

CASE STUDY



The power of new standards

CASE STUDY:

Building the Leadership Agility to Fuel and Manage Unprecedented Growth

How CLP India Developed the Forward-Thinking Management Culture to Lead the Industry in Talent and Innovation



OBJECTIVE:

To develop a collaborative decision-making culture and build the leadership agility to manage growth efficiently and effectively.

India is the second most populous nation in the world, and with strong GDP growth forecasts for the next 8-10 years, it is experiencing a rapidly escalating demand for energy. As one of the largest foreign investors in the Indian power sector, CLP India realized that meeting the anticipated capacity needs of the country would require a new focus on power generation, and with it, a potential to radically change the way people work. Shifting from a status quo mentality to a growth mode would require leadership, talent, culture, processes and mindset to be able to scale up and manage growth efficiently and effectively.



CHALLENGES:

To develop the leadership agility and mindset necessary to deal with unique business and market dynamics, attract talented employees and overcome barriers to collaboration.

CLP India was facing several major obstacles to growth, including:

- Scarcity of talent within the sector and the difficulty in attracting the “best and brightest,” particularly with many jobs requiring postings in remote locations.
- Communication and collaboration issues exacerbated by a heavily silo-ed and hierarchical culture.



- Managers who, though highly skilled technically, did not have the leadership skills required to effectively manage the challenges.
- An increasingly diverse and young employee base with limited relevant experience, requiring significant time investment in training.

The company also saw this as an opportunity to build a robust foundation for sustainable growth over the next many years. This would allow CLP India leadership to develop a balanced portfolio comprising both fossil as well as renewable fuels. Portfolio management at such an early stage of its footprint in India helped CLP India work with a responsible approach to growing its business and to meaningfully engaging with the communities it serves and operates in.

Altogether, the CLP leadership team realized that these goals and challenges would require a change in thinking throughout the organization.



SOLUTIONS:

Use the Whole Brain® framework as a unified launching platform for changing mindsets, building the desired culture, developing leadership skills, and improving collaboration in all areas of the organization.

To address these issues individually and to achieve the growth goals overall, CLP India needed a solution that would be highly relevant, actionable and appealing to the technical and analytical orientation of the organization in order to gain buy-in at every level. The company also wanted to adopt an approach they could carry consistently through the entire organization as an underlying framework—not just as part of a single initiative but as part of CLP India’s ongoing culture. Changing mindsets and giving people the tools to operate successfully as the company transitioned would be critical.

Herrmann International’s Whole Brain® Thinking system was seen as the ideal fit. As a framework for understanding, analyzing and harnessing the thinking within an organization—at the individual, team and organizational/ cultural levels— it would provide a unified launching platform for introducing everything else people needed to learn and expect during the company’s transformation. In addition, with its broad applicability and simple, adaptable approach, it could easily be embedded into the organization and throughout the culture.

The organization was extremely receptive to the Whole Brain® system because it is a validated approach based on thinking and the brain which, unlike behaviorally focused methods, was relatable, easy to understand and immediately relevant to the highly technical audience. According to Prasad Deshpande, Director of Empowered Learning Systems and the lead consultant working with CLP India, “There was buy-in for this approach at every level—the organization, leaders, teams and individuals.”

Because thinking is at the core of everything we do, CLP recognized that the Whole Brain® framework offered more than just an interesting tool or concept; it would serve as the connecting thread between the organization's issues, people, processes and culture. And by changing mindsets, it would pave the way for the behavioral change that needed to follow.

What Powers An Organization

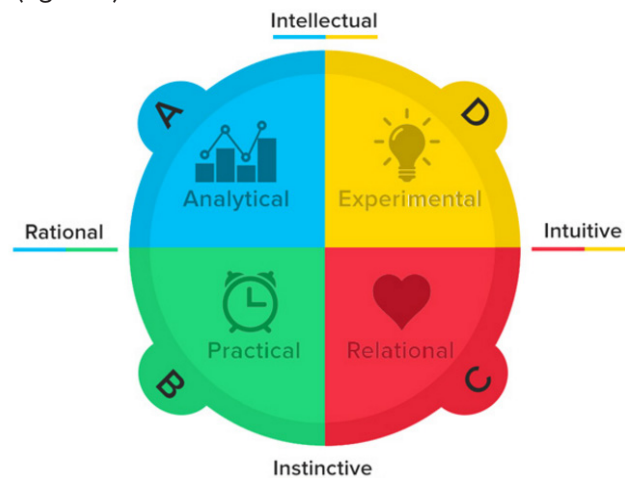
“Whole Brain® Thinking is helping CLP create a culture where you can do things differently. It's building the brand in a way that attracts the best young technical people capable of Whole Brain® leadership. That's going to be critical for success in tomorrow's business world.”
– **Prasad Deshpande, Director of Empowered Learning Systems**

