

The Learning Styles Questionnaire

80-item version

Peter Honey and Alan Mumford

To find out more about learning and learning styles visit our website:

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Foreword

In the late seventies Alan Mumford and I worked on a project in the Chloride organisation to establish the learning style preferences of individual managers and tailor their personal development plans to take account of these preferences.

After nearly four years of experimentation with different ways to assess someone's learning style preferences (we had started with Kolb's Learning Style Inventory but found it had low face validity with senior managers in Chloride), we published The Manual of Learning Styles in the autumn of 1982.

The impact of learning styles has never diminished - the Honey and Mumford Learning Styles have been translated into dozens of languages and are now used throughout the world, in all sectors of commerce and education, and enjoy high face validity.

Being aware of your preferred learning styles is now widely acknowledged as a prerequisite to becoming a better all-round learner. It has implications not just for your own learning, but will also give you insights into the styles of colleagues in your team, your manager and other contacts.

This booklet will help you identify your preferred styles and optimise your learning effectiveness, by guiding you towards learning opportunities that best suit your preferred styles. Furthermore, it will help you maximise your learning from these opportunities, by enabling you to become proficient in all four stages of the learning cycle: experiencing, reviewing, concluding and planning.

As part of the general move towards self-managed learning resources we are now providing the Learning Styles products in electronic form, combining the strengths of our learning tools with the power of today's technology. To try out our products online, visit our website at www.peterhoney.com.

This booklet has been repackaged so that learners have at their fingertips all the resources they need to manage their own learning. It now includes the questionnaire and scoring, along with an exploration of the learning cycle and descriptions of the four learning styles. You will also find information on the sort of help you can expect from your manager, given that he/she also has learning style preferences!

Peter Honey

Section 1: Introduction to Learning and Learning Styles

What is Learning?

Learning has happened when you can demonstrate that you know something you didn't know before (insights and realisations as well as facts) and/or when you can do something you couldn't do before (skills).

We learn in two substantially different ways. Sometimes we are 'taught' through formal structured activities such as lectures, case studies and books. We also learn informally from our experiences, often in an unconscious, ill-defined way. Formal learning, dedicated to the acquisition of knowledge, is both more familiar and more straightforward than experiential learning. This is because most people associate the word 'learning' with the acquisition of facts, rather than with the messier process of learning from day-to-day experiences. As we shall see, learning style preferences have implications for all types of learning.

The Importance of Learning from Experience

Learning from experience is a fundamental but crucial process. Without it we would be seriously handicapped. If you were unable to learn from your experiences you would:

- never acquire any knowledge or skills
- make the same mistakes over and over again
- be incapable of adapting to change.

Learning from experience is arguably the most important of all life skills - it is so fundamental that it affects everything we do.

Of course, everyone learns from experience but, rather like breathing, too often it is taken for granted and carried out intuitively without even realising it. The snags with learning intuitively are that you:

- aren't clear what you have learned
- cannot communicate your learning to other people
- don't know how you learn and therefore cannot improve the process and become a more efficient learner from experience
- do not help other people to learn from their experiences.

These are serious omissions and strongly suggest that intuitive learning needs to be supplemented with learning that is more conscious and deliberate.

The Advantages of Being a Conscious Learner from Experience

Doing anything consciously and deliberately clearly takes more effort than doing something unconsciously or intuitively. But the extra effort secures many advantages. If you are a conscious learner from experience you

- are clear what you have learned
- can communicate your learning to other people
- know how you learn and can therefore improve the way you do it
- have a recipe for continuous improvement and for helping others to improve
- keep ahead of and are comfortable with change
- learn from successes, not just from mistakes
- are better able to transfer learning from one specific situation to a broader range of other situations
- are more purposeful - determined to extract learning, even from unremarkable routine experiences.

So the good thing about being a conscious learner is that you do not just become a better learner, your performance is also improved.

Learning Styles

Learning is such a fundamental process that many people take it for granted, conveniently assuming that by the time they are adults they have learned how to learn and need no further assistance with the process. Thus teachers concentrate on teaching and assume students are skilled at such learning activities as listening, note-taking, researching, essay writing and revising. Trainers too often assume that learners are empty buckets waiting to be filled by whatever training method the trainer favours - the fact that the buckets are different shapes and sizes is conveniently overlooked.

Yet it is patently clear that people vary, not just in their learning skills, but also in their learning styles. Why otherwise might two people - matched for age, intelligence and need - react so differently when exposed to the same learning opportunity? One person emerges enthusiastic, able to articulate and implement what has been learned, yet the other claims it was a waste of time and that nothing has been learned.

This booklet aims to show that the reason for this divergence stems from unspoken preferences about how to learn. Perhaps the learning opportunity involved being 'thrown in at the deep end' with minimal guidance - this might suit one person's style, but not the other, who might prefer to learn by being thoroughly briefed before having a go.

The term 'learning styles' is used as a description of the attitudes and behaviours that determine our preferred way of learning. Most people are unaware of their learning style preferences, they just know vaguely that they feel more comfortable with - and learn more from - some activities than

others. Knowing about different learning styles is the key to becoming more effective at learning from experience.

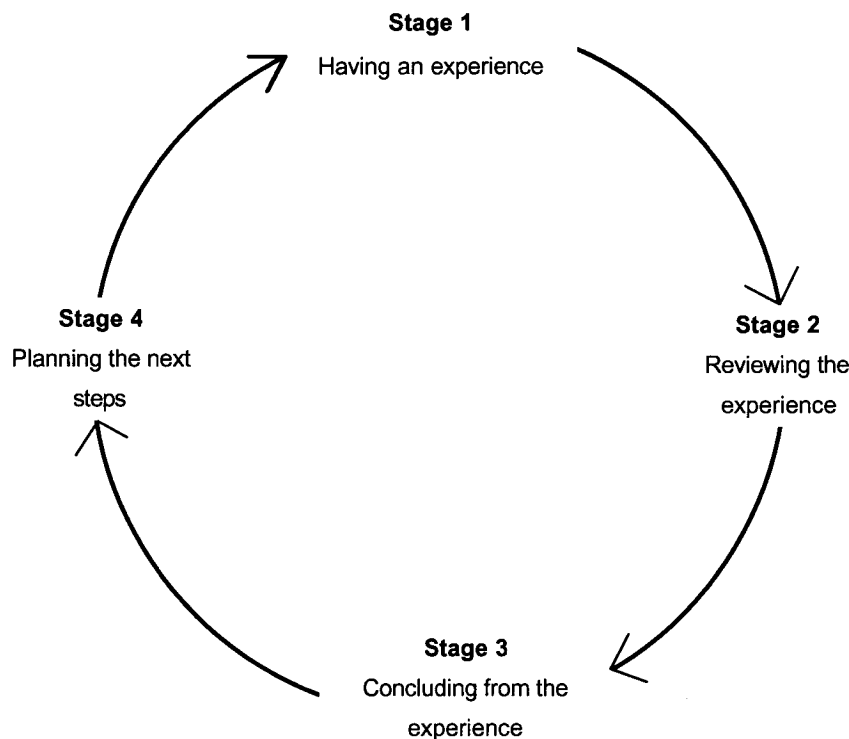
The 80-item Learning Styles Questionnaire (LSQ) (Section 3) is a self-assessment questionnaire that helps you identify your preferred learning style(s). Once you have completed the questionnaire and are aware of your preferred style(s), you can help yourself to recommendations in this booklet that will enable you to:

- select learning opportunities that are appropriate to your preferences
- strengthen your under-utilised styles, with a view to becoming a more balanced, 'all-round' learner and being more comfortable with all stages of the learning cycle.

Section 2: The Learning Cycle

Learning from Experience

Learning from experience is a process and, like all processes, it is possible to break it down into its constituent parts. Imagine a circle with four steps or stages at the four points of a compass:



Stage 1: Having an Experience

There are two different ways to have an experience. One is to let the experience come to you (reactive) and the other is to seek it out deliberately (proactive). The opportunities to learn are greatly increased if the normal everyday things that happen to us are supplemented by extra experiences we create. Suppose, for example, you regularly attend a weekly meeting that tends to be deadly dull. You could decide to view it as a learning opportunity and start to experiment with different ways of livening up the meeting.

Stage 2: Reviewing the Experience

If you are to learn from an experience it is vital to review what happened during it. In the deadly dull meeting, for example, you might experiment by having a different person take the chair for different agenda items. Your review might focus on the differences you observed between the way the best and the worst chairperson undertook the task.

Stage 3: Concluding from the Experience

Concluding involves scanning the raw material from the review for conclusions, 'answers' or lessons learned. It helps if the conclusions are specific rather than global. After the meeting, you might conclude that the best chairperson:

- clarified the objective of whatever was to be discussed
- actively sought people's ideas
- summarised at frequent intervals.

Stage 4: Planning the Next Steps

Planning involves translating some of the conclusions into actions, things to do better or differently. An example might be a plan to spend ten minutes at the start of the next meeting discussing your conclusions about the best chairperson and working out how to help those who had most difficulty with the three modes of behaviour described above.

Learning as a Continuous Process

The four stages in the process of learning from experience are mutually dependent on one another. No stage makes sense, or is particularly useful, in isolation from the others.

You can start anywhere on the cycle because each stage feeds into the next. A person could, for example, start at stage 2 by acquiring some information and pondering it before reaching some conclusions at stage 3, and deciding how to apply it at stage 4. On the other hand, someone could start at stage 4 with a technique that they plan to incorporate into their working methods. Using the technique would then be stage 1 in the cycle, reviewing how it worked out, stage 2, reaching conclusions, stage 3, and modifying the technique in the light of the experience, stage 4.

This continuous, iterative process is so fundamental that it underpins many other approaches. The scientific method is one example. Many problem solving or decision making processes also map onto the stages in the learning cycle.

Ways of Distorting the Learning Cycle

The four stages - experiencing, reviewing, concluding and planning - are mutually supportive. None is fully effective as a learning procedure on its own. Each stage plays an equally important part in the total process (though the time spent on each may vary considerably).

Most people, however, develop preferences that give them a liking for certain stages over others. The preferences lead to a distortion of the learning process, so that greater emphasis is placed on some stages to the detriment of others.

Here are some typical examples:

- Preferences for experiencing to the extent that people develop an addiction for activities and rush around, constantly on the go. This results in plenty of experiences and the assumption that having experiences is synonymous with learning from them
- Preferences for reviewing such that people shy away from first-hand experiences and postpone reaching conclusions for as long as possible whilst more information is gathered. This results in an 'analysis to paralysis' tendency with plenty of pondering but little action
- Preferences for concluding such that people have a compulsion to reach an answer quickly. This results in a tendency to jump to conclusions by circumventing the review stage, where uncertainty and ambiguity are higher (conclusions, even if they are dubious, are comforting things to have)
- Preferences for seizing on an expedient course of action and implementing it with inadequate preparation. This results in a tendency to go for 'quick fixes' by over-emphasising the planning and experiencing stages to the detriment of reviewing and concluding.

Section 3: 80-item Learning Styles Questionnaire

This questionnaire will help you discover your learning style preferences. We all develop learning 'habits' that make us happier to learn in some ways and less happy to learn in other, less familiar, ways. Most people are only vaguely aware of their learning preferences. This questionnaire will clarify your preferred ways of learning so that you are in a better position to select experiences that suit your style and/or to broaden your scope by strengthening under-utilised styles.

There is no time limit for the completion of this questionnaire. It will probably take you 10 to 15 minutes. The accuracy of the results depends on how honest you are. There are no right or wrong answers. If you agree more than you disagree with a statement put a tick (✓) in the box. If you disagree more than you agree with a statement put a cross (x) in the box. Be sure to mark each item with either a tick or a cross.

- 1 ☐ I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad.
- 2 ☐ I often act without considering the possible consequences.
- 3 ☐ I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach.
- 4 ☐ I believe that formal procedures and policies restrict people.
- 5 ☐ I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly.
- 6 ☐ I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis.
- 7 ☐ I like the sort of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation.
- 8 ☐ I regularly question people about their basic assumptions.
- 9 ☐ What matters most is whether something works in practice.
- 10 ☐ I actively seek out new experiences.

- 11 ☐ When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice.
- 12 ☐ I am keen on self-discipline such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine, etc.
- 13 ☐ I take pride in doing a thorough job.
- 14 ☐ I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, 'irrational' people.
- 15 ☐ I take care over the interpretation of data available to me and avoid jumping to conclusions.
- 16 ☐ I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up many alternatives.
- 17 ☐ I'm attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones.
- 18 ☐ I don't like disorganised things and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern.
- 19 ☐ I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done.
- 20 ☐ I like to relate my actions to a general principle.
- 21 ☐ In discussions I like to get straight to the point.
- 22 ☐ I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work.
- 23 ☐ I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different.
- 24 ☐ I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people.
- 25 ☐ I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion.
- 26 ☐ I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse.
- 27 ☐ I believe in coming to the point immediately.
- 28 ☐ I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly.

