Assess for Success
Assessing Personal Strengths and Weaknesses

Check yourself out
Accentuate the positive
Remember, nobody’s perfect
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

LAP development requires the leadership and active participation of many individuals—instructors, writers, editors, and others. Special credit is due the following individuals for their contributions to this LAP:

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OBJECTIVES

A Explain the importance of recognizing personal strengths and weaknesses.
B Identify personal strengths and weaknesses.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

Slide/Transparency
Number
Message

A 1 So What? (Why learn to identify personal strengths and weaknesses?)
   A. Have you ever interviewed for a job and faced these questions:
      1. What is your greatest strength?
      2. What is your greatest weakness?
   B. Perhaps you don’t have a lot of interview experience yet, but be assured that you
      will have to answer these questions in the future.
   C. Interviewers use them to determine whether or not you are a good fit for a certain
      position.
   D. You want a job that uses your strengths and minimizes your weaknesses—and
      employers want this as well.
      1. An employee in the wrong job is a waste of time and effort for everyone
         involved.
      2. This is why developing the ability to identify your personal strengths and
         weaknesses is so important.

DISCUSSION #1: Ask students if they have ever faced strengths/weaknesses questions in an interview. How did they respond?
**DISCUSSION GUIDE (cont’d)**

### A 2  • Importance of self-assessment in the workplace:

A. Philip is a whiz with computers and math, and he works best on his own, in a quiet environment where he can focus and concentrate.

B. What will happen if Philip takes a job that requires a lot of writing and collaboration with a team?
   1. Most likely, Philip will be unhappy and unsuccessful.
   2. His managers and coworkers will also be frustrated with his performance.

C. Philip needs to be in a position that capitalizes on his strengths and minimizes his weaknesses.

D. For this to happen, he needs to know what those strengths and weaknesses are!

### • Strengths and weaknesses are everywhere.

A. If you stop to think about it, we often assess, or evaluate, the strengths and weaknesses of everyday things.
   1. A coach, for example, might have the team assess the strengths and weaknesses of its performance in yesterday’s game.
   2. You might ask your supervisor to look over your proposal to identify its strengths and weaknesses.

B. The same principle is true for people.

C. We all have our own individual strengths and weaknesses.

**DISCUSSION #2:** Ask students to give more examples of strengths and weaknesses in everyday things.

### 3 • Benefits of self-assessment:

A. Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, said, “Know thyself.”

B. His quote encourages you to evaluate yourself as a person.

C. By doing this, you can make the best use of your strengths and can identify areas for improvement.

D. In short, you can work to become a better employee and a better you.
DISCUSSION GUIDE (cont’d)

Slide/Transparency Number  Message

A  3 (cont’d)  E. Other benefits of knowing yourself include:

1. The ability to apply your talents where they are best used
   a. Once you understand what you do best, you can look for opportunities to apply those talents.
   b. Examples:
      1) You may have great interpersonal skills and be very persuasive—these strengths would translate well into a sales career.
      2) You might be a very talented artist; this skill could take you many places—a career in graphic design, art education, or even fashion.
   c. Knowing your strengths can also help you maximize your performance in your current job.
      1) Let’s say you’ll be babysitting all summer.
      2) If you have athletic talent, you can take the kids swimming or to the park to learn how to play soccer.
      3) This will likely bring you more success and satisfaction than staying indoors playing video games.

2. Increased opportunities for professional development and career success
   a. When you know your strengths and weaknesses, you have a greater chance for career success.
   b. You give yourself the opportunity to maximize your strengths and improve your weaknesses.
   c. Example:
      1) Perhaps you’ll pursue a career in architecture, but there will be a certain software program you struggle with.
      2) When you recognize this weakness, you can take steps to fix it—spending extra time on it after work or taking a class or seminar, for instance.
      3) You can also utilize your strengths, possibly by mentoring coworkers in certain subjects or taking the lead on an account you’ve had experience with.

3. Better interviewing skills
   a. Asking a potential employee about his/her greatest strengths and weaknesses is a classic interview tactic, one that you will undoubtedly face many times over the course of your career.
   b. As with all interview questions, it’s best to have an answer reviewed and ready to go.
   c. When you have taken the time to evaluate yourself and identify your strengths and weaknesses, you will be better prepared to handle these questions.
   d. As a result, you will be a more impressive interviewee with a better shot at landing that job.
4. Better decision-making skills
   a. Whether or not you realize it, you make choices based on your personal strengths and weaknesses.
   b. Example:
      1) Let’s say one of your weaknesses is time management.
      2) Time management involves many small decisions each day.
      3) If you are not a good manager of time, then many of those small decisions you make are probably the wrong ones—going to bed too late or spending too much time on a minor project, for example.
      4) When you recognize this weakness, you can look at your individual decisions in a new light and begin making improvements.

DISCUSSION #3: Ask students to give more examples of how assessing strengths and weaknesses can improve decision-making skills.

5. Better teamwork skills
   a. Groups need people with certain strengths to function effectively.
   b. No one person can possess all these strengths.
   c. Therefore, a mix of different group members with different strengths is important.
   d. When group members know their strengths and weaknesses, they have a clear understanding of what they bring to the table to help the group succeed.

DISCUSSION #4: Ask students to identify more benefits of assessing strengths and weaknesses.

• Starting the task of self-assessment:
  A. Identifying your strengths and weaknesses is not easy—in fact, it can be downright scary.
  B. Self-examination may reveal characteristics we don’t really like about ourselves.
  C. Some people have low self-esteem, so they are much more aware of their weaknesses than their strengths.
  D. It takes courage to evaluate yourself, acknowledge your strengths, and examine your flaws.
B 4 • Your self-assessment will be more productive and balanced if you follow these tips:

A. Be realistic.
   1. It's great to dream big, but you must also be honest with yourself about your limitations.
   2. If you have a below-average aptitude for and interest in math, you may not become a NASA engineer.
   3. You will need to pursue a career that’s better suited for your strengths.

