Mobile Tools and the Whole Brain Model

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Knowledge silos represent traditional campus thinking. While needs tend to overlap, knowledge tends to build vertically. The development of the World Wide Web has brought about a spirit of collaborative effort to understand the knowledge connections across disciplines. Social networking tools have advanced web connections and made a substantial difference in how we interact. The linked environment of social networks supports the breakdown of discipline specific knowledge. Technology, in the form of graphic search tools and tagging, acts as a catalyst to form connections in unexpected ways. Perhaps due to the high dollar return, far more new tools or approaches seem to develop for business and management than for education technology. Yet, it would seem tools that frame communication activities, whether for management development or education, offer useful approaches no matter the purpose. It is in a spirit of cross-connecting disciplines that the following suggestions are explored.

The Whole Brain Thinking Model is a management training model developed by Ned Hermann while at General Electric Corporation. Hermann’s work was based up Dr. Roger Sperry’s split brain research. Sperry’s work looked at what happens when the corpus callosum, which connects the right and left sides of the brain, is cut. Sperry’s research discovered humans actually have two brains. Another significant finding regarding brain function derived from Sperry’s research found the right side of the brain is essentially mute and illiterate relying on the more dominant left-side. However, if severed from the left-side, the right-side can learn to write though the writing will be done in larger motions. The right-side of the brain is responsible for geometry, music, and form; the left for reading, writing, and arithmetic (Pietsch, 1970).

Hermann’s work with the Whole Brain Model suggests we have a genetic preferences that control our cognition. The speed with which we can do a function reinforces the preference over time and creates dominance through positive-feedback. (Singsurf.org) Hermann developed a brain dominance instrument (HBDI) based upon his research of the four quadrants: left-cerebral analytical, left-limbic sequential, right-limbic interpersonal and right-cerebral imaginative (Singsurf.org, 2009). The Model is not an accurate representation of brain functions but can be used to define different thinking styles. There is some debate surrounding Hermann’s Brain Dominance Model. Of primary concern in this debate is saying any particular task is carried out solely in one area of the brain. Regardless, the model has been used by management development and training professionals to refocus and overcome perceived dominance in communication, improve understanding in teamwork and strengthen collaboration. Success in this application of the model would suggest Whole Brain Thinking would transfer to Mobile technologies to strengthen thinking, round out thought preferences, and provide higher levels of engagement by working outside of dominant preferences. Some examples for how mobile tools and Whole Brain Thinking can be applied follow.
Strengthen Your Writing and Your Brain

Web-based tools for mobile learning act as channels for public or private communication. If chosen for a public forum, the Whole Brain Model can help connect ideas to the audience. Mobile technologies offer immediacy not found in most of our classrooms. The quick use of many mobile technologies means messages are sometime impulsive, spontaneous, and reactive. Tweeter (http://www.tweeter.com) is a prime example of a fast-paced mobile tool. Tweeter, a micro-blogging application, publishes text entries to a website using a computer or cell phone. There is a limit on the number of characters of each entry. Tweeter has many uses including recording conversations or actions during live events for others to view live or as an archive. However, the pace of the event can often rush the posts. The Whole Brain Thinking Communication Technique could be used to structure Tweeter posts for later clarity to the audience. A Tweeter posts are composed, use the model to step through each quadrant to be sure each thinking style is represented. Begin with the logical quadrant, move to the communicator, then on to the visionary, and finally to the logician. (Hermann, 1996) An example using Tweeter might be ordered in the following way. Logical: Lay out the facts. Communicator: Describe feelings. Visionary: Look to the future, what does this mean? Organizer: Steps to take: How do we get to the future? The structure of the Whole Brain Model offers a way to fully capture the conversation or event by forcing attention to areas which might not be the thinking preference. In other words, in “Tweeking” an event, the model can help latch on to key concepts which might normally lie outside of a preference or dominant area of thinking.

Force A New Style And Strengthen Your Brain

Combining mobile tools and the Whole Brain Model can also work to strengthen the brain. Choose tools that strengthen the weakest preference. If the preference is to assimilate information in a non-organized manner, stretch the brain by using mobile devices and websites that emphasize organization. Web 2.0 sites that combine cell phones and web applications for organization include RemembertheMilk (http://www.rememberthemilk.com/) and Evernote. RemembertheMilk supports cell phone upload of tasks and reminders. Tagging, cell phone reminders, sharing, and map integrations are also a part of the site. Evernote (http://www.evernote.com) acts as a picture organizing file system. Using a cell phone, pictures of documents or notes and other images can be uploaded to the Evernote website or stored on a computer or phone. Evernote uses tagging to help organize the information.

Another example might be for logician preference thinkers to use music from a car or phone as a way to free the mind. Then use Jott (http://www.jott.com), a mobile note taking site, to quickly upload new ideas as they come out of sequence. Or, logician thinkers could visit the Watchmedoing (http://www.watchmedoing.com/) website to view and share video. When capturing video this style might look for action shots and interesting combinations of images that convey a whole story.

Hermann’s Brain Dominance Instrument can help identifying brain dominance. The Whole Brain quadrants can help identify areas and thinking that will force work outside of a comfort and dominance. Once the type of thinking needed to stretch the brain is identified, mobile devices and Web 2.0 tools are fast and easy ways to structure thinking activities that will strengthen the brain.

For more resources: http://www.uwex.edu/disted/conference
References


