Self, other and social context

Learning style questionnaire: An Overview

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Source: Peter Honey and Alan Mumford, The Learning Styles Questionnaire
Executive examples...

- **Individual Learning**
  - Ghosn, CEO Renault
    - “I spend a lot of time learning – that’s what makes my job so exciting”

- **Team learning**
  - “More learning, more earning” (Japanese corporate saying)

- **Organisational Learning**
  - "We are a learning organization" (Jack Welch, GE)
Business Driven Action Learning:
Levels of learning...

- What am I learning about the organization?
- What am I learning about myself?
- What am I learning about how I learn?
- What am I learning that I can apply after the "programme"?
- Who else needs to know about this learning?
Learning Style types

- Activists
- Reflectors
- Theorists
- Pragmatists
Activists

- Activists like to take direct action
- Enthusiastic
- Welcome new challenges & experiences
- Not so interested in the past or broader, context-here and now
- Like to try things out & participate and like to be the centre of attention
Activists – Summary

Like to:

- Think on their feet
- Have short sessions
- Plenty of variety
- Opportunity to initiate
- Participate and have fun
Activists will learn most easily when

- There are new experiences, problems, opportunities from which to learn
- You can engross yourself in short "here and now activities"
- There is excitement, drama, crisis
- Things change frequently and there are diverse activities to tackle
Activists will learn most easily when

- You have a lot of limelight
- You are allowed lots of ideas
- You are thrown in the deep end with a task you think is difficult and/or engaging
- You are involved with other people
  - E.g. bouncing ideas off them, solving problems as part of a team
- It is appropriate "to have a go"
Activists will find it more difficult to learn when:

- Learning involves a passive role
  - E.g. listening to lectures, explanations, reading, watching, reading or listening to statements on how thinks should be done
- You are asked to stand back and not be involved
- You are required to engage in solitary work
  - Reading, writing, or thinking on your own
- You are asked to repeat essentially the same activity over and over again, e.g. when practising
Activists will find it more difficult to learn when:

- You have precise instructions to follow with little room for manoeuvre
- You are asked to do a thorough job
  
  - E.g. attend to detail, tie up loose ends, dot the 1's and cross the t's
Understanding the sort of help you are likely to get/not get from your boss
Activist manager will tend to help by:

- Generating (unconsciously) opportunities for others to observe and reflect on what they do taking an optimistic and positive view of what is involved in a new situation
- Giving a positive and encouraging lead (at least initially) in short term, active learning opportunities
- Following through with action to provide learning experiences (if they have been convinced of their value)
- Responding spontaneously to opportunities as they arise
Activist managers will be less likely to provide help through:

- Providing planned learning experiences
- Giving support to learning as a planned, structured activity
- Assessing and using learning experiences that are different to those which they have learned
- Discussing learning opportunities beforehand and reviewing them afterwards
- Standing back and allowing others to participate or take action
- Giving different learning experiences to employees with different learning styles
Reflectors

- Like to think about things in detail before taking action
- Thoughtful approach
- Good listeners
- Low profile
- Prepared to read (and re-read)
Reflectors—Summary

They like:

- To think before acting
- Thorough preparation
- Research and evaluate
- Make decisions in their own time
- Listen and observe
Reflectors will learn most easily when:

- You are encouraged or allowed to watch, think, chew over activities
- You are able to stand back from events and listen, observe
  - E.g. take a back seat in a group activity, watch a film or video
- You are allowed to think before acting
  - E.g. time to prepare, a chance to read background information in advance
Reflectors will learn most easily when:

- You can carry out some painstaking research
  - Investigate, gather information, probe to get to the bottom of things
- You have an opportunity to think about what has happened, what you have learned
- You are asked to produce carefully considered analyses and reports
- You can reach a decision in your own time without pressure and tight deadlines
Reflectors will find it more difficult to learn when:

- You are "forced" into the limelight
  - E.g. to act as leader to role-play in front of onlookers
- You are involved in situations that require action without planning
- You are thrown into doing something without warning
  - E.g. to produce an instant reaction, or an off-the-top-of-the-head idea
- You are given insufficient information on which to base a conclusion
Reflectors will find it more difficult to learn when:

- You are given cut and dried instructions of how things should be done
- You are worried by time pressures or rushed from one activity to another
- You are not given time to do a thorough job
Reflector managers will tend to help by:

- Suggesting activities that can be observed
- Recommending how observation can be carried out
- Identifying ways in which an event or problem can be analysed
- Discussing what may happen and reviewing what has happened
- Providing data or feedback in a controlled learning environment
Reflector managers will tend to help by:

- Advising how to prepare carefully for a management activity
- Not taking a dominant sole in meetings with employees
- Emphasizing the importance of collecting data before taking action
- Giving a controlled response to requests for help
Reflector managers will be less likely to provide help through:

- Suggesting ad hoc, immediate learning opportunities
- Showing how to take advantage spontaneously of unplanned learning activities
- Providing unexpected or slightly risky learning situations, e.g. sudden delegation of a task
- Giving immediate answers to unexpected requests for direct help
- Proving a large-scale view of philosophy, concept, system or policy
- Providing a strong personal model of anything except Reflector behaviour
Theorists

- Like to see how things fit into an overall pattern
- Logical and objective "systems" people
- Prefer sequential approach to problems
- Analytical & rational
- Pay attention to detail
- Tend to be perfectionists
Theorists-Summary

Like:

- Concepts and models
- To see the overall picture
- To feel intellectually stretched
- Structure and clear objectives
- Logical presentation of ideas
Theorists will learn most easily when:

- You have time to be more methodical and to explore the associations and interrelationships between ideas, events and situations.
- You have a chance to question and probe the basic methodology, assumptions and logic behind something.
- You are intellectually stretched by analyzing a complex situation, by working with people who ask searching questions.
Theorists will find it more difficult to learn when:

- Forced to do something without enough background information or an apparent purpose
- Participating in situations emphasizing emotions and feelings
- Involved in unstructured activities where uncertainty is high
- Asked to act, decide, without proper guidelines
- Find the subject matter banal, shallow, gimmicky
- Out of tune with others, esp. around too many Activists or people of lower intellectual calibre
Theorist managers will tend to

- Showing interest in an intellectually respectable idea
- Helping people to describe underlying causes, to explain the systems or concepts involved in any activity
- Demonstrating the intellectual validity of an answer or process
- Showing how to strengthen or demolish a case by the use of logic
Theorist managers will tend to help by:

- Bringing out complexities
- Aiming for clarity of structure or purpose
- Articulating theories, e.g. Open Systems Theory
- Generalizing reasons why something works or does not work
- Setting high standards for quality of data
Theorist managers will be less likely to help though:

- Showing when to accept the obvious
- Helping others to understand emotions and feelings in specific circumstances
- Making use of data or occasions that conflict with their theories
- Developing others who are different in intellectual level-or style, e.g. if theories clash with their own
- Showing how to use information that they regard as trivial, irrelevant, or not intellectually respectable
- Drawing up specific action plans
Pragmatists

- Like to see how things work in practice
- Enjoy experimenting and new ideas
- Practical, down to earth
- Like to solve problems
- Appreciate the opportunity to try out what they have learned/are learning
Pragmatists-Summary

Like to:
- See the relevance of their work
- Gain practical advantage from learning

Like:
- Credible role models
- Proven techniques
- Activities to be real
Pragmatists will learn most easily when:

- There is an obvious link between the subject matter and a current problem or opportunity at work
- You are shown techniques for doing things with obvious practical advantages
  - E.g. how to save time, how to deal with awkward people
- You have the chance to try out and practise techniques with coaching from someone you trust, who is successful and can do the techniques themselves
Pragmatists will find it more difficult to learn from activities where:

- You feel that people are going round in circles and not getting anywhere fast enough
- There are political, managerial or personal obstacles to implementation
- You can't see sufficient reward from the learning activity
Pragmatist managers will tend to hep by:

- Showing responsiveness to new ideas and techniques
- Demonstrating an interest in specific action plans
- Pressing for relevant learning programmes with clear payoff
- Being open to new situations
- Showing a belief in the possibility of improvement
- Following the party line, e.g. on appraisals or releasing people for courses
- Following specific suggestions on how to improve learning
Pragmatists will learn most easily when:

- You have the opportunity to learn from a demonstration by someone with a proven track record or a film showing how it is done.
- You are shown techniques that apply to what you are trying to achieve.
- You are given immediate opportunities to implement what you have learned.
- You can concentrate on practical issues.
  - E.g. by drawing up action plans with an obvious end product, suggesting short cuts, giving tips.
Pragmatists will find it more difficult to learn from activities where:

- The learning is not related to an immediate need you recognize or see, or an immediate relevance, practical benefit
- Organizers of the learning or the event itself seem distanced from reality, i.e. "ivory towered", all theory and general principles, pure "chalk and talk"
- There is no practice or clear guidelines on how to do it
Pragmatist managers will be less likely to provide help through:

- Being responsive to ideas or techniques not immediately relevant to a current problem
- Showing interest in concepts or theories
- Encouraging action relevant to the longer term
- Encouraging ideas or learning programs that they regard as unproved or off-base
- Pushing for action that apparently is not valued by the culture or system
- Using learning opportunities that they see as unrelated to real life, e.g. seminars by "people who don't understand our industry, organization, problems"
In Summary

- If executives know what kind of learning activities they are not likely to provide themselves, they ought to be responsive to suggestions outside their own style.

- The best executives will actively seek to fill in the gaps by using other people and resources.