DISCUSSION #5: Ask students to talk realistically about some of their strengths and weaknesses. What careers are they best suited for?

B. Don’t compare yourself to others.
   1. We all know someone who seems “perfect,” and we can’t possibly compete with her/him.
   2. Remember that assessing your own strengths and weaknesses is not a competition.
   3. It involves only you, so there is no need to compare.
   4. Everyone has abilities.
      a. You might be a better listener than speaker.
      b. Your coworker might be a better speaker than listener.
      c. Each has its advantages.
      d. One is not better than the other.

C. Be specific.
   1. Don’t just say, “I am a good leader,” or “I am not a good leader.”
   2. Think about what makes these statements true.
      a. Are you a good leader because you know how to communicate clearly and you don’t shy away from responsibility?
      b. Are you a poor leader because you lack self-confidence?
   3. Break down general statements to get to the heart of your strengths and weaknesses.

DISCUSSION #6: Ask students to give more examples of broad statements that can be broken down to discover specific strengths and weaknesses.
D. Be honest.

1. Of course, it's difficult sometimes to admit a weakness.
   a. No one likes to look at him/herself and see flaws.
   b. Keep in mind that no one is perfect, and everyone has areas that need improvement.
   c. If you're not honest about your weaknesses, you won't have the opportunity to improve them.

2. On the flip side, it's sometimes difficult to be honest about strengths as well.
   a. We don't want to seem as if we're bragging or “stuck up.”
   b. Be assured that recognizing our talents, abilities, and the things we do well is a healthy and acceptable thing to do!

E. Don't be too hard on yourself.

1. Recognizing our weaknesses is important, but it's equally important that we don't obsess over them.

2. Try to identify one strength for every weakness you find in yourself.

F. Don't make false generalizations.

1. Never base your idea of a personal strength or weakness on one isolated incident.
   a. Missing one deadline does not make you a poor time manager.
   b. Acing one test does not make you a genius, either!

2. Look for patterns in your behaviors, things that occur regularly over time, before you decide what's a strength and what's a weakness.

DISCUSSION #7: Ask students to give more examples of false generalizations.

G. Assess yourself on a regular basis.

1. Have you kept a portfolio of important documents and projects from throughout your educational and professional career?
   a. Once in a while, you may look over these items.
   b. Some things are still valuable to you, while others are not.
   c. If you compare a paper you wrote five years ago to one you wrote yesterday, it is obvious that your abilities have improved.

2. Assessing your strengths and weaknesses is similar to this process.

3. You should start your assessment early in your career, but you need to review your strong and weak points regularly.
4. Keep the strengths that are valuable, improve your weaknesses, and notice how your assessments change as you mature.

5. Tracking your changes and progress:
   a. Increases your self-awareness
   b. Prepares you for lifelong success

**Steps for assessing personal strengths and weaknesses:**

A. Step One—Ask yourself important questions.
   1. Examples:
      a. What do I do well?
      b. What can I improve?
      c. What have I learned from my mistakes?
      d. What are my career goals?
      e. What might others see as my strengths and weaknesses?
      f. What skills and talents do I most enjoy using?
      g. What skills and talents do I least enjoy using?
   2. Answer these questions honestly and thoughtfully, and record your responses.
   3. Doing so puts your thought process into motion and helps bring your strengths and weaknesses into clearer focus.
   4. Remember that these are just a few examples of questions you might ask yourself to help determine strengths and weaknesses.

**DISCUSSION #8:** Ask students to think of some more important questions to ask oneself when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses.

B. Step Two—Review your education and experience.
   1. Think about your life so far and what you have accomplished, both educationally and professionally.
   2. Consider choices you have made, things you enjoy doing or don't enjoy doing, situations you handled well or wish you could redo.
   3. Look for patterns.
      a. What skills or talents do you use on a regular basis?
      b. What situations do you try to avoid at all costs?
4. Although some situations may seem unrelated, do you notice any similar reactions or behaviors?
   a. For example, you may serve on the ethics committee for your company, and you may also contribute frequently at weekly team meetings within your work group.
   b. While these two situations appear to be different, they both show that you work well with others in a team setting.

C. Step Three—Get input from others.
   1. While self-assessment implies working alone, it often helps to get another opinion.
   2. Before you ask for help, think of people you trust and respect.
      a. Choose people from different aspects of your life:
         1) Supervisors
         2) Coworkers
         3) Family
         4) Friends
      b. The people you choose should be honest, yet tactful—not those who will hurt your feelings.
   3. Remember, the purpose of this exercise is to make you more aware of your positive and negative qualities, so prepare to hear both.
   4. Plan a time to meet, and make sure you will not be rushed or interrupted.
   5. Really listen to what the person has to say about you.
   6. Ask for examples to support the qualities identified, particularly those you had not previously considered.
   7. When it comes to receiving feedback about your weaknesses, it may be a little tough to handle.
   8. Keep in mind that growth and development aren’t always easy but are necessary for success.
   9. Then, use the feedback to your advantage as you continue to assess your strengths and weaknesses.

**DISCUSSION #9:** Ask students to think of people they might ask to help them assess their strengths and weaknesses.
D. Step Four—Observe others whom you admire.
   1. Self-assessment often comes indirectly from observing others.
   2. Who is a role model for you?
      a. Have you met a manager or a coworker who inspired you?
      b. What about a famous person whose career you’d like to emulate?
      c. Anyone from your personal life?
   3. Analyze why you look up to or like being around this person.
   4. What qualities do you most admire?
   5. Be as specific as you can in your observation so you can create a list of admirable strengths.
   6. Evaluating your role model can help you identify strengths you wish to possess.

DISCUSSION #10: Ask students to identify role models who exhibit strengths they’d like to cultivate.