- 29 ☐ I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible - the more data to think over the better.
- 30 ☐ Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me.
- 31 ☐ I listen to other people's points of view before putting my own forward.
- 32 ☐ I tend to be open about how I'm feeling.
- 33 ☐ In discussions I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants.
- 34 ☐ I prefer to respond to events on spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance.
- 35 ☐ I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning, etc.
- 36 ☐ It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline.
- 37 ☐ I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits.
- 38 ☐ Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy.
- 39 ☐ I often get irritated by people who want to rush things.
- 40 ☐ It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future.
- 41 ☐ I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition.
- 42 ☐ I tend to be a perfectionist.
- 43 ☐ In discussions I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas.
- 44 ☐ In meetings I put forward practical, realistic ideas.
- 45 ☐ More often than not, rules are there to be broken.
- 46 ☐ I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives.

- 47 ☐ I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments.
- 48 ☐ On balance I talk more than I listen.
- 49 ☐ I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done.
- 50 ☐ I think written reports should be short and to the point.
- 51 ☐ I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day.
- 52 ☐ I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engaging in social discussion.
- 53 ☐ I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically.
- 54 ☐ In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions.
- 55 ☐ If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version.
- 56 ☐ I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice.
- 57 ☐ I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach.
- 58 ☐ I enjoy being the one that talks a lot.
- 59 ☐ In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping people to the point and avoiding wild speculations.
- 60 ☐ I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind.
- 61 ☐ In discussions with people I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective.
- 62 ☐ In discussions I'm more likely to adopt a 'low profile' than to take the lead and do most of the talking.
- 63 ☐ I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer term bigger picture.
- 64 ☐ When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and put it down to experience.

- 65 ☐ I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical.
- 66 ☐ It's best to think carefully before taking action.
- 67 ☐ On balance I do the listening rather than the talking.
- 68 ☐ I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach.
- 69 ☐ Most times I believe the end justifies the means.
- 70 ☐ I don't mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done.
- 71 ☐ I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling.
- 72 ☐ I'm usually one of the people who puts life into a party.
- 73 ☐ I do whatever is expedient to get the job done.
- 74 ☐ I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work.
- 75 ☐ I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.
- 76 ☐ I'm always interested to find out what people think.
- 77 ☐ I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to laid down agenda, etc.
- 78 ☐ I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics.
- 79 ☐ I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation.
- 80 ☐ People often find me insensitive to their feelings.

In the following section you will find descriptions of the four learning styles. After reading them, complete the Score Key in Section 5 to find out your learning style preferences.

Section 4: Learning Style Descriptions

Activists

Activists like to take direct action. They are enthusiastic and welcome new challenges and experiences. They are less interested in what has happened in the past or in putting things into a broader context. They are primarily interested in the here and now. They like to have a go, try things out and participate. They like to be the centre of attention.

So, in summary, Activists like:

- to think on their feet
- to have short sessions
- plenty of variety
- the opportunity to initiate
- to participate and have fun.

Reflectors

Reflectors like to think about things in detail before taking action. They take a thoughtful approach. They are good listeners and prefer to adopt a low profile. They are prepared to read and re-read and will welcome the opportunity to repeat a piece of learning.

So, in summary, Reflectors like:

- to think before acting
- thorough preparation
- to research and evaluate
- to make decisions in their own time
- to listen and observe.

Theorists

Theorists like to see how things fit into an overall pattern. They are logical and objective 'systems' people who prefer a sequential approach to problems. They are analytical, pay great attention to detail and tend to be perfectionists.

So, in summary, Theorists like:

- concepts and models
- to see the overall picture
- to feel intellectually stretched
- structure and clear objectives
- logical presentation of ideas.

Pragmatists

Pragmatists like to see how things work in practice. They enjoy experimenting with new ideas. They are practical, down to earth and like to solve problems. They appreciate the opportunity to try out what they have learned/are learning.

So, in summary, Pragmatists like:

- to see the relevance of their work
- to gain practical advantage from learning
- credible role models
- proven techniques
- activities to be real.

Section 5: Score Key

You score one point for each item ticked (✓). There are no points for items you crossed (✗). Simply write your scores in the boxes below and add up the columns for your total scores for each style.

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 | <input type="checkbox"/> 13 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 | <input type="checkbox"/> 15 | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10 | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 | <input type="checkbox"/> 12 | <input type="checkbox"/> 19 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 17 | <input type="checkbox"/> 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> 14 | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 23 | <input type="checkbox"/> 28 | <input type="checkbox"/> 18 | <input type="checkbox"/> 27 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> 29 | <input type="checkbox"/> 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 35 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 32 | <input type="checkbox"/> 31 | <input type="checkbox"/> 22 | <input type="checkbox"/> 37 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 33 | <input type="checkbox"/> 26 | <input type="checkbox"/> 44 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 38 | <input type="checkbox"/> 36 | <input type="checkbox"/> 30 | <input type="checkbox"/> 49 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 40 | <input type="checkbox"/> 39 | <input type="checkbox"/> 42 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 43 | <input type="checkbox"/> 41 | <input type="checkbox"/> 47 | <input type="checkbox"/> 53 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45 | <input type="checkbox"/> 46 | <input type="checkbox"/> 51 | <input type="checkbox"/> 54 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 48 | <input type="checkbox"/> 52 | <input type="checkbox"/> 57 | <input type="checkbox"/> 56 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 58 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 | <input type="checkbox"/> 61 | <input type="checkbox"/> 59 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60 | <input type="checkbox"/> 63 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 71 | <input type="checkbox"/> 62 | <input type="checkbox"/> 68 | <input type="checkbox"/> 69 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 72 | <input type="checkbox"/> 66 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 | <input type="checkbox"/> 70 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 74 | <input type="checkbox"/> 67 | <input type="checkbox"/> 77 | <input type="checkbox"/> 73 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 79 | <input type="checkbox"/> 76 | <input type="checkbox"/> 78 | <input type="checkbox"/> 80 |
| TOTAL | | | |
| <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Activist | Reflector | Theorist | Pragmatist |

Section 6: Understanding Your Result

You have four scores, ranging from 0-20, for Activist, Reflector, Theorist and Pragmatist. The question is: what do these four scores tell you? Since the maximum score for each style is 20, at first sight you might conclude that the highest of your four scores indicates your predominant learning style. This, however, is not necessarily so. Before drawing a conclusion you need to view your scores in relation to those obtained by other people who have completed the questionnaire. Norms, as they are called, have been calculated for various groups of people and you need to decide with which group to compare your scores. Start by using the general norms based on the scores obtained by 3,500 people. Circle your scores on the table below.

