

The Role of 'Thinking Styles' and 'Creativity' in bringing about Organizational Change

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Each of us is endowed with preferred mode of thinking that plays a predominant role in neural reception and processing of information. A simple model developed by William "Ned" Hermann (1922 - December 24, 1999) a Nobel scholar in creative thinking, and brain dominance theory which classifies four impressions to illustrate how brain perceives and processes information. Four designated mode of thinking are: 1) analytical thinking, 2) sequential thinking, 3) interpersonal thinking; 4) imagination thinking. Interestingly, as against the phenomenon of whole brain thinking perspective, human beings have an innate proclivity for a particular mode of thinking which governs and dictates their domain of thought process to a limited periphery. We may infer that obsessive preference for a particular mode of thinking results in to involuntary divorce from other modes of thinking patterns.

In pursuance to the subject matter of this paper, inexorably in the context of 21st century whole brain thinking perspective is a key to organizational success. The conscious adoption of whole brain thinking perspective has limitless potential to give organization the plethora of opportunities to widen an otherwise parochial canvass of rudimentary and monotonous thinking, the novel way of assimilating the opportunities and problems, to usher in cutting edge world class practices, to build and retain intellectual human capital, to escalate agility for faster adoption of changes so as to give new lease of life to the organization, to ameliorate the psychological health of the organization, to scale up the standards of performance and to have unique competitive edge, to name a few. Using whole brain thinking essentially means to be able to utilize the thinking preference of each of the four quadrants: upper and lower part of left and right brain.

The quality of strategic decision making ultimately determines the longevity and fate of the organization. The application of whole brain dominance perspective can be a beckon of hope for such organizations enamored for obsessed fractured and volatile decisions. Most decisions can be benefited from the process of reviewing kaleidoscopic multiple options and perspectives. Thinkers can review situation with more flexibility with all four quadrants which can contribute to a better choice of decision and avoid going back to drawing board time and over again and unpleasant surprises

Another use of whole brain dominance perspective is in problem solving process. Each of four quadrants is under review in order to trouble shoot the problem from different perspective of view. More so applications of whole brain dominance perspective are to improve the team interactions and performance. Whole brain thinking can help a team to acknowledge the differences among team members and then use those differences to make the most of the ideas of each team

member. After all successful business is nothing but minting of novel ideas.

Innovate or fall behind and perish: the competitive imperative for virtually all businesses today is a concrete reality of knowledge economy. Achieving it is hard; however, innovation can take place when different ideas, perceptions, and ways of processing and judging information collide. That, in turn, often requires collaboration among various players who see the world in inherently different ways. The collusion of psychedelic ideas can be converted into commercial reality and the citadel of organizational uniqueness can be built by the dint of collaborative whole brain thinking culture. Nonetheless, in this context we can ill afford to turn a blind eye on the issue of handling a human resource.

Generally, managers have two responses to this phenomenon. On the one hand, managers who dislike conflict—or value only their own approach—actively avoid the clash of ideas. They hire and reward people of a particular stripe, usually people like themselves. Their organizations fall victim to what we call the comfortable clone syndrome: coworkers share similar interests and training; everyone thinks alike. Because all ideas pass through similar cognitive screens, only familiar ones survive. For example, a new-business development group formed entirely of employees with the same disciplinary background and set of experiences will assess every idea with an unvarying set of assumptions and analytical tools. Such a group will struggle to innovate, often in vain.

On the other hand, managers who value employees with a variety of thinking styles frequently don't understand how to manage them. They act as if locking a group of diverse individuals in the same room will necessarily result in a creative solution to a problem. They overlook the fact that people with different styles often don't understand or respect one another, and that such differences can fuel personal disagreements. The "detail guy" dismisses the "vision thing"; the "concept man" deplores endless analysis; and the individualist considers the demands of a team an utter waste of time. They simply can't work together without help.

The manager successful at fostering innovations figures out how to get different approaches to grate against one another productively, in a modern management parlance it is called as creative abrasion. Such a manager understands that different people have different thinking styles: analytical or intuitive, conceptual or experiential, social or independent, logical or values driven. He deliberately designs a full spectrum of approaches and perspectives into his organization—whether that organization is a team, a work group, or an entire company—and he understands that cognitively diverse people must respect the

thinking styles of others. He sets ground rules congenial ambience for working together to nurture the creative process. Above all, the manager who wants to encourage innovation in organization needs to examine what he ought to do to promote and ought not to do to inhibit creative abrasion.

