

## **Discover the strengths you didn't know you had**

When I assign my students at Portland State University to the task of taking a strengths measure many of them shrug their shoulders and ask “why.” The common wisdom seems to hold that most of us already know our strengths, are already using our strengths, and that strengths are not places of personal growth. One student put it bluntly, saying “I am really creative. A strengths assessment isn't going to help me be any more creative.” Interestingly, the Realise2– the new strengths assessment from my colleagues at CAPP–show precisely the opposite to be true. Instead of identifying only those areas where a person is particularly shiny it also highlights what we call “unrealized strengths.” Unrealized strengths, simply put, are those strengths at which a person excels, are personally energizing, but which are seldom used. They are untapped resources that lie dormant, just waiting to be harnessed for success.

Why might we have important strengths that we do not use? One reason is that we simply do not have the opportunities to use them all that often. Take the example of one of my own unrealised strengths; that of “narrator.” Narrator means that I have a gift for telling stories. I can communicate information through story very effectively, making it emotionally resonant, entertaining, and informative. But not so long ago I had relatively few chances to actually use this strength. I certainly told a lot of stories when I was with my friends– and it felt great when I did– but I didn't have many opportunities to really use these narratives to full effect. Once I recognized and accepted this talent as an unrealised strength I started looking for places I might use this in my professional life. I began integrating stories into my academic presentations, my writing, and my interactions with my coaching clients. Since that time I have become more engaged with my work and happier.

My students often have a similar type of revelation. They read their Realise2 results and think to themselves “Wait a minute, is this a strength I have?” From there they graduate to accepting their unrealized strengths, then looking for opportunities to use them, and finally a degree of mastery of these shiny resources. In the end, strengths are tremendous areas of growth but it is not those obvious strengths, the ones we use every day, that we should focus on for development, but those that are waiting to be dusted off and used!

To learn about your own unrealized strengths take the Realise2 strengths assessment by visiting [www.realise2.com](http://www.realise2.com). To learn the difference between unrealized strengths and learned behaviors feel free to drop me an e-mail at [robert@cappu.org](mailto:robert@cappu.org) and I will send you a description.

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