E. Step Five—Complete personal skills inventories.
   1. If you are having trouble coming up with ideas on your own, there are great assessment tools designed to help you figure out your strengths and weaknesses.
   2. Examples:
      a. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
      b. The Buckingham-Clifton Strengths Finder Profile
   3. If you were to take one of these surveys, you would answer multiple-choice questions related to your behavior, interests, and feelings.
   4. The survey would then be scored, and you would be given the results.
   5. The survey results often reveal new information about you that could be useful in the assessment process.
   6. The Internet is an excellent resource for finding these and other assessment tools, many of which you can take advantage of at no cost.
   7. The human resources department at your work place may also have access to similar assessment tools.
**DISCUSSION GUIDE** (cont’d)

**Slide/Transparency Number**

**Message**

**B**

- • **Gear up to take action.**
  
  A. After following the five steps above, you should have identified several personal strengths and weaknesses.

  B. Now you know which qualities you should emphasize and which ones you should minimize or work to improve.

  C. There are many different ways to go about doing so, but the important thing now is that you’re “in the know”!

  D. Use this knowledge to help you along the path to professional development and career growth.

- • **The Gray Zone**

  A. It’s often helpful to get input from others when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses.

  B. At one time or another, you may be the person someone comes to for input for his/her self-assessment.

  C. Let’s say a friend from the office asks you for feedback on his strengths and weaknesses on the job.

    1. You’ve thought of a few weaknesses as well as strengths, but you’re unsure about sharing your thoughts.

    2. You value your friendship with him and don’t want to cause problems or hurt his feelings.

    3. On the other hand, knowing his weaknesses can help him improve and become a better employee.

    4. What should you do?
1. Common interview questions:
   a. Your greatest strength?
   b. Your greatest weakness?

2. Important to know the answers!
Importance of Self-Assessment

1. Your job should:
   a. Maximize strengths
   b. Minimize weaknesses

2. Good for you and your employer
Benefits of Self-Assessment

1. Ability to apply talents where best used
2. Increased opportunities for career development/success
3. Better interviewing skills
4. Better decision-making skills
5. Better teamwork skills
Tips for Self-Assessment

1. Be realistic.
2. Don’t compare yourself with others.
3. Be specific.
4. Be honest.
5. Don’t be too hard on yourself.
6. Don’t make false generalizations.
7. Assess on a regular basis.
Steps for Assessing Strengths and Weaknesses

1. Ask important questions.
2. Review your education and experience.
3. Get input from others.
4. Observe others whom you admire.
5. Complete personal skills inventories.
The Gray Zone

1. Giving input to others
2. Don’t want to hurt a friend
3. What should you do?
DIRECTIONS TO THE INSTRUCTOR

Individual Activities

These activities are designed to reinforce individual student understanding and skill in assessing personal strengths and weaknesses. Read the two activities, and select the one that better meets the individual’s needs.

1. Duplicate the handout Tell the Tip on page 21. When the student has completed the activity, provide him/her with a copy of the answer guide on page 22.

2. Ask the student to choose a famous businessperson or entrepreneur whom s/he admires. The student should then conduct research on this role model to determine his/her strengths and weaknesses and how they have affected his/her success. Ask the student to summarize her/his findings in a one-page paper for your review.

Group Activities

These activities are designed to provide group reinforcement and practice in assessing personal strengths and weaknesses. Read the two activities, and select the one better suited to the group’s needs.

1. **Preparation:** No advance preparation is needed for this activity.

   **Process:** Divide the class into groups of three or four students each. Ask the students to discuss some of their personal strengths and weaknesses with each other. How do these attributes help/hurt them at school? How do they help/hurt them on the job? Encourage the students to brainstorm with each other for ways they can capitalize on strengths and improve weaknesses. If time allows, ask the groups to share some of their ideas.

2. **Preparation:** No advance preparation is needed for this activity.

   **Process:** Divide the class into five groups. Assign each group one of the five steps in the process of assessing personal strengths and weaknesses. Ask each group to create a presentation (using visual aids or presentation software if possible) illustrating its step—its importance and how to complete it. When the groups have finished, ask each to make its presentation to the class. Encourage discussion if time allows.
TELL THE TIP

Directions: For each of the following statements, determine what tip or tips for assessing personal strengths and weaknesses the person is demonstrating. Write your answers in the spaces provided.

Tips:
- Be realistic.
- Don’t compare yourself to others.
- Be specific.
- Be honest.
- Don’t be too hard on yourself.
- Don’t make false generalizations.
- Assess yourself on a regular basis.

1. Allison hates to admit that she lacks determination, but she lists it as a weakness so she can work to improve it. ______________________

2. Brett gets down about his weakness of poor communication skills, but he tries to remember that he’s great at managing time. ______________________

3. Jade is a good teacher. When she lists this as a strength, she mentions her excellent communication skills and ability to break complex ideas down into easily learned parts. ______________________

4. Christian did poorly on his math test last week, but he knows it was because he didn’t have enough time to study. He’s not listing “bad at math” as a weakness. ______________________

5. Kate’s sister has already gotten three promotions at work in her first two years. Kate is careful not to base her assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses on her ideas about her sister’s success. ______________________

6. Jack has decided to conduct an assessment of his personal strengths and weaknesses each year during the month of his birthday. ______________________

7. Because she is not a strong writer, Claire knows she isn’t going to become a journalist. Knowing this weakness ahead of time can help her focus on her strengths and pursue a career that’s well-suited for her. ______________________

8. James has great logic skills which he uses in his career as a detective. He’s not afraid to list these skills as one of his strengths. ______________________

9. Julia placed second in a design contest she entered. She knows this doesn’t make her an expert designer yet, though. ______________________

10. Jorge conducts a new personal assessment every time he gets a promotion at work. ______________________
1. Allison hates to admit that she lacks determination, but she lists it as a weakness so she can work to improve it. Be realistic, be honest.

2. Brett gets down about his weakness of poor communication skills, but he tries to remember that he’s great at managing time. Don’t be too hard on yourself.

3. Jade is a good teacher. When she lists this as a strength, she mentions her excellent communication skills and ability to break complex ideas down into easily learned parts. Be specific.

