ACTIVITIES for building team RQ

corestrengths

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Activities for building Team Relationship Intelligence

We did Core Strengths training. Now what? It's the essence of a question we often hear. The questions arise from the realization that no matter how good the Results through Relationships training experience is, sustainable change and better performance is a hit-or-miss proposition without additional reinforcement.

Metaphors abound that make this point. Imagine going to the best gym in town, working with a professional, knowledgeable, and engaging personal trainer who puts you through the best workout you've ever experienced. Then, you leave the gym, return to your old habits, and expect your fitness and health to be forever improved. Although we all wish this were the case, it's not. Lasting change requires intentional effort and, in most cases, hard work. Fortunately, for relationship skills, it's an enjoyable process that simply requires people to do what they want to do anyway—build authentic connections with the people that matter most in their lives—and help others do likewise.

So no matter your role, consider these action steps so you can build a high-trust team that knows how to get work done.

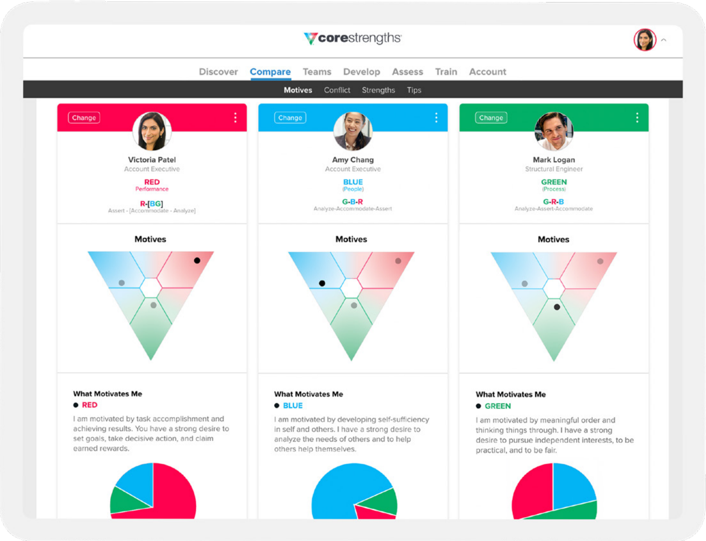
When it comes to improving relationships, whose responsibility is it to change?

Whoever wants a different result.

Tim Scudder Ph.D

Compare Styles

As a team, open up the Compare tab on the Core Strengths Platform and give each person 3-5 minutes to talk through their SDI 2.0 results. Each person can share their Motives, Conflict Sequence, Top 3 Strengths, and highlight 3 of the Communication Tips that resonate most. Hearing each person describe the most effective way to work with them goes a long way in eliminating past misperceptions and helps teams co-create a better future together. Beyond just a one-time activity, make a habit of taking new hires through the Compare feature to help them quickly learn the best approach with each team member.



PREP

5 minutes

Make sure team members are connected on the Core Strengths Platform.

NOTE

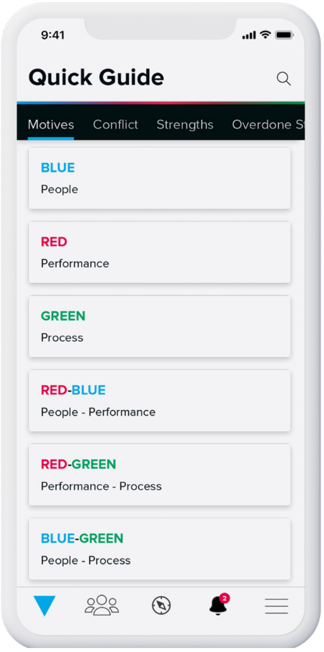
Compare lets you show three people side by side so you could pair people up to present together.

BONUS

If you want to get extra value out of the exercise, consider recording each person's presentation and having these short videos available to the team. This serves as a personal user manual for how to work best with each person.

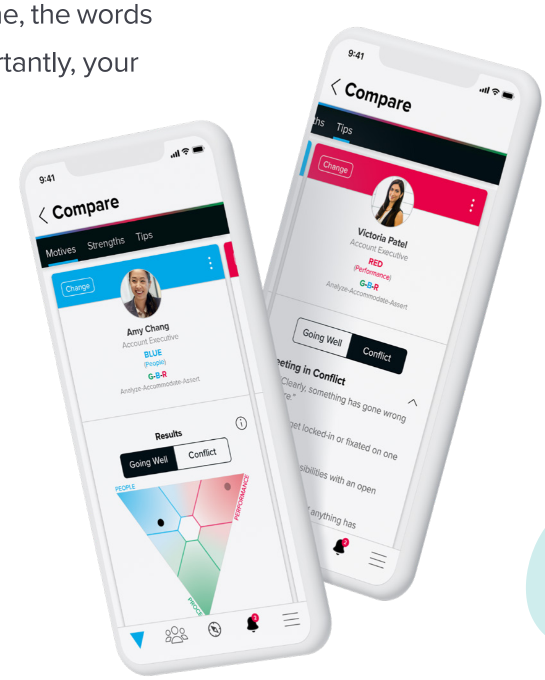
RQ in your pocket

Much has been debated about the negative impact of social media on our lives. Distraction, misinformation, and the disagreement that deteriorates real-life relationships are just a few of the unintended effects. But the Core Strengths mobile app was designed to do the opposite. It's an app that strengthens connections and builds appreciation for the differences we see in each other.



