



Welcome

This month we have some feedback from delegates on the March Thinking Styles Masterclass, an interesting case study from Aberdeen Business School detailing how Thinking Styles is being used to improve the quality of student's thinking, and some insights into the Kilimanjaro climb that raised more than £3 million for Comic Relief.

Contents

- 1 Reflections on the Thinking Styles Masterclass
- 2 Future 2009 Accreditation dates for Thinking Styles
3. How stupid are Business School students?
4. Climbing Kilimanjaro for Comic Relief

1 Reflections on the Thinking Styles Masterclass

"A great day!" "Interesting and useful"
"Passionate and knowledgeable presenters" "Excellent"
"Insights gave the day richness" "Inspiring"
"Some self-awareness moments"

This is just some of the feedback we received after our recent Thinking Styles Masterclass.

People relished the opportunity to share their experiences and expertise on using Thinking Styles and to network with other managers, coaches and consultants.

We were particularly grateful to Caroline Harvey of Inspire Beyond and Moira Bailey from Robert Gordon University who shared their experiences of using Thinking Styles within BT and a business school environment. Moira's case study is summarised in this newsletter.

We are intending to run future Masterclasses in a one-day conference format. If you have any specific areas that you would like us to cover, please let us know via info@cognitivefitness.co.uk

2 Future Accreditation dates for Thinking Styles

If you would like to become Accredited to use Thinking Styles yourself, the dates for the Accreditation Workshops in 2009 are:

- 9th / 10th June
- 22nd / 23rd September
- 8th / 9th December

For more information about the format and outcomes of the Accreditation Workshop, please contact us on info@cognitivefitness.co.uk

3 How 'stupid' are Business School students?

Well, the answer of course is that they're not stupid at all. Having said that though, one of the major headaches for college and university tutors is how to stop students from only thinking in straight lines and then stopping dead when they reach their first difficulty or mental set of red traffic lights! What I mean of course, is that a student's learning experience is like a car journey the tutor can give the students a map which shows the lay of the land, major landmarks, trunk roads, roundabouts, side roads and dead ends, but what students these days really want is sat. nav! They want to be lazy learners. Learners who, rather than having an ordnance survey perspective of their educational and intellectual journey, just want to be told, "in 200 yards, turn right".

'Sat Nav' learning, (a "tabula rasa", empty vessel approach to learning), doesn't teach students to be independent and flexible thinkers who can think their way out of a problem or round an obstacle. But we have a tool that can. Its name is Thinking Styles. So, can Thinking Styles help students to become more 'intelligent', more reflective in their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and show significant improvements in the quality of their thinking?

As part of the recent Thinking Styles Masterclass, Moira Bailey of Aberdeen Business School, shared her experiences of using Thinking Styles as the catalyst for enhancing student self-awareness and developing cognitive flexibility, both in a learning environment and at work.



Garthdee Campus, Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University.

Originally Moira had wanted to use the CIPD* Thinking Performer competences as an integral part of the CPD programme she was developing, but quickly realised that achieving the CIPD competences would require a high degree of cognitive flexibility and reflection from her students - neither of which are easy for students to achieve, until they have the tools to do so.



So Moira decided to use Thinking Styles and our free Cognitive Fitness Questionnaire web site to help students to develop their individual Personal Development Plans (PDPs). She found that not only did Thinking Styles help students to increase their awareness of their own thinking style preferences, it also led to a significant improvement in their ability to focus on the critical elements of their own PDPs. Moreover, other course tutors reported a marked increase in the quality and flexibility of the students' thinking, - which surprised them! (It didn't of course surprise us or Moira).

One of the key learning points that came from this project is the need for all students - and all learners in fact, to develop their Cognitive Fitness and their cognitive flexibility and if you would like to learn more about this click [here](#). Moira has therefore incorporated Thinking Styles and the Cognitive Fitness Questionnaire into all of her undergraduate and post-graduate student programmes, with an emphasis on increasing student's cognitive versatility and agility.

Moira Bailey is a lecturer in Human Resource Management at the Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University. She was working with in-post, part-time MSc Human Resource Management students and currently employed, part-time engineering graduates.

If you would like to be kept updated about Moira's work with her students, please let us know.

* *Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development*

4 Climbing Kilimanjaro for Comic Relief

How many of us could watch the "Kilimanjaro 9" climb the highest peak in Africa at 19,330 ft, raising over £3 million for Comic Relief, and not fail to be impressed by their tremendous achievement?

Not only by the physical levels of fitness and stamina they had to demonstrate in order to reach the summit, but also by the sheer force of will shown by every member of the team in order for them to overcome back pain, altitude sickness and sheer exhaustion.



Our 3 Peaks of Leadership explores the relationship between someone's mental fitness and resilience, their physical fitness and energy levels and their ability to balance their focus on both the task and the people to help everyone perform under pressure.

Watching the Kilimanjaro 9, it struck us that each and every one of them had to develop their own emotional intelligence and mental toughness whilst learning to work together as a team in order to climb and conquer the mountain. At varying times each of them had to become the leader and role model, encouraging the others through humour, empathy and song to go beyond their physical and emotional pain barriers so that the entire team could complete the task.

Our 3 Peaks of Leadership are Cognitive Fitness, Operational Fitness and Physical Fitness. Each one of these 3 Peaks of Leadership is critical for success. Without Physical Fitness you cannot manage your own energy levels effectively and cope with stressful situations at work. Without Cognitive Fitness you cannot develop the mental flexibility and mental toughness that you need to maintain a positive mental attitude and the sense of humour you will need to get yourself and the rest of your team through difficult times. Without Operational Fitness you cannot effectively mobilise the resources you have and keep the balance of priorities between your task and your people.

The Kilimanjaro 9 showed us that within any worthwhile objective there will be situations when every one has to step up to the platform and become the leader, supporting the others and taking responsibility for the team. Do you think that you have the levels of physical, mental and operational fitness required to be able to do this now, at work, in your current role? If not, is developing them going to be critical to your, or your organisation's success?

If you would like us to talk to you about how the 3 Peaks of Leadership could make a difference to your future career in your organisation or if you would like to participate in our own mountain climbing challenge on our 3 Peaks Leadership Development Programme, then please e-mail us at:

info@3peaksleadership.co.uk

or call the Programme Director, Fiona Beddoes-Jones on 01476 861010.