

**"A must read for everyone who wants to apply their whole selves in whatever they do."
—JIM KOUZES, COAUTHOR OF *THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE***

Unlocking the
Power of Whole
Brain Thinking
in Organizations,
Teams, and
Individuals



The Whole Brain Business Book

SECOND EDITION

Ned Herrmann and Ann Herrmann-Nehdi

Contents

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION	xi
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xiii
INTRODUCTION	1

PART 1

THE WHOLE BRAIN FRAMEWORK

CHAPTER 1	Every Business Runs on Thinking	5
CHAPTER 2	Making Sense of Thinking: A Practical Organizing Principle for Business	15
CHAPTER 3	Getting Smart About Work: Your Thinking Preferences, Your Competencies, and Your Career	27
CHAPTER 4	What You Need to Know So You Can Grow: Become a Whole Brain® Thinker	45
CHAPTER 5	Expect Difference, and Then Take Advantage of It!	61
CHAPTER 6	Getting More Satisfaction from Work: Why “Smart” is Relative	77

PART 2

WHERE THINKING MEETS THE BOTTOM LINE

CHAPTER 7	Becoming a Thinking Manager : How to Get Results from Cognitive Differences	101
CHAPTER 8	Communicating Across Thinking Styles: How to Break Through the Mental Static	123
CHAPTER 9	Getting Work Done: Motivating, Delegating and Managing in All Directions	137
CHAPTER 10	Productivity Through Fit: Individual, Job, and Assignment Alignment	149

CHAPTER 11	Growing Yourself and Others: Developing, Coaching, and Mentoring with Thinking and Learning in Mind	161
CHAPTER 12	Teams that Work: Getting Advantage from Difference	175
CHAPTER 13	Influencing, Getting Buy-In, and Connecting with Your Customers: Thinking Behind the Pitch	191

PART 3

LEADING THE WAY THROUGH BUSINESS COMPLEXITIES

CHAPTER 14	Whole Brain Leadership: The Secret to Thriving in Today's World	203
CHAPTER 15	Making Vision and Values Actionable: How to Align Any Business for Optimum Performance	213
CHAPTER 16	The Essential Shift to Strategic Thinking: Making Strategic Planning Pay Off	229
CHAPTER 17	Reorganization That Really Works: Energizing for Breakthrough Business Outcomes	241
CHAPTER 18	Dealing with Disruption: When Business Adversity, Risk, or Crisis Strikes	251
CHAPTER 19	Making Change Work: How to Break Through the Mindset Barrier	261
CHAPTER 20	How CEOs Think and Lead: Insights from Research on CEOs Around the World	273

PART 4

TAPPING INTO BREAKTHROUGH THINKING

CHAPTER 21	Increasing Business Creativity and Innovation—Head First	293
CHAPTER 22	Getting Business Results from Creative Thinking	311
CHAPTER 23	Want Enterprisewide Innovation? Make Creativity a Core Competency for Every Job Across the Business	331

PART 5

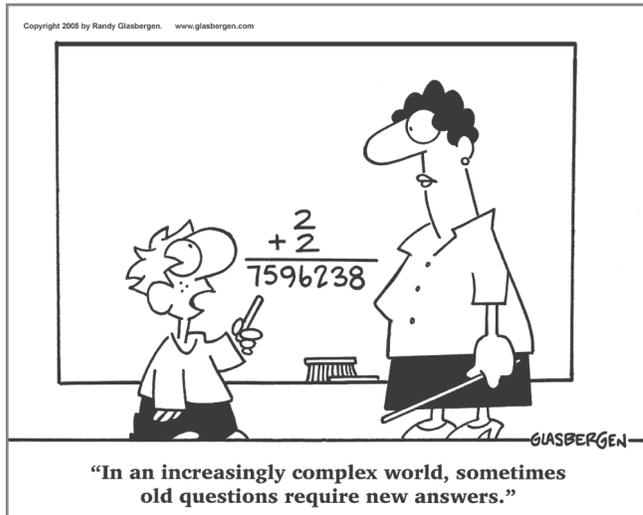
PERSONAL GROWTH THROUGH WHOLE BRAIN® THINKING

