

# Can you see the signs?

By Sarah Hirschorn

The next time you're considering a new challenge - a difficult work project, a limit-pushing sports event, even asking your dream date out to dinner – pay attention to the source of your motivation. Is it hunger for success, or determination not to fail? These might at first glance seem identical, but evidence shows people motivated by 'I must succeed' achieve more than those motivated by 'I must not fail', and it's more than just a matter of positive thinking – the target you place in your line of sight alters your behaviour.

Take the first group; the success-seekers. Counterintuitively, studies show that when performing a task and failing, they will only persist for a limited time before abandoning it. Unfazed by the loss, they instead pursue tasks where success is more certain, maximising opportunities for high achievement. Failure-avoiders, on the other hand, will persist. Determined to prove they can overcome failure, they ironically expose themselves to its greater probability, and often only mediocre performance at best.

While persistence can certainly enhance performance, this finding presents another success strategy; seeing through the fog of failure and spotting exactly where your opportunities for achievement lie. But on days when that fog seems particularly thick, where do you begin to look?

Identifying your strengths builds a personalised signpost that directs you to your most authentic areas of high performance and energy. Evidence shows people who use their strengths are happier, more confident and more likely to reach their goals. By taking a strengths test and flagging yours, you can approach success in a way that feels energising and natural.

Take the example of Kate, a local reporter aspiring to go national. For several years she ignored a nagging sense of dissatisfaction at work and the fact she never progressed to bigger titles, believing persistence was better than defeat. After taking a strengths test, it was no surprise that *scribe* was revealed as a top strength, but her profile presented a previously unseen signpost. With *adventure* rivalling *scribe* for top position, Kate stopped seeing her unrelenting wanderlust as a distracting vice and reframed it as a strength. She slowly but surely followed her signpost, and within a year secured commissions (and various free overseas press trips!) as a freelance writer on a range of national travel titles.

Approaching success can be made simple if you look for the signs. You can take the Realise2 strengths test at [www.strengths2020.com](http://www.strengths2020.com). Then take action by making your signs prominent; whether you create an actual sign out of card, frame a treasured photo that shows your strength in action, or make a neon flashing screensaver, the important thing is first to see the signs, and then to follow them.