4. Christian did poorly on his math test last week, but he knows it was because he didn’t have enough time to study. He’s not listing “bad at math” as a weakness. Don’t make false generalizations, don’t be too hard on yourself.

5. Kate’s sister has already gotten three promotions at work in her first two years. Kate is careful not to base her assessment of personal strengths and weaknesses on her ideas about her sister’s success. Don’t compare yourself to others.

6. Jack has decided to conduct an assessment of his personal strengths and weaknesses each year during the month of his birthday. Assess yourself on a regular basis.

7. Because she is not a strong writer, Claire knows she isn’t going to become a journalist. Knowing this weakness ahead of time can help her focus on her strengths and pursue a career that’s well-suited for her. Be realistic, don’t compare yourself to others.

8. James has great logic skills which he uses in his career as a detective. He’s not afraid to list these skills as one of his strengths. Be honest.

9. Julia placed second in a design contest she entered. She knows this doesn’t make her an expert designer yet, though. Don’t make false generalizations, be realistic.

10. Jorge conducts a new personal assessment every time he gets a promotion at work. Assess yourself on a regular basis.
TOTAL RECALL KEY

OBJECTIVE A (Page 4 of student LAP)

1. Once you understand what you do best, you can look for opportunities to apply those talents. You may have great interpersonal skills and be very persuasive. These strengths would translate well into a sales career. Or, you might be a very talented artist. This skill could take you many places—a career in graphic design, art education, or even fashion. Knowing your strengths can also help you maximize your performance in your current job.

2. When you know your strengths and weaknesses, you have a greater chance for career success. You give yourself the opportunity to maximize your strengths and improve your weaknesses. Perhaps you’ll pursue a career in architecture, but there will be a certain software program you struggle with. When you recognize this weakness, you can take steps to fix it—spending extra time on it after work or taking a class or seminar, for instance. You can also utilize your strengths, possibly by mentoring coworkers in certain subjects or taking the lead on an account you’ve had experience with.

3. Asking a potential employee about his/her greatest strengths and weaknesses is a classic interview tactic, one that you will undoubtedly face many times over the course of your career. As with all interview questions, it’s best to have an answer reviewed and ready to go. When you have taken the time to evaluate yourself and identify your strengths and weaknesses, you will be better prepared to handle these questions. As a result, you will be a more impressive interviewee with a better shot at landing that job.

4. Whether or not you realize it, you make choices based on your personal strengths and weaknesses. Let’s say one of your weaknesses is time management. Time management involves many small decisions each day. If you are not a good manager of time, then many of those small decisions you make are probably the wrong ones—going to bed too late or spending too much time on a minor project, for example. When you recognize this weakness, you can look at your individual decisions in a new light and begin making improvements.

5. Groups need people with certain strengths to function effectively. No one person can possess all these strengths. Therefore, a mix of different group members with different strengths is important. When group members know their strengths and weaknesses, they have a clear understanding of what they bring to the table to help the group succeed.
OBJECTIVE B (Page 8 of student LAP)

1. Assessing personal strengths and weaknesses is more productive and balanced if you follow these tips:

*Be realistic.* Be honest with yourself about your limitations.

*Don’t compare yourself to others.* Remember that assessing your own strengths and weaknesses is not a competition. It involves only you, so there is no need to compare. Everyone has abilities.

*Be specific.* Break down general statements to get to the heart of your strengths and weaknesses.

*Be honest.* It’s difficult sometimes to admit a weakness. No one likes to look at him/herself and see flaws. Keep in mind that no one is perfect, and everyone has areas that need improvement. If you’re not honest about your weaknesses, you won’t have the opportunity to improve them. It’s sometimes difficult to be honest about strengths as well. We don’t want to seem as if we’re bragging or “stuck up.” Be assured that recognizing our talents, abilities, and the things we do well is a healthy and acceptable thing to do.

*Don’t be too hard on yourself.* Recognizing our weaknesses is important, but it’s equally important that we don’t obsess over them. Try to identify one strength for every weakness you find in yourself.

*Don’t make false generalizations.* Never base your idea of a personal strength or weakness on one isolated incident. Look for patterns in your behaviors, things that occur regularly over time, before you decide what’s a strength and what’s a weakness.

*Assess yourself on a regular basis.* Review your strong and weak points regularly. Keep the strengths that are valuable, improve your weaknesses, and notice how your assessments change as you mature. Tracking your changes and progress increases your self-awareness and prepares you for lifelong success.

2. The five steps in the process of assessing personal strengths and weaknesses are:

**Step One—Ask yourself important questions such as:**

- What do I do well?
- What can I improve?
- What have I learned from my mistakes?
- What are my career goals?
- What might others see as my strengths and weaknesses?
- What skills and talents do I most enjoy using?
- What skills and talents do I least enjoy using?

Answer these questions honestly and thoughtfully, and record your responses. Doing so puts your thought process into motion and helps bring your strengths and weaknesses into clearer focus.

**Step Two—Review your education and experience.** Think about your life so far and what you have accomplished, both educationally and professionally. Consider choices you have made, things you enjoy doing or don’t enjoy doing, situations you handled well or wish you could redo. Look for patterns.
Step Three—Get input from others. While self-assessment implies working alone, it often helps to get another opinion. Before you ask for help, think of people you trust and respect. Choose people from different aspects of your life—supervisors, coworkers, even family and friends. The people you choose should be honest, yet tactful—not those who will hurt your feelings. Remember, the purpose of this exercise is to make you more aware of your positive and negative qualities, so prepare to hear both. Plan a time to meet, and make sure you will not be rushed or interrupted. Really listen to what the person has to say about you. Ask for examples to support the qualities identified, particularly those you had not previously considered. When it comes to receiving feedback about your weaknesses, it may be a little tough to handle. Keep in mind that growth and development aren’t always easy but are necessary for success. Then, use the feedback to your advantage as you continue to assess your strengths and weaknesses.

