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Stand out by developing 6 senses

Article by Julie Surycz

The work force has traditionally been dominated by analytical, details focused left brain thinkers. The 21st century work place is demanding these skills and more.

The right brain is rising ... The whole brain is needed.

Article at a glance

Globalization, material abundance and sophisticated technology have forced us into a new age. The Conceptual Age values qualities that cannot be sent to Asia to do cheaply or given to a computer to do more accurately and faster. Meaning, symphony, empathy, play, design and story are the right brain tools for you to master so you can widen career prospects and craft an enduring organisation.

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What do these people have in common?

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|-----------------------|--|
| Steve Jobs | - Co-founder, chairman and CEO of Apple Inc |
| Walt Disney | - Film producer, director, screenwriter, actor, animator |
| Thomas Edison | - Invented the light bulb |
| Pablo Picasso | - 20th century artist and co-founder of the Cubist movement |
| William Hewlett | - Co-founder of the Hewlett-Packard Company |
| Albert Einstein | - Physicist and inventor of the 'Theory of Relativity' |
| Leonardo Da Vinci | - Architect, musician, painter, inventor, engineer, sculptor |
| Sir Richard Branson | - Founder of the Virgin group |
| Sir Winston Churchill | - British prime minister during World War 2 |
| Alexander Graham Bell | - Scientist, innovator and inventor of the telephone |
| Henry Ford | - Founder of the Ford Motor Company |
| Steven Spielberg | - Film producer and director |
| Ted Turner | - Founder of CNN |

They are all dyslexic.

'Dyslexics think differently. They are intuitive and excel at problem-solving, seeing the big picture and simplifying ... They are poor rote learners, but inspired visionaries,' says Sally Shaywitz, who is a neuroscientist and dyslexia specialist at Yale University.

Dyslexia is a learning disability that occurs at all levels of intelligence. Dyslexic people battle with written language, especially reading and spelling. Some sufferers even have brain damage on the language areas of the left hemisphere of their brain.

There is something about the way these dyslexics used their brain that we can emulate in order to prepare ourselves better for the future, the Conceptual Age.

The dyslexic advantage

The brain contains about 100 billion cells. Together these cells form a network of one quadrillion (1,000,000,000,000,000) connections which control our central nervous system. Even though the brain is so intricate and complex, the basic structure is fairly simple and astoundingly symmetrical.

Both halves of the brain - the left and right - are crucial for human reasoning and they both play a role in helping us to live balanced, healthy lives. However, certain halves of the brain are more active than others when we perform certain functions.

If the left side of your brain were a conscientious accountant, the right side would be an eccentric artist. The left hemisphere is logical, sequential, objective, analytical, details-focused and literal. The right side processes information simultaneously, is more creative, subjective, focuses on the big picture and interprets the context and non-verbal clues of communication. The left side analyses and the right side synthesises.

Dyslexics struggle with left brain thinking. So, they tend to compensate for this weakness by developing stronger abilities in right brain thinking. What they lose in the

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left side, they make up for in the right side.

In order to prepare ourselves for the future we, like the dyslexics I listed, need to develop our right brain thinking more. Our future depends on it. In his book 'A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers will Rule the Future', Daniel Pink talks about how left brain-directed thinking is still necessary but it is no longer sufficient.

He says:

We are moving from an economy and society built on logical, linear, computer-like capabilities of the Information Age to an economy and society built on the inventive, empathetic, big picture capabilities of what's rising in its place - the Conceptual Age.

Left brain thinking used to be the driver and right-brain-style thinking the passenger. Now, right-directed thinking is suddenly grabbing the wheel, stepping on the gas, and determining where we're going and how we'll get there.

What is pushing us towards the new Conceptual Age?

Three things are pushing us towards the Conceptual Age - Abundance, Asia and Automation.

1. Abundance

In the developed world, we have a standard of living that our forefathers could never have imagined. Read any history book and you will see their lives consisted of toil, physical labour and struggle for survival.

Of course there is still poverty and suffering in the world but generally, we live a good and abundant life. We have a wealth of material possessions. Do you have more than one cell phone? Do you own a car? A house? Many people have Google at their fingertips and live on instants - instant entertainment, instant information and instant gratification.