CLP's aggressive growth goals would have implications throughout the organization, and building the desired culture to support growth would require shifts in all areas. The company realized they couldn't accomplish their objectives just by conducting training sessions.

“One of the key elements of a case like this is that when organizations need to change mindsets, they have to start with the big picture—the culture,” Prasad Deshpande says. “It can't be approached in a piecemeal way.”

With that in mind, Prasad Deshpande worked with Gopinath Govindan, CLP India's Director of Human Resources, to determine how the Whole Brain® system could be applied as a framework for achieving the organization's objectives, both broadly and at the individual level.

The first step was diagnosing the gaps, starting with the question, “What kind of organization is CLP India today?” Using the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®) assessment, they assessed the leadership team to get a picture of the thinking at the top. The 120-question HBDI® evaluates and describes the degree of preference individuals have for thinking in each of the four brain quadrants, as depicted by the Herrmann Whole Brain® Model (figure 1).



The four-color, four-quadrant graphic and Whole Brain® are registered trademarks of Herrmann Global, LLC. © 2015 Herrmann Global, LLC

Figure 1: The Herrmann Whole Brain Model

The upper left A quadrant (blue) indicates a preference for analytical, quantitative thinking; the lower left B quadrant (green) denotes planned, detailed thinking preferences. On the right side, the lower C quadrant (red) represents a preference for more interpersonal, feeling-based thinking, and the upper D quadrant (yellow) represents visionary, experimental thinking.

Unsurprisingly for a highly technical organization, the preferences of the leadership team as a whole were strongly tilted toward A- and B-quadrant, analytical and detailed thinking (figure 2). However, the Whole Brain® concept emphasizes that while someone may prefer one type of thinking over another, we all have access to all four quadrants; we simply need the tools and skills to become more comfortable with and understand when to use the less-preferred modes. Working with Deshpande on this exercise, the company saw that they could leverage the strong A- and B-quadrant thinking of the organization more strategically and deliberately going forward, and they realized they would need to work on building awareness and skills in the C/red quadrant to improve collaboration and communication. They would also need to develop D-quadrant thinking skills systematically for specific projects.

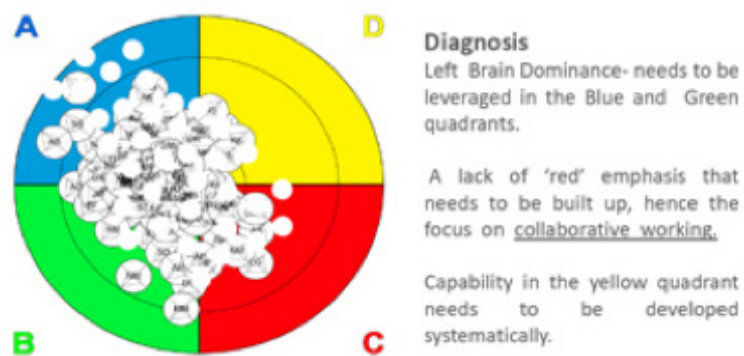


Figure 2: Thinking Preferences of the Leadership Team (122 individuals)

Creating Whole Brain® Leadership

*“You have to build flexible, adaptable mindsets.
It’s about honoring— not just accepting—differences.”*

– Prasad Deshpande, Director of Empowered Learning Systems

As the next step in the process, Prasad Deshpande worked with CLP to identify and implement initiatives to develop Whole Brain® leadership at the organizational level. CLP’s managers were highly skilled technical managers who needed to develop the leadership savvy to support the company’s rapid growth. CLP used the Whole Brain® framework to organize and plan their leadership development strategy so they could create a balanced, holistic approach—one that encompasses all four thinking preferences—and to make sure they were leveraging the thinking preferences of the group to their advantage.