Step Four—Observe others whom you admire. Self-assessment often comes indirectly from observing others. Who is a role model for you? Analyze why you look up to or like being around this person. What qualities do you most admire? Be as specific as you can in your observation so you can create a list of admirable strengths. Evaluating your role model can help you identify strengths you wish to possess.

Step Five—Complete personal skills inventories. There are great assessment tools designed to help you figure out your strengths and weaknesses. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and The Buckingham-Clifton StrengthsFinder Profile are two examples of commonly used surveys. If you were to take one of these surveys, you would answer multiple-choice questions related to your behavior, interests, and feelings. The survey would then be scored, and you would be given the results. The survey results often reveal new information about you that could be useful in the assessment process. The Internet is an excellent resource for finding these and other assessment tools, many of which you can take advantage of at no cost. The human resources department at your work place may also have access to similar assessment tools.
PRACTICE TEST

Part I—60 points

Directions: Answer each of the following questions. Use a separate sheet of paper to record your responses.

OBJECTIVE A

1. Why is self-assessment important in the workplace? (4 points)
2. How does self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses help you to apply your talents appropriately? (3 points)
3. How does self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses provide increased opportunities for professional development and career success? (3 points)
4. How does self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses help to build better interviewing skills? (3 points)
5. How does self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses help to build better decision-making skills? (3 points)
6. How does self-assessment of strengths and weaknesses help to build better teamwork skills? (3 points)

OBJECTIVE B

7. Why is it important to be realistic when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses? (3 points)
8. Why shouldn’t you compare yourself to others when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses? (3 points)
9. Why is it important to be specific when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses? (3 points)
10. Why is it important to be honest when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses? (3 points)
11. Why shouldn’t you be too hard on yourself when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses? (3 points)
12. Why shouldn’t you make false generalizations when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses? (3 points)
13. Why should you assess yourself on a regular basis? (3 points)
14. Describe the five steps in the process of assessing personal strengths and weaknesses: (20 points; 4 points each)
   a. Ask yourself important questions.
   b. Review your education and experience.
   c. Get input from others.
   d. Observe others whom you admire.
   e. Complete personal skills inventories.
Part II—40 points

**Directions:** You’ve just graduated and are looking for your first full-time job. Before you start interviewing, you want to identify your personal strengths and weaknesses. Write a plan for how you will complete this task. Be sure that your plan addresses the steps outlined in the LAP.

**Suggested Criteria Levels:**
- Part I—48 points
- Part II—32 points
OBJECTIVE A

1. Self-assessment in the workplace is important because both employees and employers want to fill positions that maximize strengths and minimize weaknesses. (4 points)

2. Once you understand what you do best, you can look for opportunities to apply those talents. You may have great interpersonal skills and be very persuasive. These strengths would translate well into a sales career. Or, you might be a very talented artist. This skill could take you many places—a career in graphic design, art education, or even fashion. Knowing your strengths can also help you maximize your performance in your current job. (3 points)

3. When you know your strengths and weaknesses, you have a greater chance for career success. You give yourself the opportunity to maximize your strengths and improve your weaknesses. Perhaps you’ll pursue a career in architecture, but there will be a certain software program you struggle with. When you recognize this weakness, you can take steps to fix it—spending extra time on it after work or taking a class or seminar, for instance. You can also utilize your strengths, possibly by mentoring coworkers in certain subjects or taking the lead on an account you’ve had experience with. (3 points)

4. Asking a potential employee about his/her greatest strengths and weaknesses is a classic interview tactic, one that you will undoubtedly face many times over the course of your career. As with all interview questions, it’s best to have an answer reviewed and ready to go. When you have taken the time to evaluate yourself and identify your strengths and weaknesses, you will be better prepared to handle these questions. As a result, you will be a more impressive interviewee with a better shot at landing that job. (3 points)

5. Whether or not you realize it, you make choices based on your personal strengths and weaknesses. Let’s say one of your weaknesses is time management. Time management involves many small decisions each day. If you are not a good manager of time, then many of those small decisions you make are probably the wrong ones—going to bed too late or spending too much time on a minor project, for example. When you recognize this weakness, you can look at your individual decisions in a new light and begin making improvements. (3 points)

6. Groups need people with certain strengths to function effectively. No one person can possess all these strengths. Therefore, a mix of different group members with different strengths is important. When group members know their strengths and weaknesses, they have a clear understanding of what they bring to the table to help the group succeed. (3 points)

OBJECTIVE B

7. It’s great to dream big, but you must also be honest with yourself about your limitations. You want to pursue a career that’s best suited for your strengths. (3 points)

8. We all know someone who seems “perfect,” and we can’t possibly compete with her/him. Remember that assessing your own strengths and weaknesses is not a competition. It involves only you, so there is no need to compare. Everyone has abilities. You might be a better listener than speaker. Your coworker might be a better speaker than listener. Each has its advantages. One is not better than the other. (3 points)
It's important to be specific when assessing personal strengths and weaknesses. Don't just say, "I am a good leader," or "I am not a good leader." Think about what makes these statements true. Are you a good leader because you know how to communicate clearly, and you don't shy away from responsibility? Are you a poor leader because you lack self-confidence? Break down general statements to get to the heart of your strengths and weaknesses. (3 points)

10. It's difficult sometimes to admit a weakness. No one likes to look at him/herself and see flaws. Keep in mind that no one is perfect, and everyone has areas that need improvement. If you're not honest about your weaknesses, you won't have the opportunity to improve them. On the flip side, it's sometimes difficult to be honest about strengths as well. We don't want to seem as if we're bragging or "stuck up." Be assured that recognizing our talents, abilities, and the things we do well is a healthy and acceptable thing to do. (3 points)

11. Don't be too hard on yourself. Recognizing our weaknesses is important, but it's equally important that we don't obsess over them. Try to identify one strength for every weakness you find in yourself. (3 points)

12. Never base your idea of a personal strength or weakness on one isolated incident. Missing one deadline does not make you a poor time manager. Acing one test does not make you a genius, either. Look for patterns in your behaviors, things that occur regularly over time, before you decide what's a strength and what's a weakness. (3 points)

13. Assessing your strengths and weaknesses is an ongoing process. You should start your assessment early in your career, but you need to review your strong and weak points regularly. Keep the strengths that are valuable, improve your weaknesses, and notice how your assessments change as you mature. Tracking your changes and progress increases your self-awareness and prepares you for lifelong success. (3 points)

14. The five steps in the process of assessing personal strengths and weaknesses are:

Step One—Ask yourself important questions such as:

- What do I do well?
- What can I improve?
- What have I learned from my mistakes?
- What are my career goals?
- What might others see as my strengths and weaknesses?
- What skills and talents do I most enjoy using?
- What skills and talents do I least enjoy using?

