

SUCCESS STORY

LASTAR Inc.

PAPER IN BRIEF:

- **Discover** how thinking preferences impact everyday interactions, work processes and behaviors.
- **Explore** examples from Lastar's experiences applying Whole Brain® Thinking to improve communication, accelerate decision making and build productive relationships at the individual, one-on-one and team levels.
- **Learn** how Lastar leaders are using HBDI® individual and Pair Profile™ data to work more productively with direct reports and leverage the full spectrum of thinking available within their teams.
- **Find Out how Whole Brain® Thinking** is helping Lastar become more efficient and effective in handling the complexities of daily business.

Lastar is an industry leader in high performance cabling and connectivity solutions servicing a variety of markets including education, corporate, healthcare, and hospitality. With global operations, the company has locations in the United States, Europe, and Asia.

Lastar's capabilities allow it to service market demand in North America, throughout much of Central and South America, in EMEA and in many parts of Asia, either directly or in partnership with its distribution partners.



THE CHALLENGE:

Complex projects and complicated decision-making processes are part of the everyday reality of global operations and logistics. With customers in multiple market sectors around the world, and a strong commitment to delivering innovative products and services, Lastar is continually looking for ways to improve how its operations team works together so it can be more efficient and effective in handling the complexities of daily business.

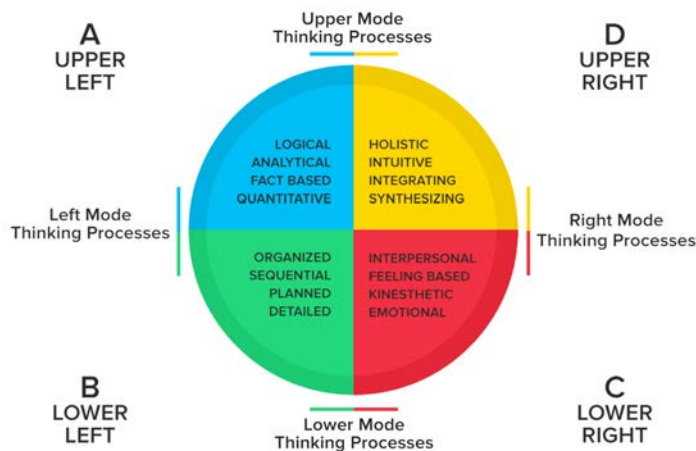


THE SOLUTION: BETTER THINKING

Mindy Morrow, Lastar's Director of Leadership and Organization Development, was certified in the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®) in 2007. As an HBDI® Practitioner, she works with leaders and employees across the organization to help them understand how they prefer to think and how they can apply what we know about thinking to improve communications, teamwork, creativity, and other aspects of their performance.

With the HBDI® and Whole Brain® Thinking, Brian saw an opportunity to help the team understand how they think and approach work—as individuals, in one-on-one situations and as a team—and how they could apply this knowledge to improve their communication, decision making, goal setting, and overall working relationships.

The Whole Brain® Model



The Whole Brain® Model (above) depicts the four different thinking preferences and serves as an organizing principle for how the brain works. Although someone may prefer certain styles of thinking over others, everyone has access to all four quadrants. Applying Whole Brain® Thinking means being able to fully leverage one's own preferences, stretch to other styles when necessary, and adapt to and take advantage of the preferences of those around you to improve performance and results.

Originally developed at General Electric, the highly validated Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®) is the assessment tool at the heart of the Herrmann Whole Brain® Thinking System.

"It shed light on how I think and process information," he says, "and it answered a lot of questions about myself and why I work the way I work. I realized this is just how I think."

He also began to see that differences in thinking preferences could explain why he and his team would often spend so much time talking in circles to get to a decision. Even when everyone would arrive at the same conclusions, because they were thinking about the issue in different ways, the process could be time consuming and frustrating as everyone struggled to be heard.

With the HBDI® and Whole Brain® Thinking, Brian saw an opportunity to help the team understand how they think and approach work—as individuals, in one-on-one situations and as a team—and how they could apply this knowledge to improve their communication, decision making, goal setting, and overall working relationships.



Brian worked with Mindy to implement the program, and all leaders of the operations team now complete the HBDI® assessment and learn about their personal thinking profiles. In training sessions, they learn how thinking preferences impact the way people approach their work, and they learn Whole Brain® Thinking skills to help them communicate and solve problems

more effectively both with those who think in the same way they do as well as those who think differently. Because one-on-one communication is so essential to the work they do, HBDI® Pair Profile™ debriefs are also conducted with members of the team. This process includes analyzing the similarities and differences in the way two people think to help them uncover and appreciate their similarities, see the benefits of their differences, and learn techniques for working together in the most optimal way.

Putting it to Work: Better Performance

As the team learns about the impact of thinking on performance, the endless communication loops are gradually becoming a thing of the past.

“With everyone thinking about an issue differently and coming at it from different angles, we used to spend a lot of time getting through a discussion or decision even when everyone was essentially saying the same thing,” Brian says.

“Now we know how to get there so much faster.”

According to Mindy, “Brian has done a great job of ‘socializing’ Whole Brain® Thinking—not as a way to label, divide, or pigeonhole, but as something that allows people to listen to each other from a position of strengths.”