The Core Strengths mobile app (iOS and Android) puts Relationship Intelligence in your pocket when you need it. Have your team download it and review it in a meeting together. Your co-workers will discover more about how they work and how they can work better with others. For those who love our SDI Quick Guide, our mobile app transports it from your desk to your device and gives you customized communication tips for each of your colleagues.

Before making that telephone call or hitting send on an email, help your team recognize the value of taking just a few moments to pause and consider the people on the receiving end. It could cause you to change your tone, the words you use, or the order in which you present your ideas. Most importantly, your team will quickly recognize that one size doesn't fit all, and their results will improve as they begin tailoring their approach to fit each person's communication style.



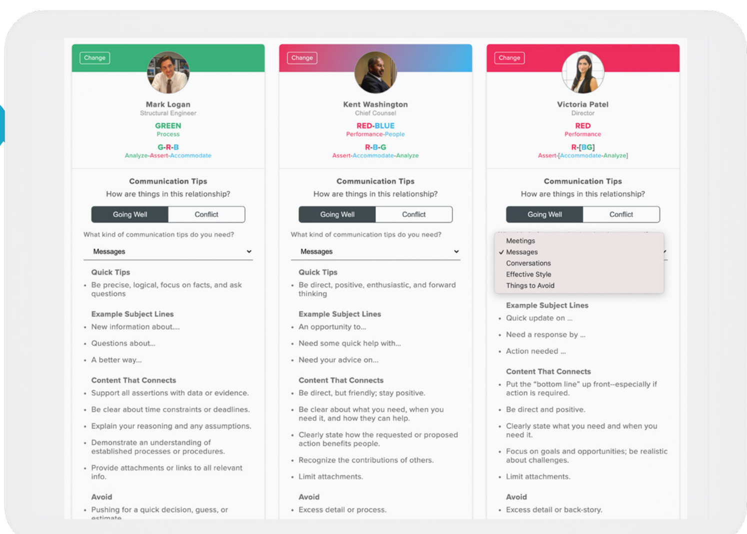
PREP 5 minutes

Make sure team members are connected on the Core Strengths Platform.

NOTE Compare lets you show two people side by side so you could pair people up to present together.

Recognition that Resonates

People like to know that their work is appreciated. The recognition that means the most is often connected to their Motives. At the end of one meeting, assign “homework” to observe others’ work and create a meaningful compliment. There are example compliments in Compare > Tips on the [Core Strengths mobile app]() and platform for each Motive color. At the next meeting, open with compliments about work that was observed since the previous meeting. Take a moment to allow people to reflect on how they feel about having their work recognized. Discuss whether the team would like to make recognition a standing agenda item for their meetings. To make it more playful, consider giving the assignment to give an over-the-top, excessive compliment. While it can be fun to create these over-the-top compliments, it’s also a valuable lesson that they tend not to be perceived as genuine. In other words, you can overdo a compliment to the point that it gets in the way of the relationship.