| Activist | Reflector | Theorist | Pragmatist | |
|----------|-----------|----------|------------|------------------------|
| 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | |
| 19 | | | | |
| 18 | | 19 | 19 | |
| 17 | | | | Very Strong Preference |
| 16 | 19 | 18 | | |
| 15 | | | 18 | |
| 14 | | 17 | | |
| 13 | 18 | 16 | 17 | |
| 12 | 17 | 15 | 16 | Strong Preference |
| 11 | 16 | | | |
| 10 | 15 | 14 | 15 | |
| 9 | 14 | 13 | 14 | |
| 8 | 13 | 12 | 13 | Moderate Preference |
| 7 | 12 | 11 | 12 | |
| 6 | 11 | 10 | 11 | |
| 5 | 10 | 9 | 10 | Low Preference |
| 4 | 9 | 8 | 9 | |
| 3 | 8 | 7 | 8 | |
| | 7 | 6 | 7 | |
| | 6 | 5 | 6 | |
| 2 | | | | |
| | 5 | | 5 | |
| | | 4 | | |
| | 4 | | 4 | Very Low Preference |
| | | 3 | | |
| | 3 | | 3 | |
| 1 | | 2 | | |
| | 2 | | 2 | |
| | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |

The norms are calculated by dividing the scores into the following bands:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Top 10% of scores | Very strong preferences |
| Next 20% of scores | Strong preferences |
| Middle 40% of scores | Moderate preferences |
| Next 20% of scores | Low preferences |
| Bottom 10% of scores | Very low preferences |

Other norms for small groups are given in Appendix 1 on page 49.

Now that you know your learning style preferences, there are two implications. Firstly, you could use the information to select activities that suit your preferred ways of learning. Secondly, you could deliberately put more effort into developing the styles you are less comfortable with so that you fire on all four learning cylinders.

Section 7: How to Choose Learning Activities to Suit your Learning Style

Just as some individuals have a preference for one learning style, so some learning activities are strongly geared to one style of learning. Where individual preferences and activities match, learning is more likely. If there is a mismatch individuals are much less likely to learn effectively.

The following pages contain four checklists to show you how you can choose activities that are likely to dovetail with your style. They also indicate the activities it may pay you to avoid, unless you are given special help in coping with them. They will also help you identify the kind of work experiences from which you are most likely to learn and benefit.

Each checklist is followed by key questions you should ask before engaging in any learning activity. Whenever the answer to some (or all) the questions in each batch is 'No', the activity is not a good fit with your preferred learning style.

You do not have to study the detail on all of the checklists. Just concentrate on the parts that are relevant to you in the light of your Learning Styles Questionnaire result.

If you have a preference for the **Activist** style:

you will learn most easily from activities where

- 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 chop and change and there are diverse activities to tackle
- you have a lot of the limelight
- you are allowed to generate lots of ideas
- you are thrown in at the deep end with a task you think is difficult/challenging
- you are involved with other people, eg bouncing ideas off them, solving problems as part of a team
- it is appropriate to 'have a go'.

you will find it more difficult to learn from activities where

- learning involves a passive role, eg listening to lectures, monologues, explanations, statements of how things should be done, reading, watching
- you are asked to stand back and not be involved
- you are required to engage in solitary work, ie reading, writing or thinking on your own
- you are asked to repeat essentially the same activity over and over again, eg when practising
- you have precise instructions to follow with little room for manoeuvre
- you are asked to do a thorough job, eg attend to detail, tie up loose ends, dot i's and cross t's.

Key Questions for You to Bear in Mind

- Will I be likely to learn something new, ie that I didn't know/couldn't do before?
- Will there be a wide variety of different activities?
(I don't want to sit and listen for more than an hour at a stretch!)
- Will it be OK to have a go/let my hair down/make mistakes?
- Will I encounter tough problems and challenges?
- Will there be other like-minded people to mix with/have fun with?
- Will there be lots to do/lots of opportunities to participate?

If you have a preference for the **Reflector** style:

you will learn most easily from activities where

- you are allowed or encouraged to watch/think/chew over activities
- you are able to stand back from events and listen/observe, eg take a back seat in a group activity, watch a film or video
- you are allowed to think before acting, eg time to prepare, a chance to read background information in advance
- you can carry out some painstaking research, eg investigate, gather information, probe to get to the bottom of things
- you have the 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.

you will find it more difficult to learn from activities where

- you are 'forced' into the limelight, eg to act as leader, to role-play in front of onlookers
- you are involved in situations that require action without planning
- you are pitched into doing something without warning, eg to produce an instant reaction, to produce an off-the-top-of-the-head idea
- you are given insufficient information on which to base a conclusion
- 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.

Key Questions for You to Bear in Mind

- Will I be given adequate time to consider, assimilate and prepare?
- Will there be opportunities/facilities to gather relevant information?
- Will there be opportunities to listen to other people's points of view? (Preferably a wide cross-section of people with a variety of views)
- Will I have adequate time to prepare and not be under pressure to be slap-dash or to think on my feet?
- Will there be useful opportunities to watch other people in action?

If you have a preference for the **Theorist** style:

you will learn most easily from activities where

- you have time to be methodical and to explore the associations and inter-relationships between ideas, events and situations
- you have the chance to question and probe the basic methodology, assumptions or logic behind something, eg by taking part in a question and answer session, by checking a newspaper for inconsistencies
- you are intellectually stretched, eg by analysing a complex situation, being tested in a tutorial session, by working with people who ask searching questions
- you are in structured situations with a clear purpose
- you can listen to, or read about, ideas and concepts that emphasise rationality or logic and are well argued/watertight
- you are offered interesting ideas and concepts, even though they may not be immediately relevant
- you are required to understand and participate in complex situations.

you will find it more difficult to learn from activities where

- you are pitchforked into doing something without enough background information or an apparent purpose
- you have to participate in situations emphasising emotions and feelings
- you are involved in unstructured activities where uncertainty is high
- you are asked to act, or decide, without proper guidelines
- you are faced with a hotchpotch of alternative/contradictory techniques/methods
- you doubt that the subject matter is methodologically sound, eg where questionnaires haven't been validated, where there aren't any statistics to support the argument
- you find the subject matter banal, shallow or gimmicky
- you feel yourself out of tune with other participants, eg when with lots of Activists or people of lower intellectual calibre.

Key Questions for You to Bear in Mind

- Will there be lots of opportunities to ask questions?
- Will there be clear objectives and a plan/structure to achieve them?
- Will I encounter complex ideas and concepts that are likely to stretch me?
- Will the approaches used and concepts explored be 'respectable', ie sound and valid?
- Will I be with people of similar calibre to myself?
- Will this experience give me the chance to develop a general view or model?