This is having an impact on the team’s approaches—to projects, processes, and each other—in a variety of ways.

For starters, by learning about the thinking strengths of the people on his team, Brian has discovered he has deeper reserves of talent than he realized, and that it’s not always in places he expected.

As an example, he recently discovered that one of his “behind-the-scenes” team members has a very strong preference for A-quadrant (blue) thinking, something he never would have known based on her outward behavior and the role she performs. Since learning about her thinking styles, he now turns to her when he needs help with analytical issues

“This shows that personality may project something, but that’s just a perception,” he says, adding, “I’m amazed at how many previously untapped resources I have.”

Now that he knows about his team members' thinking preferences, Brian is able to leverage their strengths and fill the gaps in his own. The team also has a better understanding of how each of them processes through things, so rather than label someone a "flip flopper" or "by the book," they've learned to recognize "that's just how they think." By getting away from these preconceived notions, Brian says, they are able to engage with each other in a more meaningful and productive way.

Between Two People: Better Results

Whole Brain® Thinking is also providing the foundation for improving the outcomes of one-on-one interactions and discussions. When it comes to 'working with someone on an issue or going into a conversation, Brian now looks at their Pair Profile™ Report first to know who he's talking to and how to get off on the right foot right away.



For example, one of his direct reports, with whom he has worked for 10 years on a variety of internal projects, is very analytical and conceptual (strong A- and D-quadrant thinking preferences). In the past, each of them would take their own path in a conversation, so the process of solving a complicated issue could be stressful.

"He's brilliant but he can get lost in his own thought. You end up spending a lot of your energy trying to catch up with him," Brian explains. Getting to the point of agreement often took a long time, and there would be frustration on both sides, particularly when the discussion involved multiple points of conflict or multiple decisions that needed to be made.

Now, however, not only do they know where the other person is coming from, they also know how to start together to get the best results. Because the Pair Profile™ Report gives them a prescribed path for communicating most productively with each other, they use that process flow to frame the discussion. In their case, the path starts with focusing on B-quadrant (green) issues, like details and an agenda, then goes to the D (yellow) quadrant to look at possibilities and new ideas. It then proceeds to the A (blue) quadrant for analysis and discussion of facts, and finally to the C (red) quadrant, focusing on how the decision might impact others.

A recent project aimed at maximizing capacity demonstrates how they're benefitting from this new Whole Brain® way of working together. With many complexities, trapdoors, if/then and shared resources involved, putting together a viable, sustainable plan could have been extremely challenging. But because they understood how each was thinking and could create a shared vision quickly, they completed the project in record time.

“We used to spend too much time trying to get to common ground. But now, a conversation that might have taken two hours can happen in about 45 minutes,” Brian says. “It’s refreshing!”

The direct report has benefited personally, as well. While he had been labeled as someone who couldn’t communicate effectively, people now recognize the barrier is actually rooted in a difference in thinking styles. They listen to him differently and as a result, appreciate his full value. Brian also knows to give him time before a meeting to think through things so when they do meet, they can quickly move forward. It’s a small change that has dramatically increased their productivity and efficiency while reducing stress and frustration.



Similarly, when Brian was having issues working with a new hire, he realized there was disconnect due to the fact that their thinking styles were completely divergent. Once they both understood the “method behind their madness,” he says they were able to find common ground. The dynamics of their working relationship completely turned around, and the employee’s developmental process took off, too: He began applying Whole Brain® Thinking in all of his dealings at work, and it became the catalyst for his recent promotion to a new level in the organization.

Whole Brain® Thinking: A Way of Doing Business

Although he immediately saw the value his team could gain from learning about how thinking preferences impact performance, Brian also admits, “I was somewhat skeptical at first because many academic-type exercises don’t really get any traction.” After the initial roll-out and discovery process, the enthusiasm wears off and people go back to their old habits.

He was pleased to see that hasn’t been the case with Whole Brain® Thinking. He notes that people pull up their Pair Profile™ Report before they talk to someone and use the data to create clearer conversations and a better discussion path. He also emphasizes that they aren’t being told to do it; they do it because they see the value. As a result, the concepts have taken hold organically without the need for a lot of formal direction.

“They want to use it, and it’s ultimately making them a more cohesive and productive unit,” he says. “Any time we introduce a new team member, they go through the training. Awareness and application are high, and it’s not uncommon to walk into a meeting now and hear people [using the language].”

From color-coding emails to continually finding creative ways to bring the Model into everyday business, Mindy says people throughout the company have attached to the Whole Brain® Thinking System much more so than other kinds of assessments and approaches. She believes this is because it not only has immediate personal resonance, it also gets to the core of who you are and how that manifests itself in your everyday interactions and work processes.

“How you think drives your personality,” she explains. “You may be putting on a personality for work but it’s not really who you are. How you think is how you think. That doesn’t change.” The key, Brian says, is counterbalancing your thinking. “We have a much stronger unit with everyone understanding what everyone brings to the table. I use Whole Brain® Thinking daily. It has made a difference in my personal and professional life, and I know it has for my team members as well.”

UNLEASH THINKING POTENTIAL

Herrmann International combines powerful psychometric tools with learning programs to prepare your workforce for a complex and volatile environment. Learn more about our assessment tools, explore our learning programs, or talk to a Whole Brain® Specialist today.



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