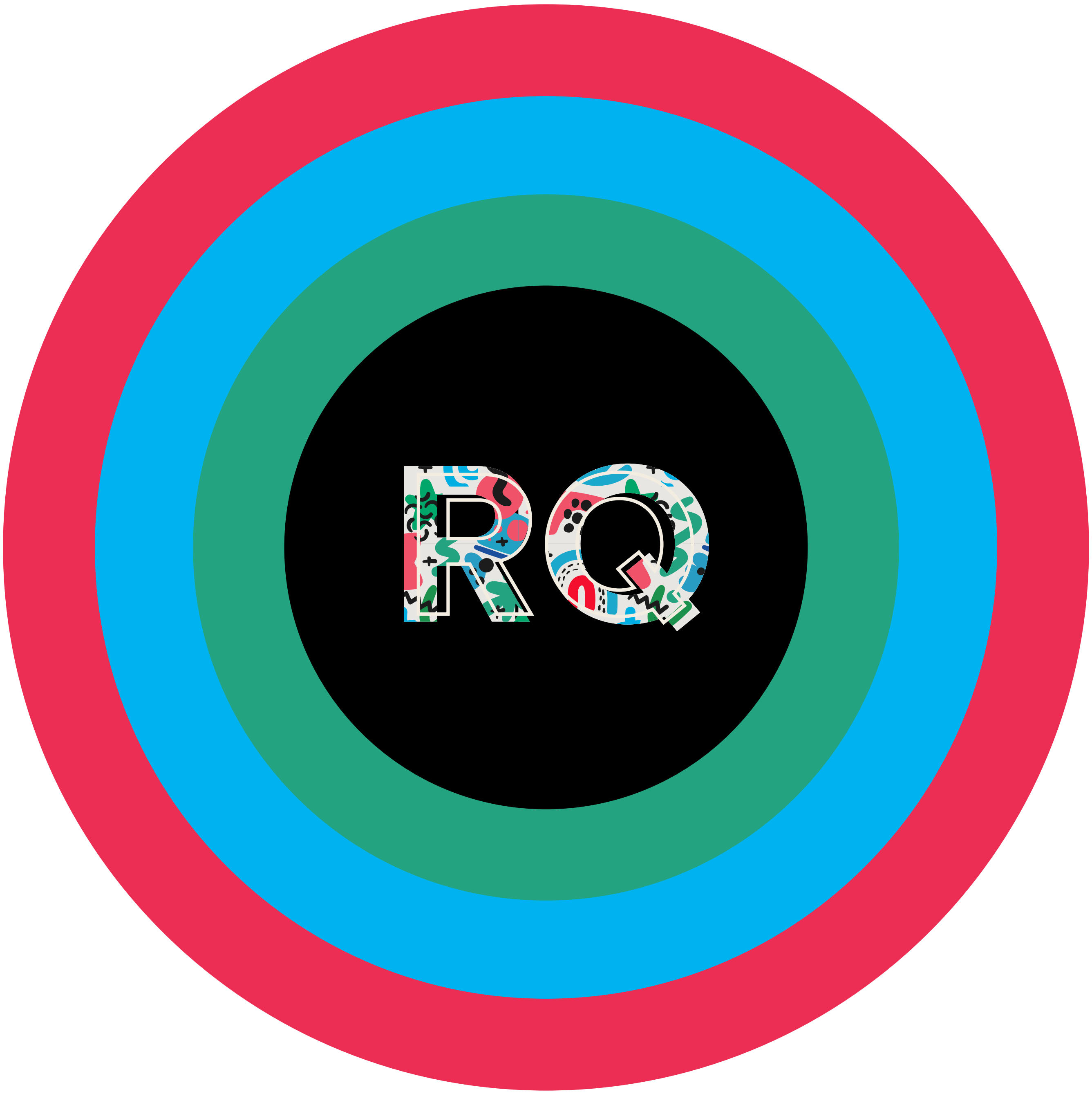
PREP

15 minutes

Guide teams to lookup example compliments in the Tips section under Compare.

BONUS

Send a personalized ‘Thank You’ card with a compliment connected to a person’s Motives. Download ‘Thank You’ cards for each Motive color [here]() and make them available for your team to use at will.



Teams that hit the mark know it’s all about relationships.