What we call cognitive differences are varying approaches to perceiving and assimilating data, making decisions, solving problems, and relating to other people. These approaches are preferences (not to be confused with skills or abilities). For instance, you may prefer to approach problems intuitively but in fact may be better trained to approach them analytically. Preferences are not rigid: most people can draw on a mixture of approaches and do not live their lives within narrow cognitive boundaries. We often stretch outside the borders of our preferred operating modes if the conditions are right and the stakes are high enough. That said, we all tend to have one or two preferred habits of thought that influence our decision-making styles and our interactions with others—for good or for ill.

The most widely recognized cognitive distinction is between left-brained and right-brained ways of thinking. This categorization is more powerful metaphorically than it is accurate physiologically; not all the functions commonly associated with the left brain are located on the left side of the cortex and not all so-called right-brained functions are located on the right. Still, the simple description does usefully capture radically different ways of thinking. An analytical, logical, and sequential approach to problem framing and solving (left-brained thinking) clearly differs from an intuitive, values-based, and nonlinear one (right-brained thinking).

Cognitive preferences also reveal themselves in work styles and decision-making activities. Take collaboration as opposed to independence. Some people prefer to work together on solving problems, whereas others prefer to gather, absorb, and process information by themselves. Each type does its best work under different conditions. Or consider thinking as opposed to feeling. Some people evaluate evidence and make decisions through a structured, logical process, whereas others rely on their values and emotions to guide them to the appropriate action.

Left-Right Brain theory jumped from cocktail party conversation to credible science in the past decade. Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (*fMRI*), the latest testing technology, has allowed scientists to open up the hood and peak into the machinery of the human brain. Here's how it works - a researcher guides your thoughts in a specific direction and monitors changes in blood flow within your brain. Each lobe of the brain functions to "process" different kinds of information. The Left Brain processes speech, time, and sequential information. The Right Brain recognizes pictures, faces and spatial concepts. For simplicity sake, we can think of the Left Brain as a logical, analyzing, and computer like organ. Our Left Brain understands calculations, realizes time measurements, and gathers objective data. At the same time, our Right Brain sees pictures, picks up on voice inflections, senses emotion and things like body language.

The successful managers they tend to toss ideas around in their mind, waiting for the magic solution or next brilliant idea. No doubt, it will come - but then what? Most managers will come up with more than one great idea and they merge in the brain to confuse, overwhelm and produce frustration. Making lists of

your ideas is a good way to get them out of your mind but doesn't offer much opportunity for exploration and expansion of your concept. How can we take our ideas, goals, and problem solving to the next level is a crucial aspect.

The "Information Age" is giving way to a whole new world where right brain thinkers and whole mind thinking are the power weapons necessary to create success. People and companies are recreating themselves, learning to think differently, becoming more creative, empathetic and purpose-driven. Most of information and technology companies have a "greater purpose" for running a successful business, a purpose that takes them beyond the profits. Here we can cite the examples of Apple and IBM giants as innovative companies.

Mind Mapping can be an effective tool which gives us an opportunity to engage right brain thinking. It's a creative process that is easy for the brain to follow, expand upon, and the key to mind mapping is asking the next question, drilling down and then drilling down some more.

On the flip side when an organization becomes right-brain dominated it tends to become chaotic and inconsistent, failing to produce coherent offerings that make sense to the marketplace. Often, former glories are overshadowed by flashy, complicated products and services that are pale imitations of their predecessors. As new releases fail to make market attraction, resources become scarce and desperation sets in.

Creativity is looked to as a lifeline, but more creativity is not the answer. It's more likely the left-brained guy in the corner with his arms folded tightly that holds the answers.

The solution to an organization dominated by the right-brain (feel, imagine, instinct, belief, fantasy, risk and possibility) is to open the door to the left brain (logic, details, facts, know, science, reality and safe). Success lies in balance, coordination and in that great 80s management concept: synergy.

A belief that if only more organizations had KPIs, budgets and comprehensive business plans, then they would soar to the lofty heights of greatness. Analysis, research and evidence: these are the faces of the triune god of the left-brainer.

Just as the right-brain dominated organization is likely to explode supernova-style, so the left-brain dominated organization is destined to implode and die; a big boring black hole.

Left-brain dominated organizations have more than their fair share of problems, and they tend to revolve around being *stale*. As with the right-brain dominated organizations, the strategic plan will be a good barometer to start with.