If you have a preference for the **Pragmatist** style:

you will learn most easily from activities where

- 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, eg how to save time, how to make a good first impression, 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
- 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, eg by drawing up action plans with an obvious end product, suggesting short cuts, giving tips.

you will find it more difficult to learn from activities where

- the learning is not related to an immediate need you recognise/see or an immediate relevance/practical benefit
- organisers of the learning or the event itself seem distanced from reality, ie 'ivory towered', all theory and general principles, pure 'chalk and talk'
- there is no practice or clear guidelines on how to do it
- 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.

Key Questions for You to Bear in Mind

- Will there be ample opportunities to practise and experiment?
- Will there be lots of practical tips and techniques?
- Will we be addressing real problems and will it result in action plans to tackle some of my current problems?
- Will we be exposed to experts who know how to/can do it themselves?
- Will this really improve my immediate performance?

Section 8: How to Strengthen an Under-utilised Style

Introduction

Learning style preferences have themselves been learned! They are therefore malleable and amenable to modification.

Sometimes this happens because of a change of circumstances – such as a change in the sort of work you do, or a move to a new team or organisation. But you can also make modifications at will because you decide that to do so would increase your overall effectiveness.

You are best equipped to learn from a wide variety of different experiences if you have more or less equal preferences for all four learning styles. This is because all the stages in the learning cycle are equal contributors to the total process of learning from experience.

Having stronger preferences for some styles than others makes it likely that you will place greater emphasis on the parts of the cycle you enjoy most, ie that coincide with your preferences. The best approach is to leave your stronger preferences intact (it would be a shame to tamper with them) and to invest effort in increasing the use of your under-utilised style(s). Forcing yourself over time (not overnight!) to make greater use of an under-utilised style will increase your comfort level and add to your repertoire of learning skills.

The exercises that follow invite you to focus on your lowest learning style preference, revisit the questionnaire items you crossed and identify a couple of items you can see some merit in doing more often. It is strongly recommended that you work on one style at a time. More than this and you will lose the plot.

How to Strengthen your Activist Style

If you want to improve your Activist style because your Activist score was, say, 10 or less, the first task is to decide what aspects you would like to develop. A useful starting point is to do an analysis of the Activist LSQ items that you crossed. This is because crossed items indicate things you do not do, or do not believe in, and are therefore pointers to what you will need to practise.

Indicate on the list below which LSQ items you crossed.

- 2 ☐ I often act without considering the possible consequences.
- 4 ☐ I believe that formal procedures and policies restrict people.
- 6 ☐ I often find that actions based on feelings are as sound as those based on careful thought and analysis.
- 10 ☐ I actively seek out new experiences.
- 17 ☐ I'm attracted more to novel, unusual ideas than to practical ones.
- 23 ☐ I thrive on the challenge of tackling something new and different.
- 24 ☐ I enjoy fun-loving, spontaneous people.
- 32 ☐ I tend to be open about how I'm feeling.
- 34 ☐ I prefer to respond to events on spontaneous, flexible basis rather than plan things out in advance.
- 38 ☐ Quiet, thoughtful people tend to make me feel uneasy.
- 40 ☐ It is more important to enjoy the present moment than to think about the past or future.
- 43 ☐ In discussions I usually produce lots of spontaneous ideas.
- 45 ☐ More often than not, rules are there to be broken.
- 48 ☐ On balance I talk more than I listen.
- 58 ☐ I enjoy being the one that talks a lot.

- 64 ☐ When things go wrong I am happy to shrug it off and put it down to experience.
- 71 ☐ I find the formality of having specific objectives and plans stifling.
- 72 ☐ I'm usually one of the people who puts life into a party.
- 74 ☐ I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work.
- 79 ☐ I enjoy the drama and excitement of a crisis situation.

Of the crossed items indicate which are:

- A definitely not like you (ie you rarely, if ever, think or do this).
- B more marginal (ie sometimes like you but only in specific situations).

Mark crossed items with an A or B accordingly.

Now decide which items you most want to practise in order to develop your Activist style. It might be sensible to start with some of the B items since these are likely to be easier to tackle and get some early successes with. Whether you choose to go for A or B items or a mixture of the two, we strongly recommend that you focus on a maximum of three items. If you aim for more it is likely to prove too ambitious. The three items you select are best converted into your own words, rather than merely copying out the original wording from the questionnaire.

Write the items you most want to develop in the space below.

You have now reviewed and concluded. The next step is to plan some actions that will give you practice in developing your Activist style. Before planning these actions it is best to consider what is inhibiting you from being more Activist, which may include:

- fear of failure and of making mistakes
- fear of ridicule

- anxiety about trying new or unfamiliar things
- self-doubt, lacking self-confidence
- taking life very seriously.

One route is simply to choose an item you crossed and experiment with behaving that way on some occasions. This might, however, be too contrary to your preferred ways of thinking and behaving. If so, it might suit you to pick up one of the specific suggestions below.

The actions with which you plan to improve your Activist style must be feasible and specific. Clearly you are more likely to action the plan if you avoid flinging yourself in at the deep end; it is best to start in the shallow end and graduate to deeper water.

Depending on your starting point, some of the suggestions that follow might strike you as too ambitious. If so, you might like to break them down into smaller, more feasible steps. Since your development plans need to be tailor-made to suit your circumstances, we can only offer a variety of suggestions in the hope that they act as useful thought starters.

- Do something new, ie something that you have never done before, at least once each week. Visit a part of your organisation you have neglected, go jogging at lunch time, wear something outrageous to work one day, read an unfamiliar newspaper with very different views to your own, change the layout of your office, etc.
- Practise initiating conversations (especially 'small talk') with strangers. Select people at random from your internal telephone directory and go and talk to them. At large gatherings, conferences or parties, force yourself to initiate and sustain conversations with everyone present. In your spare time, go door to door canvassing for a cause of your choice.
- Deliberately fragment your day by chopping and changing activities each half hour. Make the switch as diverse as possible, for example, if you have had half an hour of cerebral activity, switch to doing something utterly routine and mechanical. If you have been sitting down, stand up. If you have been talking, keep quiet, and so on.
- Force yourself into the limelight. Volunteer whenever possible to chair meetings or give presentations. When you attend a meeting, set yourself the challenge of making a substantial contribution within 10 minutes of the start of the meeting. Get on a soapbox and make a speech at Speaker's Corner.
- Practise thinking aloud and on your feet. Set yourself a problem and bounce ideas off a colleague (see if, between you, you can generate 50 ideas in 10 minutes). Get some colleagues/friends to join in a game where you give each other topics and have to give an impromptu speech lasting at least 5 minutes.