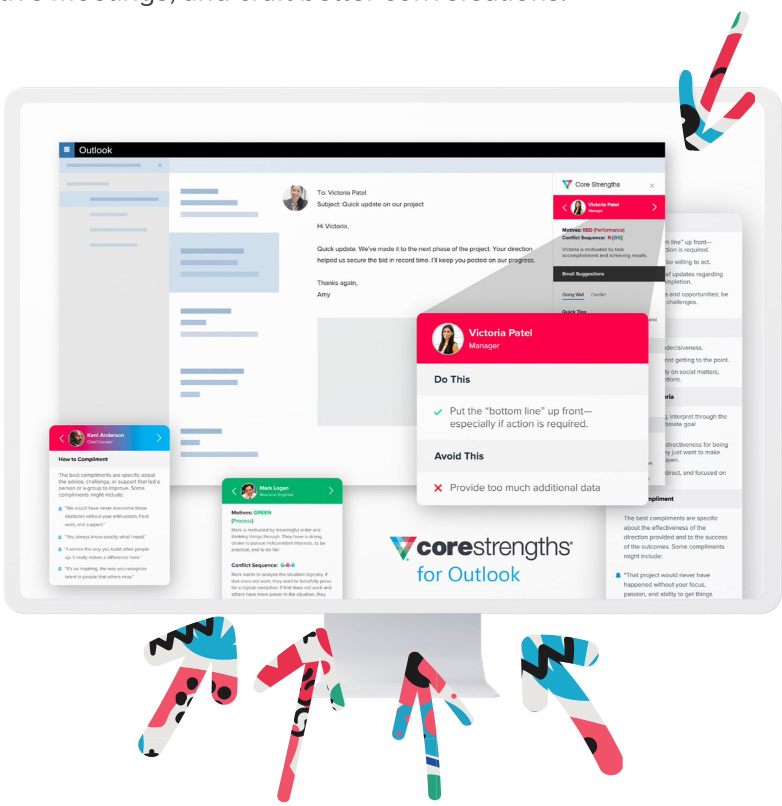
Customized Communication

Close the gap between what is said and what is heard. Core Strengths for Outlook frames each email you receive in the context of the sender's motives and communication style so you can see what matters most to them. And when you draft an email, we give you personalized tips for each recipient, based on their preferred communication style—making it easy to communicate in a way that resonates with them. (ie. keep it short and sweet, or provide lots of detail, or include how it affects the team, etc.) The add-in works with Outlook calendar, so you'll receive customized meeting tips as well. We even provide insight on how to complement each person, what not to do, and how to handle conflict. Think of it as a personalized Rosetta Stone for every colleague.

Core Strengths training teaches that it is critical to know your audience to make authentic connections and work better together. Our Outlook add-in takes the guesswork out so your team can write effective emails, have productive meetings, and craft better conversations.

PREP 5-10 minutes

Have each user download and install the Core Strengths for Outlook add-in from the Microsoft Marketplace. Then send an email to someone on the team using some of the suggested tips.

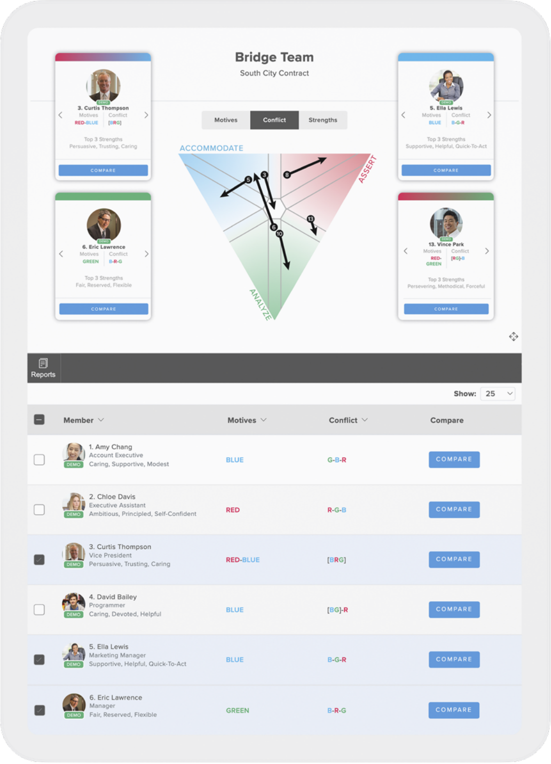


Seen & Heard

Working effectively with people means you will need to understand what they are saying. Knowing other people's motives will help you interpret what they are saying by offering insight into what is most likely behind their words. Have each member of your team prepare to talk about these questions at your next team meeting:

1. Overall, how well do you feel listened to in our team meetings?
2. What are some examples of times you recently felt fully heard by the team?
3. Which of the points would you like your team members to do more of?

Remember, any time we take time to listen to what's important to each other in how we are seen and heard and valued, it helps people know they're included and that they belong.



Build a Team on the Core Strengths Platform

Structure this discussion around the Motive Types. For example, if there are three Red-Blues on the team, have all the Red-Blues respond at the same time. After this discussion, ask the group what they will do as they commit to listening to each other more effectively.

PREP 5 minutes

Make sure team members are connected on the Core Strengths Platform.

BONUS If you want to get extra value out of the exercise, consider recording each person's presentation and having these short videos available to the team. This serves as a personal user manual for how to work best with each person.

Inclusion is all about making each individual feel welcome and valued because of their differences, not tolerated despite them.

Gil Brady Ed.D

I Am, But I Am Not

To retain and engage your employees, you need to create an environment they feel comfortable to be themselves in—one where they feel seen, heard, included, and valued. And when leaders, managers, and employees are all on the same page and prioritize building a sense of belonging, teams and organizations thrive.

Questions to answer ahead of time and anonymously:

1. Do you feel that your team is inclusive (integrates people regardless of their differences)?
2. Do you think that people with different ideas and points of view are valued in your team?

FACING THE 'MISCONCEPTIONS' OF OTHERS

This inclusion activity is a great way to break down misconceptions and stereotypes by giving people a chance to self-identify while also addressing the misunderstandings that can accompany these identifying factors.

Here are the steps for "I Am, But I Am Not"

- Each participant folds a piece of paper in half to create two separate columns.
- In the first column, they write "I Am"
- In the second column, they write "I Am Not."
- In between these two columns, write the word "but"
- The final phrase will read, "I am ______, but I am not ______."
- Participants fill in the first blank with some kind of common identifiers, such as their gender, race, religion, or age. Fill in the second blank with a common stereotype about that group that is not true (whether the stereotype is positive or negative).