The left-brain organization will embrace strategic planning because it has become conventional business wisdom, and the left-brain oriented value precedent very highly – it mitigates risk. The strategic plan will be full of business jargon and will probably be a lengthy document. It will be detailed, rational and coherent. It will also tend to be dull and uninspiring, lacking *humanity*. The strategic plan will often be used as a bastion of the tried and true, as a justifier of repetition of existing business models and outputs. The strategic plan will be a tool for stifling creativity and innovation because the An organization that is left-brain dominated will probably be seeing some worrying trends. Revenues are likely to be primarily from products and services that have been in the market for some time. Revenue from new products and services (a KPI for companies like Hewlett-

Packard) is likely to be minimal. Many inside the organization will likely be concerned that market share is shrinking as more innovative competitor products steal customers away.

This organization, focused on analysis and safety, on patch-protection and conventionality, will find it very difficult to sustain a competitive advantage. By now competitors will have worked out what it does well and will, in most cases, have figured out how to short-circuit or render irrelevant this competitive advantage.

Left-brain dominated organizations tend to start life more balanced than they end up. They do good research, good analysis and come up with a well-thought out product. Then they get scared.

They cling to this success, minimize risk and make typically small, incremental changes to products and services regardless of the pace of change the market is experiencing. Customers that start out loyal grow, over time, increasingly frustrated that the company they felt so good about has become detached from the market. They persevere for a while based on the initial goodwill generated by the original offerings, then they shrug and move on to a more balanced competitor.

It is probably more difficult to identify the left-brain dominated organization than its right-brain counterpart, because it can look so solid from the outside. The proverbial ducks are normally in a very tidy and orderly row.

There is no chaos or obvious disorganization. There are processes, systems and policies.

There are not the obvious external injuries of the right-brain dominated organization, but rather a slow internal bleed.

Those with new ideas find their creativity stifled by a slew of stage-gates, proofs of concept and contradictory precedents. Those wishing to take a risk by doing something new find themselves struggling up an unassailable hill.

The status quo is religiously and skillfully protected by the left-brain dominated. It is safe and knowable and, despite the risks of staying where you are, to the left-brainers those risks are preferable to venturing into the unknown.

The problem in addressing these issues is that the left-brain dominated organization is inherently suspicious of new ideas. Suggesting a paradigm shift, a re-balancing of how business and design is done, is likely to be met with a frosty reception.

So the key here is good evidence and a solid argument. Left-brain dominated organizations won't change because someone happens to think that's a good idea. They'll need to be persuaded.

The key to unlocking the potential of the left-brain dominated organization and producing more inspiring and compelling market offerings is to embrace design principles that demand more creativity.

Design industry for example has crafted a set of Ten Design Principles that ensure that the creative and the analytical are kept in balance. In this article we are dealing with the principles that are focused on upholding the 'softer' values that the left-brained are inclined to neglect.

The left brained organizations have blindfolded obsession that is bound by precedent. When thought processes skip creativity and jump to obvious conclusions, opportunities are lost.

It is during this phase that the right-brain must be released to roam free. This is the domain of possibility and imagination, of

helping and growing and 'what ifs'. The left-brain dominated organization must embrace the discipline of diversity in order to succeed. This means that dissent must not be just encouraged but demanded. Alternatives to any new idea must be generated whether they are desired or not, just to break the mould of 'beige thinking'.

The concept of nonlinear thinking has produced miraculous results it is about rejecting isolationism or insularism. It is about sourcing a diverse range of inputs to stimulate non-traditional and non-linear thinking. It's about getting out and walking amongst the people, reading books and magazines from unrelated fields

Eclecticism is another way which means broadening your horizons for sources of inspiration. An accountant may come up with a new idea for a service by visiting a fast food restaurant. A computer expert may come up with a new mouse by watching a child stroke a real mouse.

While many of these 'accidents' may happen serendipitously, it's amazing how many connections one can make when one looks for them. Smart organizations ensure that those involved with design of products and services look outwards to the world for inspiration. Left-brain dominated organizations need this even more.

Contextuality is the enemy of precedent. Contextuality acknowledges that each product and service design must intimately match the particular characteristics of its target market. Simply because an idea or strategy worked for Company A doesn't mean we can transplant it into Company B and make it work. Creativity cannot be outsourced in this way.

The left-brain dominated organization must re-attach itself to its target markets and understand how the contexts in which their customers operate change. A product or design that was contextually appropriate last year may now be contextually *inappropriate* if that context has changed.

Left-brain dominated organizations can tend to forget that business is not revenue targets, market segments and rational decision-making. Business is the interaction of emotional human beings with goals, aspirations, needs and insecurities.

