



CASE STUDY

Building a Winning Team Culture:

How Bronco Mendenhall Used Whole Brain® Thinking to Improve Two Top College Football Teams

BRONCO MENDENHALL

HBDI® PREFERENCE CODE: 2 2 1 1



Executive Summary

WINNING TEAM FORMULA FOR SUCCESS

Winning teams have specific core interpersonal strengths that are innate in contributing to their success.

Whether a corporate team working on a project or a football team, success can be found when teammates understand their individual and team strengths and weaknesses and use this knowledge to succeed together.

a program that had suffered three consecutive nonwinning seasons. Mendenhall used the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI®) and the Whole Brain® Thinking framework to rethink how the team worked together.

Bronco Mendenhall is a longtime college football coach who led successful programs at Brigham Young University (BYU) from 2005-2015 and the University of Virginia (UVA) from 2016-2021.

Using Whole Brain® Thinking helped Mendenhall, his staff, and the players better understand their strengths and weaknesses — and use that knowledge to win on and off the field.

When Mendenhall became the head coach at BYU, he took over

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Objectives

BUILDING TEAMS THAT WIN

Whether the goal is successfully delivering a project or winning a championship bowl game, teams need to be built to succeed. To do so, you must understand a team's diverse assets, and how to harness them for maximum success.

Bronco Mendenhall is the former head football coach at UVA and BYU. Mendenhall was a football coach for 32 years — 17 of those as a head coach.

As Mendenhall took over at BYU, he had to point the football program in a new direction. Around that time, former BYU football player and organizational behaviorist Paul Gustavson introduced Mendenhall to Herrmann and Whole Brain® Thinking.

He quickly learned that he has a high preference for experimental, big-picture (D/Yellow) thinking. With that knowledge, he knew

he needed the support of thinkers with stronger analytical (A/Blue) and structural (B/Green) thinking preferences. Mendenhall also knew he would need his staff to strengthen his relational (C/Red) thinking, as that preference tended to decline under pressure.

After embracing HBDI® and the Whole Brain® Thinking model, he introduced BYU's coaches and players to this approach.

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“My No. 1 trait that brings me fulfillment is learning. And I couldn't wait to learn, apply and consider how Whole Brain® Thinking might be able to affect our organization,” Mendenhall says.

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Challenges

REPLICATING SUCCESS

New teams are formed in business and collegiate sports as new team members are added. Replicating success from one year to the next is critical to building long-term success.

When Mendenhall took over the football program at BYU, he was initially overwhelmed by everything he had to do and the pressures he faced. Mendenhall knew the team needed more than technical training. He required an innovative solution to improve the team's mindset, beliefs, values, and collective understanding of each other's strengths.

Mendenhall wanted a cognitively diverse team. But he also wanted a team that respected and valued everyone's thinking preferences. The Whole Brain® Thinking model resonated with Mendenhall because it tapped into his passion for elevating his thinking processes to be a better coach.



Solutions

INTEGRATING WHOLE BRAIN® THINKING

Mendenhall integrated the Whole Brain® thinking approach into the BYU football program, with his staff and players completing the HBDI® assessment. He conducted workshops for the entire team and smaller player groups to facilitate their results safely.

Mendenhall made sure Whole Brain® Thinking was never far from people's minds.

"Every player, on their locker, had their nameplate. You couldn't enter a room in our organization without having to walk past someone's preferences," Mendenhall says. "After the workshops, after the understanding, after the clarity, and after the sharing, then the reinforcement simply happened nonstop around our organization."

Mendenhall also applied Whole Brain® Thinking to how he built his coaching staff. For instance, his quarterback's coach had strong preferences for Blue and Green

thinking and could process data quickly in tense situations.

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"I love the calm and the poise, but I also love the data that would come from him in that circumstance," Mendenhall says. "Pressure isn't a time for chaos. Pressure is a time for clarity. I picked and selected people that were the right complements."

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The team quickly embraced a unified mindset after implementing HBDI® and Whole Brain® Thinking. This allowed the team to establish the core beliefs, values, and focus required to win games and achieve more in life.



Results

SURPASSING EXPECTATIONS

Mendenhall's impressive on-field results speak volumes.

Over the course of 17 seasons between BYU and UVA, his teams achieved bowl-eligible records in an impressive 16 out of 17 seasons, a feat accomplished by less than 10% of all teams during the same period.

Additionally, his teams won the Mountain West Conference Championship twice while at BYU. It is worth noting that both programs were unable to achieve bowl eligibility for at least three years before Mendenhall's arrival, making his turnaround of these teams all the more remarkable.

Mendenhall also used the Whole Brain® Thinking approach to help his athletes academically. Their HBDI® profiles influenced their individualized learning plans and helped support their goals to graduate.

"This way of thinking and this way of teaching with the Whole Brain® Thinking model helps young people," Mendenhall says.

The Whole Brain® Thinking approach also helped the team off the field. During his time at BYU and UVA, Mendenhall saw the highest graduation rates for athletes in the institutions' histories.

Mendenhall is quick to praise Whole Brain® Thinking because he's seen the results firsthand. "It's not only what I believe, but it's how I've done my job," he says.