AI Practitioner

Nourish to Flourish

Nourish to Flourish brings together practitioners' voices and creative practices, and appreciative reviews of books that support strengths-based approaches to human interactions.

Book Appreciation

Ankur Dhanuka

Ankur is a highly qualified finance professional (CA, CS, MBA, DBF) with two decades of banking and entrepreneurial experience. He is passionate about entrepreneurship and people development, a keen mentor, an author, trainer and a key note speaker.
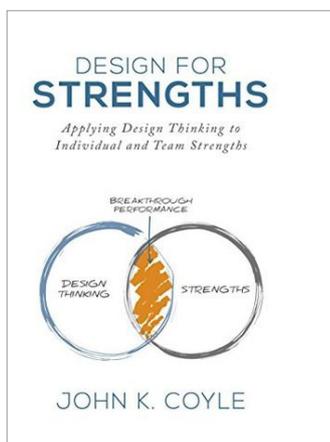
Design for Strengths: Applying Design Thinking to Individual and Team Strengths

By John K. Coyle
The Art of Really Living LLC, 2018
ISBN – 9781732094215

The book's interesting title led me to pick it up. In the past two decades, two disparate themes have emerged and caught the attention of the readers and learners, i.e. design thinking and strengths-based philosophy.

Design thinking is a creative problem-solving tool, while strengths-based philosophy starts with the premise that each person has their own strengths which they can leverage for breakthrough results. Design thinking has its roots in work done at Stanford University in California and David Kelley, whereas the strengths-based philosophy is inspired by the works of Marcus Buckingham and David Clifton.

In *Design for Strengths*, John Coyle takes the field forward by combining these two powerful concepts. Readers can learn the basics and use them for growth and development. Coyle also throws light on how teams and organizations can apply design thinking to team and individual strengths.

The author is well grounded in concepts and has explored related literature as well. Readers who love to see citations and sources would not be disappointed while reading this book. Coyle has leveraged his personal journey by sharing his experiences. He also highlights insights from other authors. He connects with well-known concepts, like deliberate practice (10,000 hour rule), flow and more. He uses examples from the field of sport, which is both engaging and holds the reader's attention. Overall, there is coherence to the way this book has been written.

The Designer's Mindset

A few of the ideas that stood out for me were:

- When quitting is good: We often tend to drag on with what we started, unable to quit. John shares a personal story abouthow quitting served him well and how he moved to his strength area.

- The Designer's Mindset: I found two phrases intriguing in relation to this: the role of "dispassionate designer" and the advice "don't get stuck on the first idea". One can build actions on these thoughts.

Strengths and weaknesses are often mirrors of each other.
John K. Coyle

- The weakness–strength connection is well articulated in this book. The author states this as four rules, found within the text of the book rather than the Table of Contents, and a good structure on which to build insights. Of these four, I found the third one very interesting: "Strengths and weaknesses are often mirrors of each other". He elaborates beautifully by using a table comparing weaknesses and strengths, showing that they are two sides of the same coin. This representation has the potential to bring in insights and uncover some of the readers' hidden strengths.

- The narration of design thinking in six steps and weaving of the strengths-based approach is supported by insights from a number of highly relevant authors.

The book is a good read for those in a quest to solve the problem of designing their life by leveraging their strengths, or who are looking at building teams

based on strengths. I wish the author had included more scientific data at certain points, rather than simply sharing examples. What could have been a great addition to this book would be a few templates, where readers can identify their own strengths using the steps he outlines for designing thinking. It would have made navigating this book more engaging, and would have generated more actionable insights.

Overall, I would say this is a good pick, and recommend this book particularly to those seeking to explore the intersection of design thinking and strengths-based approaches

John K. Coyle

John Coyle is a leading experts in Design Thinking, Olympic silver medalist, graduate Stanford University with an MBA from Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, an NBC sports analyst and award-winning author. He weaves facts, examples and intellectual principles into engaging stories which bring topics to life, and leave you with actionable ideas.