



CAREER DEVELOPMENT CENTER

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Division of Student Affairs

“Top Ten” Strengths Exercise

Whether you are a first year student, senior, graduate student or alum seeking an internship, acceptance into graduate school or other advanced study, full-time work, or a volunteer role, your chances of success will depend largely upon your knowledge of:

- ◆ What you want to do; and
- ◆ Why you are qualified to do it.

For example, before starting a job search, you must have a good idea of what will make you happy. What tasks would you like to perform? In what type of environment would you like to work? You must also be able to convince an employer to hire **you**, rather than another applicant. It is important to take stock of what it is you bring to the table. What is your “value add”? The exercise below can be a BIG help in:

- ◆ Exploring career options – knowing your favorite strengths makes it easier to find ways to engage them;
- ◆ Identifying suitable positions without worrying about job titles, i.e., you tell people the strengths you wish to use and they suggest options;
- ◆ Conveying a sense of career direction before you have focused on a particular position or role;
- ◆ Writing personal statements, resumes, cover letters applications, and conducting interviews; and
- ◆ Gaining confidence – this is especially key to a successful interview.

Creating Your “Top Ten” List

Steps:

1. List your experiences, including paid jobs, volunteer roles, leadership positions, internships, academic projects, campus and professional activities.
2. Jot down all you did in each experience.
3. List the strengths you displayed through your tasks and roles. Note that strengths involve transferable and job specific skills as well as personal qualities. Focus on what you enjoy most – those in which you take pride.
4. After each strength (skill or quality) list one or more accomplishments or pieces of evidence to make it credible. Examples follow.
5. Prioritize the list, creating your “top ten” with the most important strengths first.

Tips:

1. Your “Top Ten” can be a generic list, one to guide your thinking or to use in an information interview. It can also be changed and targeted for use in a resume, letter, essay, or interview as you apply for a specific position, graduate school program, or other role.
2. Remember that your strengths are transferable; they can be applied to different opportunities. Also, your list(s) should change over time, although some items may remain constant.

(example)

Top Ten Strengths for Marketing Position

1. **Very committed to a marketing career.** Have targeted this field since my sophomore year. Gained related work experience. Talked to a variety of professionals in the field.
2. **Related experience in marketing & public relations.** Worked in sales and marketing last summer. Served as public relations and marketing intern. Active in Public Relations Society of America.
3. **Academic preparation.** Have liberal arts background with courses in writing, communication, and business.
4. **Competent in handling market data.** Completed courses in Statistics and Survey Research.
5. **Enjoy speaking before groups.** Provided campus tours and information sessions to prospective students and parents. Presented to department managers at Sears. Offered teaching assistantship in public speaking course.
6. **Sales ability.** Led retail store in percentage of service contracts sold. Complimented for sales skills as summer clerk/cashier at L.L. Bean.
7. **Hard working & self starting.** Worked 10-20 hours per week in retail job while carrying full course load. Have been trusted to work independently and complimented on my initiative by three different employers.
8. **Strong interpersonal skills.** Experienced in friendly interactions with all types of people as a result of six different jobs and roles. Completed course, "Effective Listening".
9. **Creative.** Helped to devise merchandising plan. Complimented on my media book revisions at CiderMill Theatre.
10. **Computer literate.** Confident with Excel, Powerpoint and Access.

Note: Strengths are in bold. Each strength is followed by one or more examples or "back ups".