quick guide (Figure 5) with very specific tips (and things to avoid) for communicating with others.

You'll finish your action plan – and you'll take the first step back into the real world with a clear plan about how to start your next conversation with your stakeholder.



Figure 5: SDI Quick Guide

## Reinforcement and Continued Learning

If you're like most people, you'll think "I wish everybody I work with knew how to communicate effectively with me – and I wish I had this information top of mind for how to communicate with them." Core Strengths is here to help – and we'll give you a printed monument (Figure 6) that you can display at work. When people drop by, they can see your assessment results and quickly choose the most effective way to communicate with you.



Figure 6: Personalized Monument

Each learner gets access to LearnerSource, where they can print a certificate of completion, access documents for continuing education credits, watch additional videos, reprint their SDI and Strengths Portrait results, and download SDI images to add to their email signatures or social media profiles. Through LearnerSource, they also share the SDI and Strengths Portrait assessments with another person. Most share this link with a person outside their work environment, such as a spouse, some other family member, or a friend. Access to LearnerSource is available to the learners after they complete their course evaluation.

## Resources

- Strengths Portrait (online assessment and results)
- Strength Deployment Inventory (online assessment and results)
- Learner Guide and SDI Quick Guide
- Working with Core Strengths (book)
- Access to LearnerSource (online resources)
- Guest access to one SDI and Strengths Portrait (with an online learning module for the guest)



# Facilitators

Every organization has a unique culture and training needs, so training often works best when internal facilitators deliver it. The Core Strengths – Results through Relationships program is designed so that internal certified trainers can deliver it with ease, expertise and consistency.

To become certified, aspiring facilitators attend a full-day public Core Strengths workshop. These workshops showcase the full program. Open-enrollment courses are offered in cities across the United States. PSP's Master Facilitators can also deliver in-house pilot programs. Alternatively, the full-day Core Strengths workshop is offered online for facilitators who cannot travel to attend the full-day workshop.

During the Core Strengths Facilitator Certification Course, you will:

- Learn how to deliver the Core Strengths Accountability program in your organization.
- Practice facilitation and program delivery skills.
- Gain access to the Core Strengths training community and trainer resources.

Certification prepares you to immediately deliver Core Strengths training and introduces you to a community of more than 4,000 certified Core Strengths facilitators.

## Resources

- A complete set of the learner resources (described above)
- A comprehensive facilitator manual
- Access to FacilitatorSource (to administer online assessments, and receive updates and additional resources)
- A USB remote and key. This custom-designed interface allows seamless access to the presentation platform. It includes the ability to display group results, present the slide content, play the videos, and operate on-screen timers for activities and breaks.



# Getting Started

Each facilitator is authorized to present the Core Strengths content under an organizational license. As a condition of the license, the facilitators are expected to provide this learning experience to at least 50 people within the first year of certification.

## References

- 1 <http://www.guinness.com/en-gb/thestory.html#>
- 2 Deci, E. (1995). *Why We Do What We Do: Understanding the psychology of self-motivation*. New York, NY: Penguin Books.
- 3 Koestenbaum, P., & Block, P. (2001). *Freedom and Accountability at Work*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.
- 4 Scudder, T. J. (2013). *Personality Types in Relationship Awareness Theory: The validation of Freud's libidinal types and explication of Porter's motivational typology*. (Doctor of Philosophy Dissertation), Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara.



2701 Loker Ave West  
Suite 250  
Carlsbad, CA 92010  
[www.CoreStrengths.com](http://www.CoreStrengths.com)

Copyright © 2016, PSP, Inc. All rights reserved by PSP, Inc. Core®, Core Strengths®, Core Strengths Accountability®, SDI®, Strength Deployment Inventory®, Strengths Portrait™, Relationship Awareness®, and the SDI triangle (patent pending) are trademarks and part of the trade dress of PSP, Inc.