Answer these questions honestly and thoughtfully, and record your responses. Doing so puts your thought process into motion and helps bring your strengths and weaknesses into clearer focus.

Step Two—Review your education and experience. Think about your life so far and what you have accomplished, both educationally and professionally. Consider choices you have made, things you enjoy doing or don't enjoy doing, situations you handled well or wish you could redo. Look for patterns.
Step Three—Get input from others. While self-assessment implies working alone, it often helps to get another opinion. Before you ask for help, think of people you trust and respect. Choose people from different aspects of your life—supervisors, coworkers, even family and friends. The people you choose should be honest, yet tactful—not those who will hurt your feelings. Remember, the purpose of this exercise is to make you more aware of your positive and negative qualities, so prepare to hear both. Plan a time to meet, and make sure you will not be rushed or interrupted. Really listen to what the person has to say about you. Ask for examples to support the qualities identified, particularly those you had not previously considered. When it comes to receiving feedback about your weaknesses, it may be a little tough to handle. Keep in mind that growth and development aren’t always easy but are necessary for success. Then, use the feedback to your advantage as you continue to assess your strengths and weaknesses.

Step Four—Observe others whom you admire. Self-assessment often comes indirectly from observing others. Who is a role model for you? Analyze why you look up to or like being around this person. What qualities do you most admire? Be as specific as you can in your observation so you can create a list of admirable strengths. Evaluating your role model can help you identify strengths you wish to possess.

Step Five—Complete personal skills inventories. There are great assessment tools designed to help you figure out your strengths and weaknesses. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and The Buckingham-Clifton StrengthsFinder Profile are two examples of commonly used surveys. If you were to take one of these surveys, you would answer multiple-choice questions related to your behavior, interests, and feelings. The survey would then be scored, and you would be given the results. The survey results often reveal new information about you that could be useful in the assessment process. The Internet is an excellent resource for finding these and other assessment tools, many of which you can take advantage of at no cost. The human resources department at your workplace may also have access to similar assessment tools.

Part II—40 points

Directions: Circle the appropriate value.

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Suggested Criteria Levels: Part I—48 points  
Part II—32 points
POSTTEST

Part I—60 points

Directions: Identify the correct answer to each of the following questions. Use a separate sheet of paper to record your responses.

OBJECTIVE A

1. Employees should seek positions that
   a. capitalize on their strengths.  
   b. capitalize on their weaknesses.  
   c. minimize their strengths.  
   d. minimize their experience.  

2. Which of the following quotes encourages you to evaluate yourself as a person:
   a. “Never give up.”  
   b. “Life is like a box of chocolates.”  
   c. “Know thyself.”  
   d. “Give me liberty or give me death.”  

3.Knowing your strengths and weaknesses can help you
   a. make the right decision every time.  
   b. obtain any job you want to.  
   c. receive a raise each year.  
   d. perform better in your current job.  

4. Which of the following illustrates how knowing your strengths and weaknesses can contribute toward professional development and career success:
   a. Developing new friendships in your neighborhood  
   b. Taking a leadership role on a group project  
   c. Avoiding new assignments  
   d. Spending less time on tasks you find difficult  

5. Why is it important to assess personal strengths and weaknesses before interviewing for a job?
   a. If you know your strengths and weaknesses, you will get the job.  
   b. Interviewers often ask you to discuss your strengths and weaknesses.  
   c. You must improve all weaknesses before you are hired.  
   d. Employers require you to have at least 10 strengths.  

6. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses can help contribute to improved group performance because
   a. groups will be able to remove members with too many weaknesses.  
   b. a group can only function with one leader.  
   c. you will be able to avoid bringing your weaknesses into the group.  
   d. groups need members with different strengths to succeed.
OBJECTIVE B

7. Why is assessing strengths and weaknesses a difficult task? (3 points)
   a. It’s impossible to be modest when listing our strengths.
   b. It may reveal characteristics about ourselves that we don’t like.
   c. It’s an extremely time-consuming process.
   d. It’s unrealistic to try to discover every strength and weakness.

8. To find a career that’s best suited for your strengths, it’s important to be __________ about your strengths and weaknesses. (3 points)
   a. general  
   b. hopeful  
   c. realistic  
   d. competitive

9. Why shouldn’t you compare yourself to others when assessing strengths and weaknesses? (3 points)
   a. Everyone has unique abilities.  
   b. You will not measure up to others.  
   c. Self-assessment is very competitive.  
   d. Certain strengths are better than others.

10. When assessing strengths and weaknesses, what is wrong with simply saying, “I am a good leader?” (3 points)
    a. It’s not specific.  
    b. It’s not realistic.  
    c. It’s not honest.  
    d. It’s a false generalization.

11. Why is it sometimes difficult to be honest about strengths? (3 points)
    a. No one likes to recognize strengths.
    b. Weaknesses are more significant than strengths.
    c. We don’t want to brag.
    d. Few people have strengths.

12. Which of the following tips keeps you from being too hard on yourself when assessing strengths and weaknesses: (3 points)
    a. Minimize your strengths.  
    b. Review your weaknesses each day.  
    c. Find a new weakness every day.  
    d. Identify one strength for every weakness.