How to Strengthen your Reflector Style

If you want to improve your Reflector style because your Reflector score was, say, 14 or less, the first task is to decide what aspects you would like to develop. A useful starting point is to do an analysis of the reflector LSQ items that you crossed. This is because crossed items indicate things you do not do, or do not believe in, and are therefore pointers to what you will need to practise.

Indicate on the list below which LSQ items you crossed.

- 7 ☐ I like the sort of work where I have time for thorough preparation and implementation.
- 13 ☐ I take pride in doing a thorough job.
- 15 ☐ I take care over the interpretation of data available to me and avoid jumping to conclusions.
- 16 ☐ I like to reach a decision carefully after weighing up many alternatives.
- 25 ☐ I pay meticulous attention to detail before coming to a conclusion.
- 28 ☐ I am careful not to jump to conclusions too quickly.
- 29 ☐ I prefer to have as many sources of information as possible - the more data to think over the better.
- 31 ☐ I listen to other people's points of view before putting my own forward.
- 33 ☐ In discussions I enjoy watching the manoeuvrings of the other participants.
- 36 ☐ It worries me if I have to rush out a piece of work to meet a tight deadline.
- 39 ☐ I often get irritated by people who want to rush things.
- 41 ☐ I think that decisions based on a thorough analysis of all the information are sounder than those based on intuition.
- 46 ☐ I prefer to stand back from a situation and consider all the perspectives.
- 52 ☐ I tend to discuss specific things with people rather than engaging in social discussion.
- 55 ☐ If I have a report to write I tend to produce lots of drafts before settling on the final version.

- 60 ☐ I like to ponder many alternatives before making up my mind.
- 62 ☐ In discussions I'm more likely to adopt a 'low profile' than to take the lead and do most of the talking.
- 66 ☐ It's best to think carefully before taking action.
- 67 ☐ On balance I do the listening rather than the talking.
- 76 ☐ I'm always interested to find out what people think.

Of the crossed items indicate which are:

- A definitely not like you (ie you rarely, if ever, think or do this).
- B more marginal (ie sometimes like you but only in specific situations).

Mark crossed items with an A or B accordingly.

Now decide which items you most want to practise in order to develop your Reflector style. It might be sensible to start with some of the B items since these are likely to be easier to tackle and get some early successes with. Whether you choose to go for A or B items or a mixture of the two, we strongly recommend that you focus on a maximum of three items. If you aim for more it is likely to prove too ambitious. The three items you select are best converted into your own words, rather than merely copying out the original wording from the questionnaire.

Write the items you most want to develop in the space below.

You have now *reviewed* and *concluded*. The next step is to *plan* some actions that will give you practice in developing your Reflector style. Before planning these actions it is best to consider what is inhibiting you from being more of a Reflector, which may include:

- being short of time to plan or think
- preferring to move quickly from one activity to another

- being impatient for action
- a reluctance to listen carefully and analytically
- a reluctance to write things down.

One route is simply to choose an item you crossed and experiment with behaving that way on some occasions. This might, however, be too contrary to your preferred ways of thinking and behaving. If so, it might suit you to pick up one of the specific suggestions below.

The actions with which you plan to improve your Reflector style must be feasible and specific. Clearly you are more likely to action the plan if you avoid flinging yourself in at the deep end; it is best to start in the shallow end and graduate to deeper water.

Depending on your starting point, some of the suggestions that follow might strike you as too ambitious. If so, you might like to break them down into smaller, more feasible steps. Since your development plans need to be tailor-made to suit your circumstances, we can only offer a variety of suggestions in the hope that they act as useful thought starters.

- Practise observing, especially at meetings where there are agenda items that do not directly involve you. Study people's behaviour. Keep records about who does the most talking, who interrupts whom, what triggers disagreements, how often the chairperson summarises and so on. Also study non-verbal behaviour. When do people lean forward and lean back? Count how many times people emphasise a point with a gesture. When do people fold their arms, look at their watches, chew their pens etc?
- Keep a diary and each evening write an account of what happened during the day. Reflect on the day's events and see if you can reach any conclusions from them. Record your conclusions in the diary.
- Practise reviewing after a meeting or event of some kind. Go back over the sequence of events identifying what went well and what could have gone better. If possible, record some conversations and play back the audio cassette at least twice, reviewing what happened in great detail. List lessons learned from this activity.
- Give yourself something to research, something that requires the painstaking gathering of data from different sources. Go to your local library and spend a few hours in the reference section.
- Practise producing highly polished pieces of writing. Give yourself essays to write on various topics (perhaps something you have researched). Write a report or paper about something. Draft watertight policy statements, agreements or procedures. When you have written something, put it aside for a week then force yourself to return to it and do a substantial rewrite.
- Practise drawing up lists for and against a particular course of action. Take a contentious issue and produce balanced arguments from both points of view. Whenever you are with people who want to rush into action, caution them to consider options and to anticipate the consequences.

How to Strengthen your Theorist Style

If you want to improve your Theorist style because your Theorist score was, say, 13 or less, the first task is to decide what aspects you would like to develop. A useful starting point is to do an analysis of the Theorist LSQ items that you crossed. This is because crossed items indicate things you do not do, or do not believe in, and are therefore pointers to what you will need to practise.

Indicate on the list below which LSQ items you crossed.

- 1 ☐ I have strong beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad.
- 3 ☐ I tend to solve problems using a step-by-step approach.
- 8 ☐ I regularly question people about their basic assumptions.
- 12 ☐ I am keen on self-discipline such as watching my diet, taking regular exercise, sticking to a fixed routine, etc.
- 14 ☐ I get on best with logical, analytical people and less well with spontaneous, 'irrational' people.
- 18 ☐ I don't like disorganised things and prefer to fit things into a coherent pattern.
- 20 ☐ I like to relate my actions to a general principle.
- 22 ☐ I tend to have distant, rather formal relationships with people at work.
- 26 ☐ I find it difficult to produce ideas on impulse.
- 30 ☐ Flippant people who don't take things seriously enough usually irritate me.
- 42 ☐ I tend to be a perfectionist.
- 47 ☐ I can often see inconsistencies and weaknesses in other people's arguments.
- 51 ☐ I believe that rational, logical thinking should win the day.
- 57 ☐ I am keen to reach answers via a logical approach.
- 61 ☐ In discussions with people I often find I am the most dispassionate and objective.