Activity continues on next page

I Am, But I Am Not (continued)

- Make sure there are no questions and have everyone write at least five statements.
- Allow participants to share their statements with the team and have an open and respectful discourse on stereotypes.

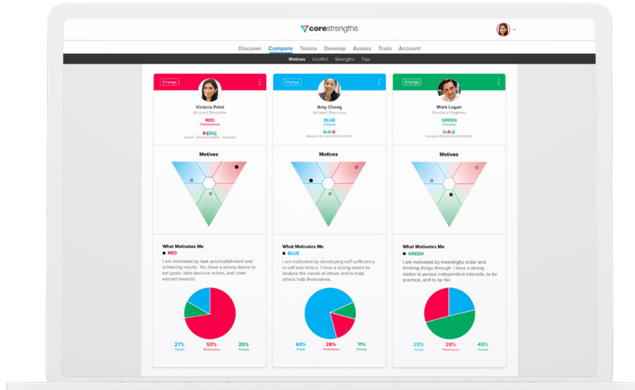
SUGGESTED DEBRIEFING QUESTIONS

- What are 1-2 words that describe what this activity was like for you?
- How did you choose which identities to share?
- Did anyone in the group surprise you? Why?
- How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge misconceptions?
- (If there was any laughter during the exercise), I heard several moments of laughter. What was that about?
- Where did we learn these stereotypes?
- How can we reduce stereotypes here?

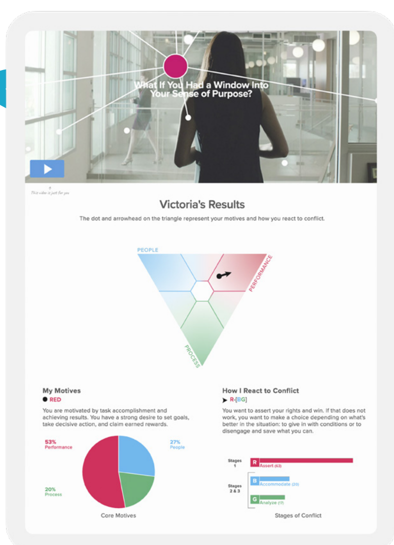
THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Addressing stereotypes can be a trigger. The debrief is very important. People may articulate stereotypes in their "but I am not" statements that might trigger other participants. A helpful way to debrief is to ask the group (or individual), "Where did you learn that stereotype? What was your first message about that stereotype? How is it reinforced for you?" It might also be helpful to ask other participants if they had heard that stereotype before and what their first messages about it were, too.
- The key to this activity is the process of examining one's own identity and the stereotypes associated with that identity, then having one's stereotypes challenged through others' stories and stereotype challenges.
- It is crucial, especially for the final part of the activity when participants share their stereotypes, to allow for silences. People will be hesitant to share initially, but once the ball starts rolling, the activity carries a lot of energy. Allow time in the end for participants to talk more about whatever stereotype they shared.

Coaching Conversations



Managers can use the Compare feature on the Platform and the Action Planner format when coaching team members *(Action Planners are available to those who have completed Core Strengths training).* Now, when looking forward to new projects or conducting a retrospective review of a situation that could have gone better, the manager can become a partner in the learning process. Imagine the energy that could come from jointly planning an upcoming sales presentation or change initiative to assess key stakeholders' motives and values, whether or not they may be in conflict, and how this should affect the strengths your team chooses to advance your cause. Ultimately, the goal is to communicate in the right style based on the audience's needs, so the manager can guide the team members as they prepare.



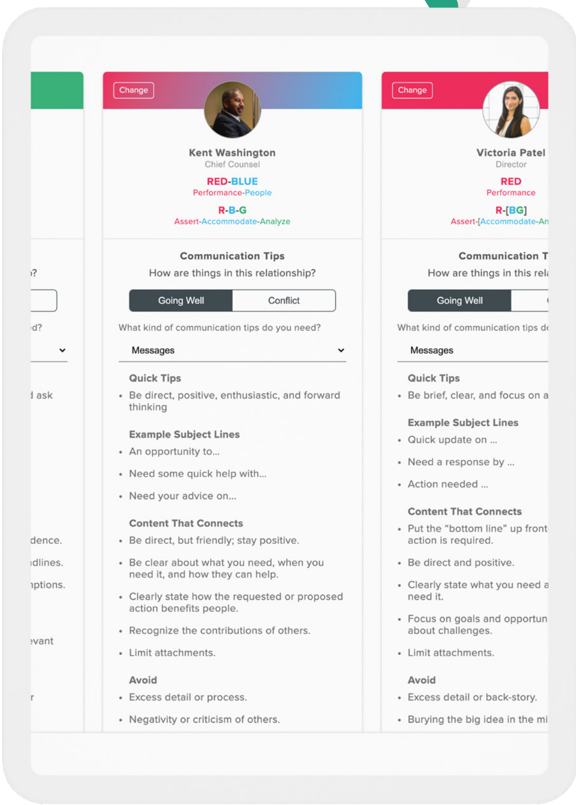
PREP 15 minutes

Team leaders and managers should review the SDI 2.0 Results of the Coachee for additional context and insight.