13. Jennifer’s manager pointed out some areas for improvement in her last performance review. Now, she thinks she is a poor employee. This is an example of (3 points)
    a. false generalization.  
    b. comparing yourself to others.  
    c. being modest.  
    d. recognizing your strengths.
14. Assessing personal strengths and weaknesses is a(n) __________ process. (3 points)
   a. competitive
   b. ongoing
   c. easy
   d. one-time

15. Which of the following questions might you ask when assessing your strengths and weaknesses: (3 points)
   a. Who can help me change?
   b. Why don’t I work well in groups?
   c. How can I better manage my time?
   d. What can I improve?

16. When reviewing your education and experience to help assess strengths and weaknesses, look for (3 points)
   a. patterns.
   b. choices.
   c. talents.
   d. mistakes.

17. When asking someone for input to help you assess personal strengths and weaknesses, you should (3 points)
   a. expect to get your feelings hurt.
   b. approach only coworkers.
   c. request specific examples.
   d. avoid speaking to friends.

18. A person you ask for input to help you assess personal strengths and weaknesses should be (3 points)
   a. brutally honest.
   b. someone who will focus on your strengths.
   c. older than you.
   d. tactful.

19. How can observing a role model help you assess your strengths and weaknesses? (3 points)
   a. You can ask him/her to identify your strengths.
   b. You can ask him/her to identify your weaknesses.
   c. You can identify strengths you wish to possess.
   d. You can identify weaknesses you wish to avoid.

20. A survey designed to help you assess your strengths and weaknesses is known as a (3 points)
   a. group learning exam.
   b. personal skills inventory.
   c. group talent test.
   d. personal behavior survey.

Part II—40 points

Directions: You’ve decided to change careers and look for a new job. Before you start interviewing, you want to identify your personal strengths and weaknesses. Write a plan for how you will complete this task. Be sure that your plan addresses the steps outlined in the LAP.

Suggested Criteria Levels: Part I—48 points
   Part II—32 points
POSTTEST KEY

OBJECTIVE A

1. a **Capitalize on their strengths.** Employees should seek positions that capitalize on their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. This makes them more efficient, satisfied, and successful, and makes their employers and coworkers happy as well. Employees should never minimize their strengths or experience. (3 points)

2. c “**Know thyself.**” Socrates, an ancient Greek philosopher, said, “Know thyself.” His quote encourages you to evaluate yourself as a person. By doing this, you can make the best use of your strengths and can identify areas for improvement. In short, you can work to become a better you. The other quotes do not relate to self-evaluation. (3 points)

3. d **Perform better in your current job.** Knowing your strengths and weaknesses gives you the ability to apply your talents where they are best used, which can in turn help you to perform better in your current job. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses will not necessarily ensure that you will make the right decision every time, obtain any job you want to, or receive a raise each year. (3 points)

4. b **Taking a leadership role on a group project.** Taking a leadership role on a group project illustrates how knowing your strengths and weaknesses can contribute toward professional development and career success—if you are a strong leader, you are maximizing that strength and using it to your advantage. Developing new friendships is great, but it does not relate to career success. Avoiding new assignments and spending less time on tasks you find difficult may relate to your weaknesses, but reacting in these ways will not help you to improve. (3 points)

5. b **Interviewers often ask you to discuss your strengths and weaknesses.** Employers are looking for the right fit for each position. That’s why they want to know about your strengths and weaknesses. Knowing them ahead of time will allow you to discuss them easily. This doesn’t mean that you will definitely get the job, that you must improve all your weaknesses before you are hired, or that employers will require you to have at least 10 strengths. (3 points)

6. d **Groups need members with different strengths to succeed.** No one person can possess all the strengths a group needs to function effectively. Therefore, a mix of different group members with different strengths is important. When group members know their strengths and weaknesses, they have a clear understanding of what they bring to the table to help the group succeed. Groups will not necessarily remove a member for possessing too many weaknesses. Groups may have more than one leader at a time. You can’t avoid bringing your weaknesses into the group, but you can work to minimize and improve them. (3 points)

OBJECTIVE B

7. b **It may reveal characteristics about ourselves that we don’t like.** Assessing strengths and weaknesses is a difficult task because it may reveal characteristics about ourselves that we don’t like. It takes courage to evaluate yourself, acknowledge your strengths, and examine your flaws. Assessing strengths and weaknesses need not be a time-consuming process, although it should be an ongoing one. It is not unrealistic to try to discover all of one’s strengths and weaknesses, nor is it impossible to be modest when listing one’s strengths. (3 points)
POSTTEST KEY (cont’d)

8. **c Realistic.** To find a career that's best suited for your strengths, it's important to be realistic about your strengths and weaknesses. You must be honest about your aptitudes and limitations if you want to succeed. You should be specific in your self-assessment, rather than general. It's OK to be hopeful, but you must be realistic as well. Self-assessment involves only you—it's not a competition.

   (3 points)

9. **a Everyone has unique abilities.** You shouldn’t compare yourself to others when assessing strengths and weaknesses because everyone has unique abilities. Certain strengths are not necessarily better than others; certain weaknesses are not necessarily worse than others. Self-assessment is personal, not a competition. You may or may not measure up to others, but it shouldn’t matter—your only concern is assessing yourself.

   (3 points)

10. **a It’s not specific.** You must break down general statements to get to the heart of your strengths and weaknesses. Why are you a good leader? Being a good leader may be realistic and honest. It’s not necessarily a false generalization.

    (3 points)

11. **c We don’t want to brag.** It’s sometimes difficult to be honest about strengths. We don’t want to seem as if we’re bragging or “stuck up.” However, recognizing our talents, abilities, and the things we do well is a healthy and acceptable thing to do. Everyone has strengths. Weaknesses are not more significant than strengths.

    (3 points)

12. **d Identify one strength for every weakness.** It’s important to identify weaknesses, but it’s destructive to obsess over them. There’s no need to review them each day or to find a new one each day. And, there’s certainly no need to minimize your strengths. Try to identify one strength for every weakness to keep things in perspective.