- 63 ☐ I like to be able to relate current actions to a longer term bigger picture.
- 68 ☐ I tend to be tough on people who find it difficult to adopt a logical approach.
- 75 ☐ I am keen on exploring the basic assumptions, principles and theories underpinning things and events.
- 77 ☐ I like meetings to be run on methodical lines, sticking to laid down agenda, etc.
- 78 ☐ I steer clear of subjective or ambiguous topics.

Of the crossed items indicate which are

A definitely not like you (ie you rarely, if ever, think or do this)

B more marginal (ie sometimes like you but only in specific situations)

Mark crossed items with an A or B accordingly.

Now decide which items you most want to practise in order to develop your Theorist style. It might be sensible to start with some of the B items since these are likely to be easier to tackle and get some early successes with. Whether you choose to go for A or B items or a mixture of the two, we strongly recommend that you focus on a maximum of three items. If you aim for more it is likely to prove too ambitious. The three items you select are best converted into your own words rather than merely copying out the original wording from the questionnaire.

Write the items you most want to develop in the space below.

You have now *reviewed* and *concluded*. The next step is to *plan* some actions that will give you practice in developing your Theorist style. Before planning these actions it is best to consider what is inhibiting you from being more of a Theorist, which may include:

- taking things at face value
- a preference for intuition and subjectivity
- a dislike of a structured approach to life
- giving high priority to fun/spontaneity.

One route is simply to choose an item you crossed and experiment with behaving that way on some occasions. This might, however, be too contrary to your preferred ways of thinking and behaving. If so, it might suit you to pick up one of the specific suggestions below.

The actions with which you plan to improve your Theorist style must be feasible and specific. Clearly you are more likely to action the plan if you avoid flinging yourself in at the deep end; it is best to start in the shallow end and graduate to deeper water.

Depending on your starting point, some of the suggestions that follow might strike you as too ambitious. If so, you might like to break them down into smaller, more feasible steps. Since your development plans need to be tailor-made to suit your circumstances, we can only offer a variety of suggestions in the hope that they act as useful thought starters.

- Read something 'heavy' and thought-provoking for at least 30 minutes each day. Try tackling a text book on management or read some philosophy. Whatever you elect to read, afterwards try to summarise it in your own words.
- Practise spotting inconsistencies/weaknesses in other people's arguments. Go through reports highlighting inconsistencies. Analyse organisation charts to discover overlaps and conflicts. Take two newspapers of different persuasions and regularly do a comparative analysis of the differences in their points of view.
- Take a complex situation and analyse it to pinpoint why it developed the way it did. What could have been done differently and at what stage? The situations could be historical or something drawn from current affairs, or something you have been involved in personally. You could, for example, do a detailed analysis of how you spend your time, or list the people you interact with, with what frequency and with what results.
- Collect other people's theories, hypotheses and explanations about events; they might be about environmental issues, theology, the natural sciences, human behaviour - anything providing it is a topic with many different, and preferably contradictory, theories. Try to understand the underlying assumptions each theory is based upon and see if you can group similar theories together.
- Practise structuring situations so that they are orderly and more certain to proceed in the way you predict. For example, plan a conference where delegates are going to work in different

groupings. Structure the timetable, the tasks, the plenary sessions. Or try structuring a meeting by having a clear purpose, an agenda and a planned beginning, middle and end.

- Practise asking probing questions – the sort of questions that get to the bottom of things. Refuse to be fobbed off with platitudes or vague answers. Particularly ask questions designed to find out precisely why something has occurred: "Why is absenteeism increasing?", "Why do more women than men smoke?", "What is the relationship between this problem and what happened last week?"

How to Strengthen your Pragmatist Style

If you want to improve your Pragmatist style because your Pragmatist score was, say, 14 or less, the first task is to decide what aspects you would like to develop. A useful starting point is to do an analysis of the Pragmatist LSQ items that you crossed. This because crossed items indicate things you do not do, or do not believe in, and are therefore pointers to what you will need to practise.

Indicate on the list below which LSQ items you crossed.

- 5 ☐ I have a reputation for saying what I think, simply and directly.
- 9 ☐ What matters most is whether something works in practice.
- 11 ☐ When I hear about a new idea or approach I immediately start working out how to apply it in practice.
- 19 ☐ I accept and stick to laid down procedures and policies so long as I regard them as an efficient way of getting the job done.
- 21 ☐ In discussions I like to get straight to the point.
- 27 ☐ I believe in coming to the point immediately.
- 35 ☐ I tend to be attracted to techniques such as network analysis, flow charts, branching programmes, contingency planning, etc.
- 37 ☐ I tend to judge people's ideas on their practical merits.
- 44 ☐ In meetings I put forward practical, realistic ideas.
- 49 ☐ I can often see better, more practical ways to get things done.
- 50 ☐ I think written reports should be short and to the point.
- 53 ☐ I like people who approach things realistically rather than theoretically.
- 54 ☐ In discussions I get impatient with irrelevancies and digressions.
- 56 ☐ I am keen to try things out to see if they work in practice.

- 59 ☐ In discussions I often find I am the realist, keeping people to the point and avoiding wild speculations.
- 65 ☐ I tend to reject wild, spontaneous ideas as being impractical.
- 69 ☐ Most times I believe the end justifies the means.
- 70 ☐ I don't mind hurting people's feelings so long as the job gets done.
- 73 ☐ I do whatever is expedient to get the job done.
- 80 ☐ People often find me insensitive to their feelings.

Of the crossed items indicate which are:

A definitely not like you (ie you rarely, if ever, think or do this).

B more marginal (ie sometimes like you but only in specific situations).

Mark crossed items with an A or B accordingly.

Now decide which items you most want to practise in order to develop your Pragmatist style. It might be sensible to start with some of the B items since these are likely to be easier to tackle and get some early successes with. Whether you choose to go for A or B items or a mixture of the two, we strongly recommend that you focus on a maximum of three items. If you aim for more it is likely to prove too ambitious. The three items you select are best converted into your own words, rather than merely copying out the original wording from the questionnaire.

Write the items you most want to develop in the space below.

You have now *reviewed* and *concluded*. The next step is to *plan* some actions that will give you practice in developing your Pragmatist style. Before planning these actions it is best to consider what is inhibiting you from being more of a Pragmatist, which may include:

- a preference for perfect (rather than practical) solutions to problems
- seeing even useful techniques as oversimplifications or gimmicks
- enjoying interesting diversions (and being side-tracked)
- leaving things open-ended rather than committing to specific action
- believing that someone else's ideas will not work in your situation.

One route is simply to choose an item you crossed and experiment with behaving that way on some occasions. This might, however, be too contrary to your preferred ways of thinking and behaving. If so, it might suit you to pick up one of the suggestions below.