BONUS Coming soon – a brand new Coach Feature on the Core Strengths Platform. Managers will soon be able to schedule coaching conversations and have their teams provide and receive 360 assessments for more significant development and performance.

Show Your Colors

Make Motives and values more visible! Show off your Motive color. Put People, Performance, or Process (or some combination thereof) in your email signature, Zoom background, and social media profiles. Doing so makes it incredibly easy for others to respond to your messages in ways that honor your Motives and how you like to interact with people.



For example, if you can see that your colleague's Motives are Red, you might be brief and to the point in your response to a question. If a colleague's Motives are Green, you might attach some data that she can carefully review at her own pace. If a colleague's Motives are Blue, you might use a couple of lines at the outset of your message to inquire about his weekend or his kid's game before getting down to business. Here's another place where the mobile app and Outlook add-in can come in handy. Soon, people will also respond to you in your preferred style, and before long, you've created an organization where effective interactions are the norm.

PREP

15 minutes

Have team members drop in the appropriate template that corresponds with their Motive colors.

RESOURCES

Download email signature templates here.

Download Zoom backgrounds here.

Download LinkedIn header images here.

Visibility into Team Relationships

Most teams spend considerable time "Forming, Storming, and Norming" in Tuckman's team development model. Core Strengths training, coupled with ongoing consideration of each team member's Motives and Conflict Sequence, can significantly reduce the time to the "Performing" phase of team life.

One new district sales manager in a large pharmaceutical company recently told us that knowing the Motives and Conflict Sequence of his sales representatives accelerated his onboarding by months. It also improved collaboration among team members almost immediately. The key is to know how best to take advantage of these insights.

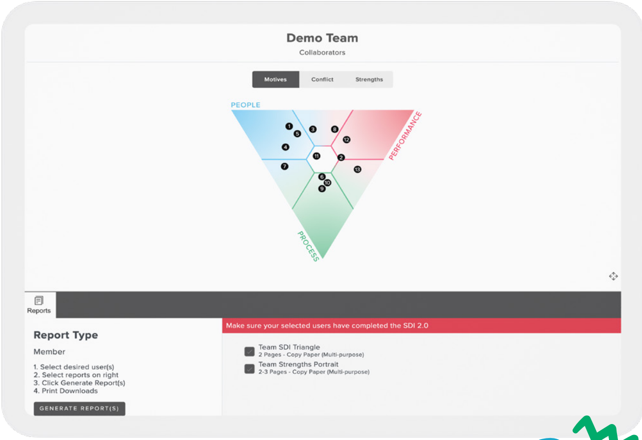
One of the great benefits of the Core Strengths Platform is the Teams feature. Anyone with a Core Strengths login can create and save a team, display a Team Triangle with everyone's Motives, Conflict Sequence, and see a composite view of Team Strengths. This gives everyone visibility into the culture of the team. By understanding a team's interpersonal dynamics and what everyone wants from their relationships, teams can begin proactively managing their communication and anticipating what may happen when there is conflict.

Team Reports can be downloaded as PDF, printed, or shared in Slack or on Microsoft Teams. Consider the power of a manager having his or her team's SDI Triangle, Conflict Sequence, and Strengths Portrait results readily available. The information would most certainly affect how the manager coaches, provides feedback and introduces new initiatives. Equally important is how team members interact with the leader and each other. Creating a Team Report is a valuable tool for these purposes—and it's easy to do. Build one on the Teams page of the Platform and talk through it together at your next meeting.

PREP 10 minutes

Navigate to "Teams" on the Platform. Create a team. Add members. You're ready. Do this for all intact teams, new hires, project teams (you get an unlimited amount!)

IDEA Use at every project kick-off meeting to fastrack team productivity.