User-focus is about designing products and services that make an emotional connection with the end-user. Those products that win loyalty are those that intuitively understand how the user wants to feel and interact with them.

Apple has so many raving – and sometimes irrational – fans because it gets this right. It reaches out to the user with its products and says 'I get you. I know about your life and what you want to do and I have just the thing for you.

Left-brain dominated organizations, not surprisingly, perilously struggle in this department. They tend to distance themselves from end-users to the point of alienating them. They can be aloof and project arrogance and give customers every encouragement to try out the competitor's wares.

A left-brain dominated organization has so much right in terms of consistent systems, rigorous analysis and evidence-based management.

It doesn't act impulsively but is measured, cautious and skeptical, all critical elements in uncertain times.

But the world changes fast and people change fast and the left-brainers can find themselves relegated to has-beens if they do not stay in touch with what's going on. The left-brain dominated

organization will, if it fails to generate new ideas and exercise creative product and service development, steadily become more and more irrelevant. It will lose market share, see revenues drop and eventually become a cautionary case-study.

Only by embracing the 'frightening', 'uncontrollable' and 'wild' tendencies of the right-brain perspective will the left-brain dominated organization correct its imbalance and protect its future.

The age old scales are tipping away from what it used to take for people to get ahead—logical, linear, left-brain, and spreadsheet-type abilities—in favor of abilities like artistry, empathy, and big-picture thinking, which are becoming more valuable.

Left-brain skills are still absolutely necessary in our complex world. They're just not sufficient anymore.

Advertising industries are right brained organizations we can cite the phenomenal success of an advertising firm of global repute and no one in the global ranking OGI VY MATHERN

Besides advertising, another example is the motion picture industry, which is about narrative, or story-telling. Increasingly fast moving consumer products companies are also tapping into right-brain skills for ex. Hindustan lever limited.

Procter & Gamble, for instance, is relying more and more on design. And Target is competing successfully against Wal-Mart, not on the left-brain dimension of price, but on the right-brain dimension of design.

The grocery chain, like Big Bazar is an interesting example. The retail grocery industry is a low-margin, cutthroat business. And yet, Big Bazar can extract premium prices by appealing to customers using the right-brain sensibility of wholeness and the back stories of products as a differentiator.

The success of Wall mart is phenomenal. The figures are impressive on every dimension—number of stores opened, revenue, profits, and stock price. In a business where the typical strategy is to go for economies of scale, cut costs, and eke out a tiny bit more of a margin, Wall mart has taken a different tack.

The focus of Wall mart is on the customer's grocery shopping for the family as a holistic experience. It's about wellness, and doing something good for the world on a small scale. That approach may seem touchy-feely, but Wall mart is outperforming every other grocery chain in America.

At a shareholders' meeting, former GM Vice Chairman Bob Lutz said, "What we've got at GM now is a general comprehension that you can't run this business by the left, intellectual, analytical side of the brain. You have to have a lot of right side, creative input. We are in the arts and entertainment business, and we're putting a huge emphasis on world-class design."

That was a 70-year-old former Marine saying we tried running the company in a left-brain way and it didn't work. We have to start running it in a right-brain way. Lutz is a serious figure in the automotive industry. When GM is in the arts business, we're all in the arts business.

Hiring people who have the kind of right-brain abilities that can't be outsourced or automated, and that satisfy some of the non-material needs of this abundant age is a need of the hour.

If you peel that back, what you want is people who are intrinsically motivated. That is, they are doing what they love.

And it tends to be right-brain activities that generate that kind of motivation.

For instance, people don't become designers because they want to make a gazillion dollars, but because they love it. They're almost compelled to do it. Same thing is true with story-telling and even empathy. These abilities are part of our nature—the things that we're motivated to do, not for the extrinsic rewards, but for internal fulfillment, joy, and challenge.

Now it turns out happily enough that these abilities increasingly confer an economic advantage. So hire people who are intrinsically motivated. They will end up doing great work, and they display abilities that have enormous value in a world where so many other skills can be outsourced or digitized.

Many people went into the professions out of a sense of economic need, which made perfect sense. But maybe they weren't naturally motivated in that direction. We can see an increasing congruence between the talents that confer an advantage in labor markets and what people are intrinsically motivated to do.

In the past, people "dropped out" of the corporate rat race to do what they really loved. Doing what you love is the best way to reach your professional goals.

The counsel to do what you love is actually very hardheaded advice right now. It's not just an idealistic notion. I think it's the best way to get ahead today. And that was not necessarily true in 1950.