The actions with which you plan to improve your Pragmatist style must be feasible and specific. Clearly you are more likely to action the plan if you avoid flinging yourself in at the deep end; it is best to start in the shallow end and graduate to deeper water.

Depending on your starting point, some of the suggestions that follow might strike you as too ambitious. If so, you might like to break them down into smaller, more feasible steps. Since your development plans need to be tailor-made to suit your circumstances, we can only offer a variety of suggestions in the hope that they act as useful thought starters.

- Collect techniques, ie practical ways of doing things. The techniques can be about anything potentially useful to you. They might be analytical techniques such as critical path analysis or cost benefit analysis. They might be interpersonal techniques drawn from Transactional Analysis, NLP, or assertiveness/presentation techniques. They might be timesaving techniques or statistical techniques, or techniques to improve your memory, cope with stress or reduce your blood pressure!
- In meetings and discussions of any kind (progress meetings, problem solving meetings, planning meetings, appraisals, negotiations, sales calls, etc) concentrate on producing action plans. Make it a rule never to emerge from a meeting or discussion without a list of actions either for yourself or for others or both. The action plans should be specific and include a deadline (eg "I will produce a report for my manager by 31st May", "Bill will produce a 2-page paper listing alternative bonus schemes by 1st June").
- Make opportunities to experiment with some of your newfound techniques. Try them out in practice. If your experiment involves other people then tell them openly that you are conducting an experiment and explain the technique that is about to be tested. (This reduces embarrassment if, in the event, the technique is a flop!) Choose the time and place for your experiments. Avoid situations where a lot is at stake and where the risks of failure are unacceptably high. Experiment in routine settings with people whose aid or support you can enlist.

- Study techniques that other people use and then model yourself on them. Pick up techniques from your boss, your boss's boss, your colleagues, your subordinates, visiting salespeople, interviewers on television, politicians, actors and actresses, your next door neighbour. When you discover something they do well – emulate them.
- Subject yourself to scrutiny from 'experts' so that they can watch your technique and coach you in how to improve it. For example, get an accomplished presenter to give you feedback on your presentation techniques. It's the equivalent of having a coaching session with a golfing professional.
- Tackle a 'do-it-yourself' project – it doesn't matter if you aren't good with your hands. Pragmatists are practical and, if only for practice purposes, DIY activities help to develop a practical outlook. Renovate a piece of furniture, put up a shelf. At work, calculate your own statistics once in a while instead of relying on a printout, do your own organisation and methods study, go and visit the shop floor in search of practical problems to solve. Learn to type or word process, learn a foreign language.

Section 9: Getting Help and Support from Others

Other people such as your manager, immediate colleagues or mentor (if you have one) can be especially helpful when:

- you have completed and scored your questionnaire and want to check whether other people have useful views on your approach to learning
- you want to make decisions about the kind of learning activities you should seek and get feedback on how you are using learning opportunities
- you want help/support with strengthening an under-utilised learning style.

Checking your Score

Obviously the checking process is best done by someone who both knows you well and understands learning styles, but the latter is not essential. The most detailed and useful approach is to ask someone to do the questionnaire about you. If there are substantial differences in your perceptions, as shown in the total scores, then it is worth going over the individual questions to check the differences in detail and the reasons for them.

Your immediate manager may be best equipped to do this and it may lead to extra benefits in developing your learning interactions. However, you may be more comfortable asking a colleague to share their perceptions with you. You could ask a domestic partner, but there may well be some major differences in your behaviour at home as opposed to your behaviour whilst at work!

Deciding on Learning Activities

Your questionnaire results can be used to help you choose which learning activities to undertake. Your manager or training adviser could assist you with this in two ways. They could help to check that any association you make between your style and an activity is accurate: are you right to assume that a particular course would give you insufficient scope as, say, a strong Reflector? Secondly, they could help to point you in the direction of opportunities that make use of your strengths or assist you to develop your weaknesses. You can then set out what you will do – perhaps in a personal development plan.

As with many things in life, the distance between planning to do something and actually achieving it can be substantial.

The role of the helper here can be to encourage you to act, to discuss opportunities and to help you by giving you feedback. You should be selective and ask them to watch for particular things. They should not be asked "How well do you think I am learning?" Ask instead "What did you think about my response to that situation? Did I...?".

Strengthening a Style

Your manager and/or colleagues can be supportive as you struggle to increase the use of an underdeveloped learning style. In addition to providing you with feedback, they could help more practically by encouraging you to experiment. For example, if you wanted to practise being more of an Activist, they could allow you to take the lead in a brainstorming session or if you wanted to practise being more of a Reflector, they could support your attempts to have, say, ten minutes per day as ring-fenced reflection time.

Clearly, if this sort of help is to be forthcoming, you will need to be open about the learning style you are seeking to enhance. The best of all possible worlds is if you have a colleague or colleagues who are also intent on expanding their repertoire of learning styles. This can lead to a mutually supportive atmosphere that everyone can enjoy and learn from.

Understanding the Sort of Help you are likely to get/not get from your Manager

Managers have learning style preferences too! The help and support they are likely to provide will vary depending on their preferences. On the next few pages are lists to help you appreciate the sort of help you can expect.

The Activist Manager

Activist managers 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 through 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.

The Reflector Manager

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 a problem can be analysed
- discussing what may happen and reviewing what has happened
- providing data or feedback in a controlled learning environment
- advising how to prepare carefully for a management activity
- not taking a dominant role in meetings with employees
- emphasising 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, eg sudden delegation of a task
- giving immediate answers to unexpected requests for direct help
- providing a large-scale view of philosophy, concept, system or policy
- providing a strong personal model of anything except Reflector behaviour.

The Theorist Manager

Theorist managers will tend to help by:

- showing interest in any 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
- bringing out complexities
- aiming for clarity of structure or purpose
- articulating theories, eg Open Systems Theory, or Theory X and Theory Y
- generalising reasons why something works or does not work
- setting high standards for quality of data.

Theorist managers will be less likely to provide help through:

- 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, eg 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.

The Pragmatist Manager

Pragmatist managers will tend to help by:

- showing responsiveness to new ideas and techniques
- demonstrating 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, eg on appraisals or releasing people for courses
- following specific suggestions on how to improve learning.

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 programmes 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, eg seminars by "people who don't understand our industry/organisation/problems".

Clearly, if managers know what kinds of learning activities they are not likely to provide themselves, they may be (and of course in terms of responsibility ought to be) at least responsive to suggestions outside their own style. The best managers will actively seek to fill in the gaps by using other people and resources.