As our material desires are satisfied, so our non-material ones creep to the surface. The investment banker Ken Costa says, 'We are long on knowledge, but short on wisdom'. Pink believes meaning is becoming the new money. Price and quality of a product no longer guarantee its sales. Companies have to look beyond that to a new differentiator - innovative design, aesthetics, beauty, being emotionally compelling and establishing a rapport with customers that targets both their heads and hearts.

Wealth of the future will come from creativity and ingenious, cutting-edge innovations. These demand more right brain thinking.

2. Asia

Your job is not guaranteed if someone in China or India can do it cheaper. So, what skills will make you marketable and build your career in the future? Factory based, mass production activities of the past did not demand intensive right brain skills. Right brain skills such as interpreting and synthesising complex information, understanding the big picture, communicating effectively and developing strategic

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relationships will be invaluable in the future because these skills cannot be outsourced or moved offshore.

3. Automation

A computer can now do jobs that are repetitive, routine and rules-based. You should focus on developing new skills that a computer does not have. Daniel Pink says, 'The future belongs to different kind of person with different kind of mind - creators, empathizers, pattern recognizers and meaning makers.'

How do we develop right brain capabilities?

In order to stand out in the Conceptual Age, you should focus on developing your six right brain senses - design, symphony, story, meaning, empathy and play. It should not be that difficult because you have these qualities in you already. Just bring them to the fore. They are natural, inherently human characteristics that are within our reach.

1. Design

'At Sony, we assume that all products of our competitors have basically the same technology, price, performance, and features,' says former Chairman Norio Ohga, 'Design is the only thing that differentiates one product from another in the marketplace.'

Today, you can't simply create something functional. You have to create something special, something significant. Apple's differentiator is their beautiful, creative electronic canvas. Think of the car industry - it is no longer sufficient to only focus on function. That is a given. Creative, innovative design is more likely to capture the market's attention.

You cannot outsource creativity and innovative thinking. Develop it. Encourage it.

2. Story

Have you ever wondered who the president of Mongolia is? Do a search on Google and, in an instant, you will find over forty web sites on Nambaryn Enkhbayar. We can get facts easily but creating context and emotional impact is more difficult.

When you relate facts in the context of something else and create a compelling story, people seem to understand better. Psychologists and teachers encourage parents to read to children to stimulate their imagination, creativity and understanding. But it should not stop there. Adults need stories to help them understand complex information - the parables of Jesus are a classic example. The best way to communicate and persuade is by telling a compelling story. The future business world is demanding the ability to capture emotion and context and explain complexity with simplicity.

3. Symphony

You need to understand the big picture like a conductor of an orchestra who synthesises individual instruments into a powerful, resounding musical piece. This skill comes from the right hemisphere of the brain.

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4. Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand what it is like to be in someone else's position. The medical field is an example of a profession that is realising it takes more than technical skills and logic to be a good doctor or nurse. The ones who stand out are compassionate, establish a rapport with patients, actively listen and understand people.

5. Play

Play is about joyfulness, humour and laughter. Southwest Airlines is renowned for their fun, relaxed, motivated work force and success in the competitive aviation industry. Herb Kelleher, former Chairman of Southwest Airlines, believed people rarely succeed at anything unless they have fun doing it. Southwest Airlines is one of the world's most profitable airlines and in 2008, it posted a profit for the 35th consecutive year.

6. Meaning

Our abundant lifestyle has allowed us to focus more on meaning and purpose. The psychiatrist Viktor Frankl said, 'People have enough to live, but nothing to live for. They have the means, but no meaning.' The new generation, the Millennials, who are entering the workforce, are demanding both meaning and money in their jobs. Striving for meaning and purpose energises the right brain.

The Age of Heart and Art

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2. Daniel H Pink A whole new mind: Why right brainers will rule the future Marshall Cavendish 2008



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TomorrowToday Ltd

www.tomorrowtoday.uk.com

info@tomorrowtoday.uk.com

+44 20 8274 3000

+44 7525 160 964

