



STRENGTHS · PROFILE

CASE STUDY

The Donkey Sanctuary is an international animal welfare charity that employs over 650 people. In 2016 the Charity received the Princess Royal Training Award for its Leadership Programme followed by a second award in 2018 for the Leadership Toolkit; providing data on individual Skills Analysis, Talent Mapping and Strengths Profiling. These awards demonstrate the inspirational commitment to the learning and development of its staff.

The organisation has a presence in Europe, Africa and Mexico, in addition to six Donkey Assisted Therapy Centres (DATs) across the UK, where they work with children and young adults with additional needs who may benefit from interaction with donkeys.

The Challenge

The Donkey Sanctuary believes in getting the most from its people – pinpointing learning needs, developing talent and promoting internally where they can. To do this they needed to understand their people’s potential to look beyond what they are achieving right now to what they could achieve in the future.

Specifically, they wanted to improve one-to-one development conversations between managers and staff, improve overall engagement, and give people the language to own their unique combination of strengths and what they bring to the organisation.

The charity has a varied workforce from graphic designers, research scientists and veterinarian nurses to farm supervisors and fundraisers. Collectively they are responsible for over 7,000 donkeys and mules.

The Approach

The Donkey Sanctuary started their journey to using a strengths-based approach to achieve these aims by:

- 400 staff completing Strengths Profile
- All staff receive a 1-2-1 debrief often followed up with a team session
- Using Strengths Profile to develop a shared language of strengths to help staff express what they are good at and what they enjoy with both managers and colleagues
- Using Strengths Profile data to map their employees’ strengths and better delegate by matching strengths to specific tasks
- Using Strengths Profile data in Performance Management conversations to focus on strengths rather than weaknesses, and to create meaningful opportunities for Continuing Professional Development
- Helping employees to make the most of interview situations by using the Strengths Profile as a framework for answering questions and using the language of the descriptors as the basis of answering questions like: “What makes you suitable for the role of...” or “What will you bring to the role of...”

“We didn’t want something that would put each person in a box and that’s where they stay. Strengths Profile ticked the right points and I would say it is the most impactful tool that I have encountered in my career.

“Strengths Profile gives us the ability to spot what our staff do best and help to do more of it. It is very well received by everyone as it uses language that is appropriate to all individuals, as well as informing managers.” – **Steven James, Learning and Development Manager.**

The Outcome

- The foundations of a strengths-based approach has created a shared understanding of each team member’s strengths and what to come to them for, which in turn has led to increased engagement and energy levels from staff
- This approach has also helped with a recent restructure, as staff members have been able to use the language of strengths to articulate what they are good at and enjoy doing to be matched with roles that suit their strengths
- The animal welfare charity has worked with Strengths Profile for eight years, using it to profile individuals and to give managers the tools to further engage with staff
- The second Princess Royal Training Award for the Leadership Toolkit focused on data-driven conversations and decisions using Strengths Profile output, Gap analysis based on the skills required for the role and placement on the Talent Map