CHAPTER 24	Stretching Your Thinking and Overcoming Mental Blind Spots	347
CHAPTER 25	Entrepreneurial Thinking: What It Is, Why You Need It, and How to Develop It	361
CHAPTER 26	Breaking Down the Barriers to Whole Brain Growth	377
AFTERWORD		387
APPENDIX A	HBDI Profile Interpretation Guide	389
NOTES		391
INDEX		399

For a list of figures that appear in this book, please go to www.wholebrainbusinessbook.com



Introduction



Perhaps you’ve found yourself in a situation where you’ve been stuck, frustrated, out of ideas, caught off guard by change, struggling with communication, or challenged by dealing with “difficult” team members, colleagues, or customers.

Or maybe you’ve wondered:

How do I get my team to be more productive?

How do I grow as a leader in a rapidly changing environment?

What’s blocking my organization from implementing the changes we need?

Why is it that we have all the right people and pieces in place, but we just can’t seem to get the results we want?

Why isn’t my organization more innovative and creative?

What you may not realize is that these kinds of issues often have a common root cause: thinking. And that’s why the skill of Whole Brain Thinking, which you’ll learn in this book, has become so important.

With the complexity of today’s business environment, you and your organization can’t afford to be held up by communication breakdowns, poorly functioning teams, or leaders who don’t have the necessary vision and agility to cut through the chaos and get results. You can’t compete successfully if you’re being consistently

outpaced by change or stuck in a rut of lackluster ideas. And you certainly can't afford to waste time, talent, and resources.

The challenges are daunting, but this book will show you that the answers are all available to you, waiting to be unleashed. It all starts with thinking.

Every business runs on thinking. The purpose of this book is to provide you with a better understanding of how thinking affects your results *and the tools you need to improve them*, whether you're an individual contributor or leading a team, or whether you're in a small to midsize business or a large global organization. We don't always know how others think, but this book will help you understand the implications of different thinking preferences (including your own) and then show you easy ways to build up your thinking agility so that you can work more effectively with others who think differently and leverage the best thinking around you to avoid costly delays, missed opportunities, and other business risks.

But more than that, you'll rediscover the full power and potential of your own thinking. This book will show you not only how to fully capitalize on your thinking, but also how to break out of your mental defaults so that you can reach new levels of success. In a complex world, that mental dexterity has never been more critical.

In a sense, many individuals and organizations have been taking the long way to results because they haven't adapted their thinking to today's realities. This book will put you on the fast track. As one executive remarked, "If only I had known this years ago. It would have saved me so much time and frustration!"

No matter what your goals are, getting smarter about your thinking will help you reach them faster, more efficiently, and more effectively. This book will help you understand that it's not just *what* you think, it's *how* you think that makes a difference. It will open up your eyes to the full "brain trust" that's available to you and show you how to tap into it and expand your own thinking capacity to optimize what you're doing, get more creative, get more efficient, and get better results.

What to Expect in These Pages

There has been an explosion of information about the brain and business since the first edition of this book was published. But in the midst of all this information—from the plethora of studies and books to the emergence of new "neuro" application fields to the significant research headlines that we read and hear about daily—there remains a need for real-world, how-does-this-apply-and-how-can-I-use-it-to-get-results practicality that is often missing from the more academic discussions and advice. This book keeps the subject

down to earth, relevant, and actionable. You won't be reading about complex theories or vague philosophies; you'll be learning practical, proven models and techniques and workable solutions to optimize your performance and improve your business.

The Whole Brain Business Book explores the core business issues that organizations in every industry and of every size and geographic scope are dealing with today. It's divided into sections that answer the following questions:

1. How does my thinking affect my performance, and how can I become more of a Whole Brain thinker?
2. How do I use my whole brain to better harness cognitive diversity: to manage, lead, collaborate with, communicate with, align, and influence people with different thinking preferences?
3. How can I be more agile, strategic, and effective as a leader in today's complex world, and what can I learn from how CEOs think?
4. In an actionable, practical sense, how do I unleash creative and strategic thinking to drive innovation at an individual, team, and organizational level?
5. What steps can I take to continue to learn, grow, evolve, and develop my thinking?