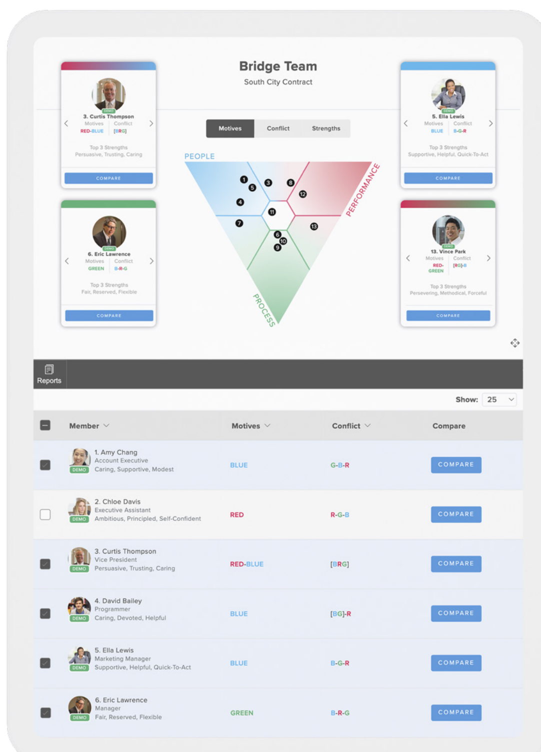


Motive-based Brainstorming

We have heard several stories about teams separating into Motives groups to provide different perspectives on business challenges in brainstorming sessions. For example, the HR team might be wrestling with identifying and implementing a new employee benefits package. Knowing this is a high-stakes situation with the potential for vastly different points of view, the leader might group the team into the 7 Motives (Reds, Blues, Greens, Hubs, etc.) and invite them to identify “key considerations” from each group’s perspective. This kind of activity almost always reveals issues that the leader had not previously considered. It also allows for team members to feel included and heard, which helps increase engagement.

PREP 10 minutes

Group teams into their respective Motive colors to surface diverse perspectives and innovative solutions (Red, Blue, Green, Red-Blue, Red-Green, Blue-Green, and Hub).

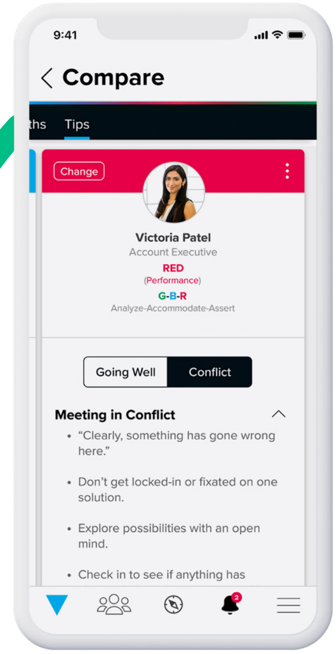


Build a Team on the Core Strengths Platform

Many times conflict is a result of unmet expectations. So when it happens, instead of asking, “what did I do?” a relationally intelligent person will ask, “what were you expecting?” and adjust their approach accordingly.

Gil Brady Ed.D

Let's Talk About Conflict



Ignoring conflict never works—especially when the stakes are high and emotions run higher. So before you get there, spend some time in meetings and one-on-one sessions discussing what things might trigger conflict long before the conflict occurs. Encourage people to be specific and use common workplace examples as a way of identifying "things to avoid" when working with them.

When conflict occurs, use Core Strengths' language—especially Overdone Strengths—to identify precisely what triggered the conflict and how the people involved might find a path back to feeling good again. These conversations can be delicate, but if the people involved are courageous enough to candidly and respectfully engage one another, most conflicts can be resolved quickly and create additional learning opportunities.

Some high-performing teams go so far as to create a conflict charter. A conflict charter is essentially an agreement addressing how the team will act when one or more of its members experiences conflict. These agreements often encourage team members to let others in the group know when they enter Stage 1 Conflict with a simple statement like, "Hey, guys, I'm not feeling comfortable with the direction we're going here. Let me tell you why..." This openness will cause the group to slow down, consider others' points-of-view and perhaps move toward a different or better decision. Another point in the charter might be, "I commit to going directly to the person with whom I am in conflict to have a private conversation rather than discussing the matter with others who are not directly involved." There are countless ideas based on the group's needs, but having the conversation and creating a conflict charter is an ideal starting point.

PREP

15 minutes

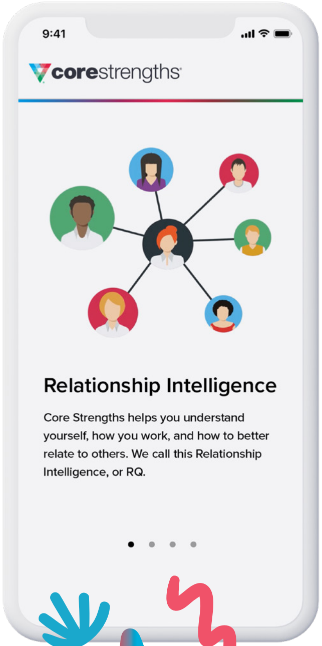
Healthy discussion takes time, yet it's always worth it. It's probably best to set aside at least an hour, depending on the size of your team.

BONUS

On the app and the Platform, we provide Conflict and Things to Avoid tips in the Compare section as a starting point. But talking it through as a team surfaces more insight and has a significant positive impact on the team relationships.