Figure 3: CLP India Whole Brain® Approach to Leadership

The language of Whole Brain® Thinking was woven throughout the leadership components, helping link together key developmental activities and giving them a common foundation that everyone understood and accepted. Prasad Deshpande says that by introducing management tools and models through the lens of Whole Brain® Thinking, CLP was able to increase the value and actionability of those tools.

“Whole Brain® Thinking is always relevant,” he notes. “So you get much more value with everything you’re doing. It knits everything together.”

As part of the leadership development strategy, managers have completed the HBDI® assessment to learn about their own thinking preferences and attended training incorporating Whole Brain® concepts to help them improve their coaching effectiveness, manage teams more effectively, and build awareness throughout the culture about the language of the Whole Brain® Model and the need for flexible, adaptive thinking to get the best results.

The ability of leaders to know when and how to stretch and adapt their thinking to the situation is becoming increasingly important as the company scales up. New operating regions combined with more diverse and younger employees could create even more silos and communication breakdowns if not managed effectively.

To avoid silos in such an environment, Prasad Deshpande explains, “you have to build flexible, adaptable mindsets. It’s about honoring—not just accepting—differences.”

In this way, the leadership strategy is influencing the work CLP is doing with individuals and teams as well. As different groups and teams have begun completing the HBDI® and learning about thinking preferences, leaders are learning how to better understand people’s strengths in terms of how their

thinking contributes to results and where they may need to stretch their thinking if “blind spots” exist. They are also better able to coach for improved performance by adapting their coaching styles to the thinking preferences of their employees. With highly technical managers, coaching can sometimes be a challenge, but the foundation in thinking preferences has given CLP’s leaders an individually targeted approach that’s within their comfort zone and easier for them to apply.

RESULTS:

A collaborative decision-making culture that embraces new thinking, solves problems more effectively, honors the strengths of all employees, and leads the industry in talent and innovation.

As the growth of the company has taken off, Whole Brain® Thinking has become integral to the company’s ability to manage effectively, achieve new levels of innovation and avoid the potential negative effects of scale. Prasad Deshpande says that “actions are always approached through a Whole Brain® lens now,” and the results can be seen throughout the organization, including:

- Increased participation and discussion in meetings—a significant change for a traditionally hierarchical company,
- Increased confidence in the way issues are addressed, which has led to faster, more effective problem solving.
- Increased employee engagement since managers have started applying Whole Brain® Thinking skills.
- A major shift from a strictly operational, “don’t question, just do” mindset to a more collaborative, inclusive approach.
- A unified culture rooted in the language of Whole Brain® Thinking, with people using the colors of the Model as a kind of shorthand to describe situations and issues.
- A culture that embraces different thinking and appeals to younger employees—critical for attracting the next generation of talent, particularly in a country with such a large population of young people.
- Management tools and methods, such as Collaborative Decision Making, that are more valuable and more effectively deployed due to their grounding in the Whole Brain® framework.
- Innovative thinking that has led to CLP India’s status as one of the few power companies in India currently focusing on both conventional and renewable energy.

Leaders are now participating in Collaborative Decision Making workshops that are built around the Whole Brain® framework. They learn to develop action plans using the four quadrants to ensure a balanced approach and better outcomes, and they’re applying Whole Brain® Thinking to tackle a variety of “live projects” in areas such as water wastage and sustainability.

Because it is now embedded into the culture, the Whole Brain® framework is expanding to meet the organization’s changing needs. While the collaborative business and leadership development focus continues, the company is now working on building the leadership pipeline through coaching efforts. In addition, most managers who join CLP complete the HBDI®, and

the common language of Whole Brain® Thinking is serving as a foundation for continually increasing employee engagement and contribution.

Prasad Desphande says that CLP India's buy-in to the approach and willingness to see it through has been a big part of why this initiative has been so successful. Rather than viewing this as an isolated event, they have embraced Whole Brain® Thinking as a way of doing business. They focused not just on development, but on culture-building within the context of their business realities.

By institutionalizing Whole Brain® Thinking, CLP has been able to get to the thinking and mindsets that lie at the core of behavior, easing the way for behavior change—and results—to follow.

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