



CASE STUDY:

# CliftonStrengths Centennial





# Boosting Performance by Focusing on CliftonStrengths and Employee Engagement

The following Case Study on the impact from a Clifton Strengths approach in City of Centennial, Colorado, was conducted and created by Gallup. It serves as an excellent representation on the impact a Clifton Strengths approach can have to government organizations. The original case study from should be downloaded directly from Gallup at:

<https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/home/en-us/cliftonstrengths-centennial-case-study>

## STORY HIGHLIGHTS

- Employee turnover shrank from 42% to 1%
- Engagement results skyrocketed from 4.02 to 4.50 in one year, placing the City of Centennial in the 98th percentile for employee engagement, according to Gallup's database
- City leaders realized **less team conflict** at work and a **greater focus on talents** to overcome obstacles
- Saw employee turnover shrink to 1%

On Feb. 7, 2001, Centennial was legally established as a city in Colorado. More than 100,000 people live in Centennial, which is located in the southern part of the Denver metro area. Although it is relatively young, Centennial has garnered attention from a number of national publications as being among the best places to live in the United States.

---

## The Challenge:

How to accomplish great things with a lean workforce

The City of Centennial (Colorado) municipal government is an extremely lean organization. To be effective, their workforce has to be efficient. Over the course of a few years, the City experienced a change in leadership, a reduction in staff and high voluntary turnover (42%).

These challenges left City leadership with troubling decisions to make about replacing its workforce and finding external partners to help with some municipal functions.

Using Gallup's workplace solutions<sup>1</sup>, including CliftonStrengths, City leadership discovered the best way to get the most from their workforce was to focus on what each employee does best.

## The Approach:

Focus on building a strengths-based, engaged culture.

Drawing from her experience in the private sector, Paula Gibson, the Director of Human Resources for the City of Centennial, quickly identified a strengths-based approach<sup>2</sup> as the solution to helping the City's government team run like clockwork.

Gibson and the Centennial leadership took these five steps to transition to a strength-based workplace:

- Gibson completed Gallup's Accelerated Strengths Coaching<sup>3</sup> course and became the organization's internal Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach.
- She rallied leadership buy-in for CliftonStrengths solutions by first providing the executives with their own strengths coaching sessions.
- The City leadership provided the CliftonStrengths assessment<sup>4</sup> to the entire staff.
- City leadership offered strengths coaching sessions to all employees.
- Managers implemented a strengths-based performance review structure, where previously there was none.

Overall, the organization's reaction to a strengths-based development approach was positive. But, City leadership didn't want their progress to stop there.

To further improve their workplace culture and keep turnover to a minimum, they turned to Gallup's Q<sup>12</sup> employee engagement survey and solutions.<sup>5</sup> The survey results and subsequent conversations with teams about their engagement helped leadership pinpoint the exact areas to focus on to improve workplace performance.

## The Success:

Turnover was squelched, engagement soared, Centennial received recognition

Qualitatively, Gibson and others sensed less conflict between teams and individuals at work, replaced with conversations that focused on how people could use their talents to overcome challenges. When they compared their first-year Q12 survey results to their second, the data affirmed that the transformation was truly happening.

Engagement results skyrocketed from **4.02** to **4.50** in the first year, and turnover fell from **42%** to less than **1%**. In the following years, engagement continued to improve. Centennial's engagement scores are now in the top tier of all organizations' scores in Gallup's database.

This boost in engagement did not just make working for the City better — it made working *with* the City better. The City saw an increase to Net Promoter Scores, in the speediness of services provided to customers, in attendance at city-sponsored events and in revenues collected (sales tax).

The City also received formal recognition for its successes. Among others:

- In 2016, *Money Magazine* named Centennial as the 13th best place to live in America.
- Zippia Inc. named Centennial as the fourth “most successful” city in the U.S. in 2016.
- In 2017, the Best of Colorado Business Choice awards recognized Centennial as one of the best places to move or open a business in the state of Colorado.

Managers throughout the organization continue to support the new culture; they helped create it, so there is buy-in. When one manager received her department’s low Q12 score of 2.95, instead of shying away from responsibility, she committed fully to using a strengths-based approach<sup>2</sup> to address and improve engagement.

Using coaching sessions with Gibson plus the multitude of Gallup engagement tools and resources<sup>6</sup>, the manager tried intently to listen to, understand and support her staff. Her team’s next Q12 survey results came back at a **4.64** — a better score than the organization’s overall score at the time!

More important, no one left the department during the transformation.

The leaders at the City of Centennial see a clear advantage to having Gallup-Certified Strengths Coaches<sup>7</sup> — people who can professionally explain and implement a strengths-based development approach — on-site and on staff. They chose to invest in another staff member becoming a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach and remain committed to the ongoing support it takes to improve in all areas as a strengths-based workplace.

For their efforts and their performance, the City of Centennial in 2017 received its first Gallup Great Workplace Award<sup>8</sup>, given annually to top-performing companies around the world that show an extraordinary ability to create an engaged workplace culture.

---

## Recourses

1. **Gallup's workplace solutions:**  
<https://workplace.gallup.com/>
2. **Strengths-based approach:**  
<https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/home/en-us/cliftonstrengths-for-organizations>
3. **Gallup's Accelerated Strengths Coaching:**  
<https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/coach/en-us/become-cliftonstrengths-coach>
4. **CliftonStrengths assessment:**  
<https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/home/en-us/cliftonstrengths-how-it-works>
5. **Gallup's Q<sup>12</sup> employee engagement survey and solutions:**  
<https://q12.gallup.com/>
6. **Gallup engagement tools and resources:**  
<https://q12.gallup.com/>
7. **Gallup-Certified Strengths Coaches:**  
<https://www.gallupstrengthscenter.com/home/en-us/become-cliftonstrengths-coach>
8. **Gallup Great Workplace Award:**  
<http://www.gallup.com/events/178847/gallup-great-workplace-award.aspx>