Learning Communities

We learn best in community, especially when we're learning how to better relate to each other. For remote and hybrid teams, creating a community that values learning together can be challenging. But it's not impossible if you're intentional. Learning communities can form in a variety of ways. One tried-and-true version is the "lunch and learn," where volunteers discuss how they're applying Relationship Intelligence and how they're choosing different strengths. Whether it's a video conference or in-person, getting people together to discuss their real-world experiences is always valuable.



While the word community implies large groups, some of the best learning takes place one-on-one. Peer coaching is a model that emphasizes this type of direct dialogue. Encourage team members to have informal conversations regularly to help each other apply Relationship Intelligence (RQ) and further refine their collaboration skills. These arrangements usually work best when the teams are peers yet come from different points on the SDI Triangle. On occasion, strong, long-lasting professional relationships form from these learning partnerships.

In our experience, the best communities take a positive and encouraging tone and are solution-oriented. It's best to establish clear ground rules at the outset, follow a plan, and invite people to prepare something in advance of each session. As a member of the community, everyone should prepare to share something.

PREP 15 minutes

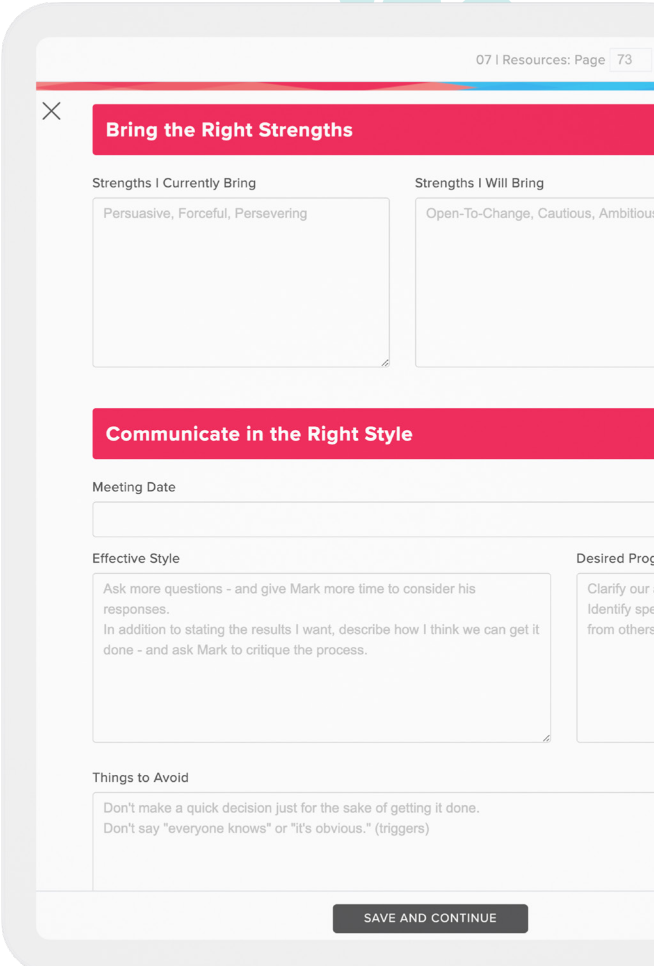
Create smaller, informal groups of peers and encourage ongoing discussions about how they can further develop their Relationship Intelligence together. They can use the Core Strengths Platform or mobile app to discuss their results, compare with colleagues, prep for difficult conversations, and co-create innovative solutions for the team.

Execute the Action Plan

For teams that have gone through the Results through Relationships workshop, have them review their Action Plans. The purpose of the Action Plan every Core Strengths learner completes is two-fold. First, the authors want learners to connect the classroom principles with a meaningful real-world situation. Adult learning theory teaches us that adults learn best when the topic is relevant to their daily lives. The new skills acquired must help solve an immediate problem and create results that will lead to a tangible benefit. We also want to provide the opportunity for a first-hand, proof-of-concept experience that leads people to say, “Wow! This stuff works.”

In the review, ask if they used strengths from the middle or bottom of their Strengths Portrait in their high-stakes situation. Were the chosen strengths effective? What was the outcome of the situation? If it’s been a while since the training, set aside 30 minutes and allow each team member to create a new Action Plan.

The focus is to help everyone recognize that the usual way they have been interacting with a key stakeholder isn’t always the best approach in the current situation. This new awareness and the probability of creating better results is the direct outflow of implementing Core Strengths—and a moment that every team leader should celebrate.



PREP 10 minutes

NOTE Find extra Action Plans in the back of the *Learner Guide. Digital versions are available in the Digital Learner Guide.

(*Available for those who have attended a workshop.)

To create a hospitable space
for innovation and unique ideas,
encourage people to think
out loud—and give them your
full attention when they do.

Tim Scudder Ph.D

all together now

- the Beatles

corestrengths®