    (3 points)

13. **a False generalization.** When Jennifer thinks she is a poor employee because of one performance review, she is falsely generalizing about herself. She’s letting a few small mistakes seem like an entire weakness. She is not comparing herself to others, being modest, or recognizing her strengths.

    (3 points)

14. **b Ongoing.** Assessing personal strengths and weaknesses is an ongoing process. You should start your assessment early in your career, but you need to review your strong and weak points regularly. Keep the strengths that are valuable, improve your weaknesses, and notice how your assessments change as you mature. It is not a competition; rather, it is just about you. It can sometimes be difficult as well.

    (3 points)

15. **d What can I improve?** When assessing your strengths and weaknesses, you might ask yourself, “What can I improve?” Asking the other three questions does not identify strengths and weaknesses. They just analyze strengths and weaknesses or try to discover ways to fix weaknesses.

    (3 points)

16. **a Patterns.** When reviewing your education and experience to help assess strengths and weaknesses, look for patterns. What skills or talents get used repeatedly? What situations do you ignore or avoid? Although the situations may seem unrelated, you may notice similar reactions or behaviors. You are not looking for choices, talents, or mistakes.

    (3 points)
17. **c** Request specific examples. When asking someone for input to help you assess personal strengths and weaknesses, you should request specific examples to support the qualities they identify. It may be difficult to hear about your weaknesses, but you will not necessarily get your feelings hurt if you approach the process with the right attitude. You shouldn’t approach only coworkers or avoid speaking to friends—a mix of people from different aspects of your life is helpful. (3 points)

18. **d** Tactful. A person you ask for input to help you assess personal strengths and weaknesses should be honest, yet tactful. S/he should be able to talk to you about your strengths and your weaknesses in a way that is helpful and not hurtful. S/he does not need to be older than you. (3 points)

19. **c** You can identify strengths you wish to possess. Observing a role model can help you assess strengths and weaknesses by identifying strengths you wish to possess. A role model isn’t perfect, but s/he would not be an example of weaknesses. Assessing strengths and weaknesses is something you must do on your own. Sometimes, it is helpful to ask a trusted friend to help you, but a role model’s job isn’t to tell you your strengths and weaknesses. (3 points)

20. **b** Personal skills inventory. A survey designed to help you assess your strengths and weaknesses is known as a personal skills inventory. The survey asks multiple-choice questions related to your behavior, interests, and feelings. The survey is then scored, and you are provided with the results. The survey results often reveal new information about you which could be useful in the assessment process. These surveys are not known as group talent tests, personal behavior surveys, or group learning exams. (3 points)

**Part II—40 points**

**Directions:** Circle the appropriate value.

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**Suggested Criteria Levels:** Part I—48 points  
Part II—32 points
POSTTEST GRADER

Page 31  Page 32  Page 33

7. b

14. b

15. d

16. a

8. c

2. c

9. a

10. a

17. c

18. d

3. d

11. c

19. c

4. b

12. d

20. b

5. b

6. d

13. a

19. c
LOSSARY

1. **Assess**: To evaluate, analyze, or review

2. **Falsely generalize**: To make a broad assumption with very little supporting evidence

3. **Feedback**: Evaluative information given to you about the things you say and do

4. **Personal skills inventory**: Assessment tool designed to help determine strengths and weaknesses

5. **Professional development**: Steps that an individual takes to enhance or improve skills or traits that are needed to excel in her/his career/profession

6. **Role model**: A person whose behavior is imitated by others

7. **Self-esteem**: How you feel about yourself at any given time

8. **Strengths**: Positive habits and qualities

9. **Weaknesses**: Negative habits and qualities
ASSESS FOR SUCCESS STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: After completing Assess for Success (Assessing Personal Strengths and Weaknesses), please rate the following statements to help MBAResearch improve the LAP. Marking a five indicates that you “strongly agree” with the statement, while selecting a one indicates that you “strongly disagree.” When you have finished, please fax your responses to 614-486-1819 or mail them to MBAResearch at P.O. Box 12279, Columbus, OH 43212.

1. The information in So What? encourages me to want to know more about assessing personal strengths and weaknesses. 1 2 3 4 5

2. The examples used in the LAP helped to increase my understanding or interest in assessing personal strengths and weaknesses. 1 2 3 4 5

3. The LAP content is clear and easy to understand. 1 2 3 4 5

4. The transparencies are easy to read and to understand. 1 2 3 4 5

5. I liked the application exercise/activity. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I understood the directions for the application exercise/activity. 1 2 3 4 5

7. I better understood how to assess personal strengths and weaknesses after completing an activity/application exercise. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I easily understood what the test questions were asking. 1 2 3 4 5

9. I guessed and got the right answer to test questions most of the time. 1 2 3 4 5

10. The Gray Zone presents an ethical dilemma that does not have a black-and-white answer. 1 2 3 4 5

11. The Gray Zone really made me think about ethical dilemmas involving assessing personal strengths and weaknesses. 1 2 3 4 5

12. What did/didn’t you like about this LAP?
Assess for Success Teacher Questionnaire

Directions: After completing Assess for Success (Assessing Personal Strengths and Weaknesses), please respond to the following questions to help MBA Research improve the LAP. When you have finished, please fax your responses to 614-486-1819 or mail them to MBA Research at P.O. Box 12279, Columbus, OH 43212.

1. What information could be presented in So What? that would compel students to want to know more about assessing personal strengths and weaknesses?

2. What information in the student or teacher booklets needs to be changed to make it more accurate, easier to understand, and/or more up-to-date?

3. What anecdotes, examples, etc., could be added to the LAP to increase student understanding or interest in assessing personal strengths and weaknesses?

4. Identify specific changes that need to be made to transparencies to make them easier to read and to understand.

5. How would you improve the application exercises and their directions?

6. What specific changes need to be made to test questions so that they will be clearer?

7. How would you change The Gray Zone to make it relate more to assessing personal strengths and weaknesses and present an ethical dilemma that does not have a black-and-white answer?