

For immediate release

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## Why is change such a challenge?

***There's a scientific reason it's difficult to persuade someone to change their mind, or their behaviour, even when it may seem obvious to all around that they should. But in an increasingly competitive business world, learning to adapt is a critical skill for those not wanting to be left behind.***

Making your mind up is more complicated than it seems, but global whole brain thinking experts Herrmann International have some valuable insights to help individuals and businesses understand the challenges of change – and overcome them.

Research reveals **90%<sup>1</sup> of people don't change when faced with a life-threatening situation.** And if that's the case, what's the likelihood of the rest of us swapping from being tardy to punctual, slovenly to tidy, slapdash to fastidious, or stropo to calm?

How likely is an eternally disorganised Creative to mend his ways and start sticking to deadlines and delivering projects on budget? And can we really expect the company Financial Director to stop talking facts and figures and communicate more effectively with her people person colleagues? Is it possible for a die-hard unionist to learn to listen to the potential benefits of workplace agreements?

Changing our minds is extremely tough. Changing the minds of others is even tougher. Even when there's a really strong reason for us to change, many of us can't. Or won't. And it's not because we're stubborn. 'Mindsets' are a scientifically-proven trait, and the reason we find it difficult to change is often **because before we even think about our actions, our minds have already made themselves up.**

According to Whole Brain Thinking experts Herrmann International, people develop their mindset – the way they see things and the way they think about the world – at a young age, and tend to stick to them.

"If someone's been brought up thinking that owing money is a terrible thing, they're likely to carry that belief with them throughout their life, and no amount of persuasion or arm-twisting is going to change that," explained CEO of Herrmann International Asia, Michael Morgan.

And the reason you can't easily talk someone into changing their mind is because their mindset will reject the facts thrown at them before their brain is even given a chance to consider them. Therefore, advised Mr Morgan, the only approach is to discover what the mindset is first, and why it's there. Then work your way around it.

The good news is that our mindsets are a survival tool, helping us make snap decisions when we need to. The bad news of course is that they can limit us by closing our mind to other options and making it difficult for people to change opinions, truly listen to other points of view, and ultimately, behave differently.

Now, if it's that difficult to change the mindset of an individual, try multiplying that by 20, 200, 2000. That's the challenge faced by those in charge of any group of people, from the coach of a struggling sporting team to a school principal, from the manager of a restaurant to the CEO of a global organisation.

But to survive in today's competitive environment, people need to be able to change, and to do it quickly. To adapt, to not be left behind. And **organisations need to find a way to get their people to go along with change.** This is where Whole Brain Thinking comes in.

"If your mindset is to be naturally risk averse," explained Mr Morgan, "you might have numerous great business ideas but never consider acting upon any of them because you fear the unknown. As a result, you could miss out on brilliant opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Dr Edward Miller, Dean of Medical School, CEO of hospital at Johns Hopkins University, USA

“And the same goes for companies, which often become locked in a particular mindset, which, when perpetuated throughout an organisation, becomes its own reality, with no one questioning behaviours or considering different options. This is why **it’s hard to change an organisation from the inside**, it’s typically easier to bring radical change in the form of new blood, as they bring their own unique mindset to the playing field, hence the booming consulting business,” said Mr Morgan.

Examples of businesses which are successfully changing the mindset of entire industries include Virgin, which has revolutionised the airline industry since entering the fray in the 1980s, and Apple which has permanently altered the music industry through its iPod innovation and is now doing the same to the mobile phone market with 2007’s must-have savvy accessory, the iPhone.

Explaining the science behind “mindsets”, Mr Morgan said they are part of our cognitive unconscious, and are made up of mental maps we build from our life experiences. As we approach each new situation we scan our existing mental maps looking for patterns or connections we recognise. Sometimes this is helpful, often it is not.

Change requires us to challenge our mental maps, and to form new connections in the brain, which takes energy and motivation. But it’s easier to do if we understand how our mental maps are working, and how they’ve formed our current mindsets. Those seriously intent on changing their behaviour must first learn how to develop and exercise their brains.

“Each brain is as unique and different as a thumbprint because of its own experiences. And each brain’s mental maps lead it to fill in gaps it might see, often with incomplete information, which is helpful when the map matches a situation and makes us more efficient, such as the fact we don’t have to sit and think how to start the car each day; but, it also means our background will pre-programme what we see or how we think about a subject or event,” said Mr Morgan.

