

For immediate release

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- Develop 'dream' teams at your next company off-site -

People with similar strengths, values, and thinking styles will probably get along like a house on fire. At work, they'll reach decisions quickly and nearly always agree. And while consensus may breed content, it doesn't always get results, according to extensive research by Whole Brain Thinking experts Herrmann International which reveals that while great minds may think alike, they shouldn't always work together.

While most people might think happy teams that agree and make decisions easily are a manager's dream, they're actually the most unlikely to produce the best outcome, or to come up with innovative ideas and solutions, says Mr Michael Morgan, CEO of Herrmann International Asia.

This is because people have different thinking style preferences, and teams of people who think in the same way won't consider, or come up with, the ideas that result from a team of people with diverse thinking styles.

"If you want an innovative organisation, you need to hire, work with and promote people who make you uncomfortable. To do that, you must understand your own thinking style preferences, so that you can exploit your strengths and complement your weaknesses when building a team.

"Dedicated teambuilding exercises or company off-sites are an ideal forum for thoroughly investigating the strengths, weaknesses, thinking styles and personalities within your organisation, and for putting teams together differently or improving productivity and innovation within existing work groups," explained Mr Morgan.

For more than 30 years Herrmann International has been expertly bringing teams together; and Mr Morgan believes conferences, seminars and other exercises which are outside the parameters of "normal work" provide one of the most conducive environments to breaking through barriers and bringing teams together.

"If you want to educate staff about how their colleagues think, and then teach them to use that information to improve communications and work together more effectively, get them away from their desks and PCs and out of their comfort zones.

According to Herrmann, an important element of understanding thinking styles is recognising that no one style is inherently better than another, each brings a valuable viewpoint to the process, and each has a negative side.

"Once people understand thinking styles, they will take disagreements less personally, and improve their ability to reach a compromise or consensus without animosity," Mr Morgan advises.

For more than 30 years, Herrmann International has been researching the way we think, and has profiled more than 2 million people in 20 countries around the world using its Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument™ (HBDI™) – a practical tool to determine the strength of our preference for certain thinking styles through a series of 120 scientifically-designed questions.

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Based on the brain's physiology, Herrmann International has identified four thinking styles and created a colour-coded four-quadrant model to reflect them:

A – blue – analyser: quantifies, logical, critical, realistic. Often works as an accountant, actuary, engineer.

B – green – organiser: neat, timely, reliable. Often works as a manager or administrator.

C – red – personaliser: sensitive, supportive, empathetic, talkative. Often works as a teacher, trainer, social worker, salesperson, writer, musician or actor.

D – yellow – strategist: risk-taker, visualises, impulsive, breaks rules. Often works as an entrepreneur, artist, strategist, consultant.

We all have at least one preferred thinking style, more women than men have several, and very few of us are equally dominant across all four quadrants.

Applying the Herrmann model to team building is simple, says Mr Morgan. While complete homogeneity in an organisation's approach can be efficient; no matter how bright a group of individuals, their capacity for innovation will be enhanced by butting up against totally different perspectives.

For instance, a group of people with dominant thinking styles in the A quadrant (blue) will function well, but not necessarily grow or expand their business. A team of mostly D's (yellow) will produce brilliant ideas but fail to capitalise on them, spending all their time talking and minimal time doing.

Heterogenous teams behave in entirely different ways – they find it difficult to agree but their diversity is ideal for creative assignments.

Organisations can use the HBDI™ to build teams with more balanced, contributory and productive thinking skills. Initially, advises Mr Morgan, they need supervision to ensure that the differences are celebrated rather than divisive, but over time, as performance improves and innovation takes place, teams will soon learn to respect and appreciate each other's differences.

Once they get over their initial teething problems, heterogenous teams who regard one another as valuable resources and who enjoy the group's differences will always produce the best results, says Mr Morgan.

And having employees compare and contrast their HBDI profiles in a group setting focused on teambuilding helps facilitate discussion about different approaches and attitudes and promotes better understanding and cooperation within teams.

"It's one thing to have an individual profile and to better understand your own thinking style but understanding your colleagues takes teamwork to a whole new level. Using HBDI profiles in teambuilding exercises also assists management in creating 'smart' teams made up of employees with complimentary profiles. What manager doesn't want that?" Mr Morgan added.

And gender can play its part too, with the battle of the sexes as alive in boardrooms as it is in bedrooms around the country. In the business world, Mr Morgan says men and women work together on teams and report to one another, sometimes with limited success for reasons that might not initially appear obvious.

"Those with opposite thinking styles tend to frustrate each other," Mr Morgan says. "More men than women prefer the "blue" thinking style, and want to talk in terms of facts, figures and information. The opposite is true of many women, who are strong in the "red" thinking style, which prefers collaboration, discussion and expressing emotion."

"The typical fallout in the workplace is men thinking women are talking too much and sharing personal feelings rather than just passing on relevant information, while women find those men arrogant and cold, unwilling to talk things through. Mixed sex teams, like teams of people with different thinking styles, will generally produce superior solutions to single sex teams, as adding a gender builds an additional layer of thinking styles into the mix," explained Mr Morgan.

Mr Morgan recommends organisations use HBDI™ profiles to assess current teams to predict performance, and to create new 'whole brained' teams. "A team of mostly 'left brain' people, with thinking style preferences in the A and B quadrants will think alike, make decisions well and implement ideas in an organised, timely way, but without any D quadrant (yellow) influence, the team will lack vision and the ability to think creatively. Introducing someone with a strong D preference to this team would raise their ideas and the quality of their solutions to another level."

"High-performing teams share common characteristics such as visualisation, intensity, focus and imagination. When leaders and managers have the ability to profile employees' mental preferences, they can assemble teams able to perform at levels way above the norm, which will produce creative, innovative ideas, rather than come up with obvious and adequate solutions," says Mr Morgan.

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.

Why Herrmann International?

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

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