There's a study that shows fewer and fewer young people want to become computer programmers. Partly that's a reaction to what they perceive to be labor market signals because they see so many stories about programming jobs going overseas.

But the other thing people are saying is that a lot of computer programming is fairly routine, or rote. People are, in some cases, willing to do routine work. If it generates a high income, people are willing to make that trade off.

But work that is routine has the potential for off shoring or automation. And so, people may be saying, it's not that fun or creative to begin with, but it also doesn't confer reliable rewards. What confers the greatest rewards and what we want to do anyway is the stuff that taps greater artistry, empathy, creativity, and big-picture thinking.

We need to allow people a certain measure of autonomy to do great work but also hold them accountable. You've got to have deadlines and measures of accountability. You can't just have a free-for-all where everyone sits around and paints all day and no one actually serves customers.

So, in general, promote autonomy and relinquish a measure of control. And to the extent it's possible, create a context that allows people's intrinsic motivation to flourish and that makes the work part of something larger than the individual.

Organizations that provide a sense of purpose, that connect individuals' talents and aspirations to a larger goal are the ones that are going to succeed. You already see that in a remarkable way with a lot of companies. Google, for example, talks about wanting to do great things for the world even if it means sacrificing some short-term profits.

Jeff Immelt, CEO of GE, speaks about meaning and purpose. He says that the reason people want to work for GE is that they want to be about something larger than themselves.

We can see the emergence of companies that you might call not-only-for-profit. They're profit driven, but that's not their only driving force. They want to be about something beyond making their quarterly numbers and returning wealth to shareholders.

This is different from the TATA'S socially responsible kind of company. GE is making a monumental investment in green technologies in part because it's a good thing, in part because it's a lucrative thing. It's the same with Google. Google's mission is to democratize information and to put facts and knowledge at people's fingertips. But that's good business too.

Creating not-only-for-profit companies that plug people's individual talents into a larger purpose becomes very important, particularly for baby boomers.

The professional services business has traditionally been left-brained. They need to think through the same imperatives: Are you doing something that someone overseas can't do cheaper, or that a computer can't do faster? Does what you do satisfy some of the spiritual, emotional, or esthetic needs of our society?

Our ability to draw on right-brain skills has become much more important. For instance, that design has become a fundamental literacy in business, particularly for consultants. Whether it's industrial design, graphic design, environmental design, or even fashion design, a good consultant must be literate in that now to go into an organization and offer useful advice.

More companies, partly out of enlightened self-interest, are going to morph into not-only-for-profits. And they're going to need guidance to change from left-brained companies in the pursuit of making those quarterly numbers to companies that are more right-brained—companies that can attract talented, intrinsically motivated people. That's a tough transition for companies to make, and consultants could help with that.

The best career move is to find what you love to do, what you're great at, and pursue that. One will be more valuable in the workforce.

The people especially from developing economies like India who pursue careers because their parents, teachers, or spouses give them outdated advice and they're dutifully marching into careers they don't really care about because they think it's the way to make money. Not only is that bad for their individual self-actualization but it's a bad career move, too in the context of creative 21st century.

The list of top 10 innovative companies of India according to fast magazine survey. Obviously more of right brained.

1. Indian Premier League: If Cricket took its baby steps towards globalization with twenty-twenty cricket, IPL have induced steroids and propelled cricket to the global scenario. Everything about it was the most talked about story. It started with the auctions, then the broadcast rights then came the cheerleaders and it never ceases to amaze. Now the world doesn't have an excuse of 'but nobody wins' to not follow cricket.

2. VNL: A Swedish Indian company which has a novel solution for India's perennial power problems. VNL runs solar powers mobile towers. It also uses wind energy wherever possible. Power or diesel is the biggest cost of running a mobile tower and VNL makes it easy to run a tower in areas with scanty or no electricity. A novel solution for last mile connectivity.

3. Reliance Industries: They sell almost anything and everything. It is hard to pass by and not look at a Reliance product. With Mumbai Indians they are directly linked to IPL.

4. Godrej Group: A rare crowd sourcing initiative which isn't online.

5. Narayana Hrudayalaya: Low-cost high-quality heart surgeries. A rare combination in India.

6. Bharti Airtel: Bharti has many firsts to its credit. With the new players it has fallen behind a little on the innovations but in the news for its acquisitions.

7. Wipro: Transforming healthcare industry with technology.

8. A little world: Transforming financial inclusion through mobiles by connecting rural India with banks with innovative mobile banking solutions.

9. Mahindra & Mahindra: A compact diesel pickup truck for American market.

10. Infosys: Outsourcing with a difference.

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