Asking others to change is asking them to make new neural connections in the brain. So it’s important to realise it’s not that simple and we can’t expect to snap our fingers and achieve the results we seek.

Back to medical scenarios, Dr Michael Merzenich, an expert on brain plasticity at the University of California, San Francisco, has found that habits actually show up on MRI scans, such as the fact that flautists have larger areas controlling their fingers, tongue and lips – hours spent at their instrument has physically altered their brains.

And this, says Mr Morgan, is precisely why **someone telling you new information will not change your mindset**. So if facts are destined to fail, how can you break through the mindset mould?

Time is important, according to Herrmann, as is a dedicated “whole brain” approach. Herrmann’s “Whole Brain Thinking” concept is based upon our distribution of specialised modes throughout the brain system, resulting in a metaphoric model dividing the brain into four separate quadrants of equal importance, and **colour-coded** for easy use.

**Herrmann’s work has been around for more than 30 years, over 2 million people have been profiled after using the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) assessment tool, and Whole Brain Thinking has been thoroughly scientifically validated.**

Its use when it comes to mindsets, is in describing them in a practical way that is simple to understand, and easy to remember:

A person whose thinking preference is in the **blue** quadrant will approach a challenge logically and analytically, seeking out the facts. They’ll feel uncomfortable with the emotions created by the unknown and will want to know the objective for the change and its financial consequences.

- A person with strong **green** thinking style will be ready for the change with a clear plan and process, but might feel unsettled by the new approaches change may bring. Their primary concerns will be timelines, specifics, minimising surprises and highlighting risks.
- Someone with a **red** thinking preference will want to talk about change but may over-react emotionally and tune out before grasping all the facts. They will be preoccupied with the emotional impact on them, their family, colleagues and customers and will want to voice their concerns and feel engaged before discussing details.

- A **yellow**-thinker often reacts spontaneously to change, ignoring details, but may worry about losing freedom of choice and become the first to “jump ship”. They need to know how their future is affected, how the change fits into the “big picture”, whether they can influence it and if it might constrain them in any way.

Those introducing change will probably confront each of these mindsets along the way, but although we all have a preferred thinking style, Herrmann’s research proves that we can all access all four, if we’re taught how. **The solution is to tackle change by first accepting that the brain is neurologically wired to resist it, and before we can change others we have to change ourselves**, said Mr Morgan.

Start by defining and analysing your current mindset, its strengths and weaknesses and its history. Then it gets harder. Challenge it. Ask yourself why you won’t let go of your mindset, look for the blind spots it’s creating, identify the barriers that might be keeping you locked into a specific mindset and consider the opportunities of exploring a new one.

“Many organisations excel at financial, rational or technical thinking (blue traits),” said Mr Morgan. “In fact, extensive HBDI™ profiling reveals more than 90% of large corporations in the Asia-Pacific region have strong thinking preferences in the blue (logical, technical, financial) and green (controlled, organised, process) quadrants. And while some of these are reasonable in the yellow quadrant (creative, big picture), most of them struggle with their red area (communicating with and responding to people) area.

“Without working on their creative and communication capabilities, blue-green organisations might find themselves shackled to oppressive structure, discipline and financial vigour. Start-ups, which usually prefer ‘yellow-red’ thinking need to strive for some ‘blue-green’ balance, or risk jeopardising their growth by not paying sufficient attention to planning, funding and procedures.”

We’re all susceptible to mindset traps, but if when considering or confronting change we ask ourselves what our mindset will be, we’re more than halfway there. As Plato said: “Nothing endures but change”, except maybe mindsets!

#### **Why HBDI™?**

**Whole Brain Thinking and the HBDI™ have been used by countless global corporations, small businesses, educational institutions, government organisations and individuals to improve their results. Satisfied clients include IBM, Microsoft, Shell, Novartis, PwC and BMW to name a few.**

**Herrmann’s work is widely regarded as superseding “left brain/right brain” thinking models, and the HBDI™ is the validated, worldwide standard for assessing thinking styles. Prominent psychometric research institutions and universities (including University of Texas and University of California) have validated Herrmann’s methods, as have major studies of up to 8000 participants.**

**Whole Brain Thinking has been the subject of more than 60 doctoral dissertations and the HBDI™ is available in 20 languages, in 20 countries. More than US\$500,000 has been injected into validation and reliability studies.**

**The HBDI™ also meets the standards of The American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association and the National Council on Measurement in Education.**