

# Brain Gain

Achieve top performance.



by Deanna Phelps, Stephen Hager, and Monty Miller

NEUROSCIENCE MAY BE THE KEY TO lead more effectively and unleash your power. Every brain is “wired” differently based on genetics, learning and experience. NeuroScience focuses on leveraging sensory and cognitive strengths to achieve top performance.

Using neuroscience, you can experience the “unrecognized solutions” to long-term problems and opportunities.

**Identifying the recognized problems.** Picture the costly problems that plague you today. Then go back 10 years. How many past challenges are still current problems? What’s on your list?

**Approaches to the problems.** What models, programs and assessments have you used to address your recognized problems and opportunities?

1. **Models, principles and programs:** Many durable principles, processes, and practices of personal human development have established the foundation for business, leadership and organizational development. Mental models survive and create culture when they yield the desired outcomes while retaining motivated, productive, and fulfilled workers. How effective have these models and programs been in solving your recognized problems?

2. **Psychology and assessments:** Assessments and tests measure personalities, behaviors, skills, competencies, intelligences, values, compatibilities, “team players” and “sales types.” These tools engender respect for the uniqueness and diversity of the workforce and help us understand ourselves and others. How effective have these tools been in addressing your recognized problems?

Do you perceive a gap to be bridged? What’s missing may be the *unrecognized solution* to your recognized problems.

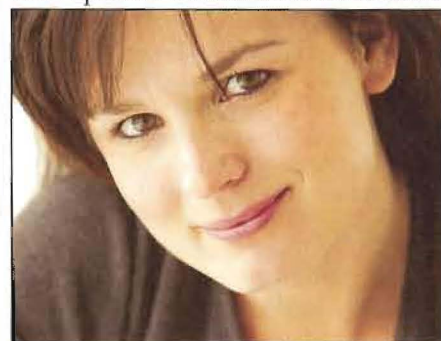
## Seven Principles

Seven principles impact how your brain is wired and how you perform.

1. **Sensory and cognitive thinking strengths are unique and diverse.**

Sensory information enters through five senses—sight (visual), touch/movement (kinesthetic), sound (auditory), smell and taste. The first three are reliably and accurately measured. To remember, make decisions and perform, two sensory modalities (usually your strongest ones) are required.

Sensory mode sequences (example: Kinesthetic, Visual and then Auditory) determine what you pay most attention to. Score intensities indicate levels of awareness and attention given to each sensory mode. Stored sensory information is the basis of memory and ability to think, solve problems, make decisions, express and perform in work and pleasure. Cognitive thinking is “how” you process sensory information in two hemispheres. The neocortex (thinking brain) has two hemispheres separated by a bundle of nerves (corpus callosum), the communication bridge between hemispheres. The *left brain* is the logical side that provides order, realism, sequence, and timeliness. The *right brain* operates thousands of times faster



and provides new ideas, possibilities, options, innovation, and systemic big-picture thinking. Most people have a clear preference or neuron pathways for either sequential (left) or global (right) thinking. Some people are integrated or more whole-brained; they use both hemispheres equally to stay engaged.

2. **Sensory and cognitive thinking modes get stronger with use.** Your brain contains 100 billion neurons—the building blocks for your unique neuron pathways that affect memory, performance, and decision-making. Taking in sensory information and thinking about it (cognitive thinking) builds a neuro-network. All modes get stronger through conscious use.

3. **Work and life activities have neuro-sensory and cognitive signatures.** Identifying the neuro-sensory and cognitive “signatures” of what needs to be achieved is the basis to align neuroscience strengths to tasks, assignments and projects. *Sensory modes:* Visual—proof reading, assessing data, quality

control observations, reading instructions, visual arts; Kinesthetic—hands-on activities, operating equipment, physical action and movement; Auditory—listening, asking and answering questions seeking clarity, crafting language, hearing tone of voice, lyrics. *Cognitive thinking modes:* Sequential—analysis, timeliness, orderliness, logic, process and procedures, tactical; Global—open-ended, options and possibilities, systemic, exploratory, designing, ideating, strategic; Integrated: a combination of Sequential and Global activities.

4. **Physical environments affect productivity.** Each sensory and cognitive thinking mode operates best in its ideal physical environment for enhanced efficiency and performance. This principle applies to all modes, regardless of preference or strength. These environments maximize productivity based on the nature of work to be completed.

5. **Effective communication and accelerated learning are connected to strengths.** When you receive information through neuroscience strengths, (strongest sensory and cognitive thinking preferences), you understand more in less time, making more time available for productive work or pleasure. When learning resources and teaching methods are aligned with your neuroscience strengths, accelerated learning occurs.

6. **Sensory creative modes and blind spots are two sides of the same coin.** The sensory mode you pay least attention to is both your “creative mode” and “blind spot.” Your “creative mode” is the portal to “breakthrough thinking” and new insights. Simple methods permit you to access stored information. Awareness of your “blind spots” helps avoid costly mistakes. On teams, people’s strengths cover each others’ “blind spots.”

7. **Stress reduces brain function.** When you’re under high stress (worry, anxiety, tired, frustration), your brain becomes less resourceful and defaults to its strongest sensory and thinking mode. Two of your three sensory modes and your least preferred cognitive mode operate at lower levels or shut down. Awareness of neuroscience strengths, how your brain functions under stress and methods to bring the brain back online, reduces errors and accidents.

Alignment of your strengths with what you know and have to do is the *unrecognized solution* to most recognized problems and opportunities. PE

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**ACTION:** Recognize your strengths.