You can read the chapters in sequence to get the full view, or you can dive into a specific chapter or section that focuses on a burning challenge that you're currently facing. Along with a multitude of real-life examples from companies, products, and people that you will immediately recognize, you'll get specific techniques you can use to strategically focus your organization's thinking directly on your key business challenges, or to expand your own thinking skills in individual performance areas. Each chapter concludes with a snapshot summary of key points along with next-step tips to help you put the concepts into action.

The Power of Whole Brain Thinking: A Growing Legacy

This edition of Ned Herrmann's groundbreaking book on the application of Whole Brain Thinking to business is rich with anecdotes from Ned's remarkable journey from management development at General Electric to pioneering researcher, author, and thought leader in the field.

Ned Herrmann died in 1999, but his legacy continues. The concepts, foundation, and spirit of the original edition, including Ned's unique voice, remain, augmented with up-to-date cases, new applications, and new business issues

that have emerged over the past several decades. Examples of the payoffs of Whole Brain Thinking are abundant in the business press, and the benefits have been applied successfully in the world of academia as well. Colleges and universities like Wharton, Stanford, and MIT are using these concepts in engineering, executive education, MBA programs, and a variety of innovative programs. In corporate learning and development, an entire discipline of Whole Brain application, design, and delivery continues to grow in nine out of ten of the Fortune 100 and a wide range of small and midsize organizations across the globe. This fully updated book builds on the now decades of concrete examples provided by the team that is carrying on the work today, led by Ned's daughter, Ann Herrmann-Nehdi, and recently joined by his grandson, Karim Nehdi. The result is proven tools that you can *put to use immediately*, without needing a PhD in neuroscience.

Around the world, thousands of professionals are applying Whole Brain Thinking across a wide range of applications, from the classroom to the boardroom. Every day, they are proving Ned's conviction: with better thinking comes better results.

It's your brain—learn to use it better than you ever have!

PART 1

The Whole Brain Framework



ELECTRONICS



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“Can you recommend a GPS device to help me avoid the dead-end streets and locate the shortcuts on the Road to Success?”

CHAPTER 1

Every Business Runs on Thinking

CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- > Because every business runs on its thinking, optimizing thinking is the key to better performance and better results.
- > The more we learn about the brain, the more relevant these concepts are to every aspect of your business, your own career, and your professional growth.
- > With Whole Brain® Thinking, your business will have an improvement process that does for people and the organization what Lean did for manufacturing and Agile did for technology.
- > More than 30 years of research stand behind the concepts, examples, and stories you will be reading about in this book.

My first full-scale research activities on brain function caused quite a stir at the GE Management Development Institute at Crotonville in the mid-1970s. Ironically, most people couldn't see how the brain was connected with my professional work in management education. Compared to what we now know about the brain, we were pretty much in the Dark Ages. In addition, most business cultures were so steeped in analytical, logical, and safekeeping modes of thinking that they not only resisted the idea of “Whole Brain” Thinking, but also didn't see why they needed to recognize, acknowledge, and apply the more interpersonal, imaginative styles of thinking that existed within their organizations but were often buried.

Whether it was explicitly articulated or not, the typical response that I seemed to be getting back then was some variation of a basic question:

“So what?” So it’s probably fitting that each chapter in this book ends with a section entitled “So What?” Why does it matter that we have different preferences for different kinds of thinking? What does creative thinking have to do with business success? Why should I care about this when I need to make my numbers, deal with complex issues, rally people around a new mission and strategy, and keep people engaged and performing at their peak?

When it comes to running a business, *so what?*

Almost all men
are intelligent.
It is method
that they lack.

—F. W. Nichol

What Is Whole Brain Thinking?

Applying Whole Brain Thinking means being able to fully leverage one’s own preferences, stretch to other styles when necessary, and adapt to and take advantage of the preferences of those around you to improve performance and results.

The answer is simple: every business runs on thinking. If you want to continually improve and reach new heights in an increasingly complex world, you have to understand the impact of thinking and take advantage of all the thinking potential that you have. For my own company and for all businesses, a more conscious Whole Brain approach to business is a necessity, not an option, for these primary reasons:

If thinking is the fuel that drives business, we need to understand how the brain works in order to deal with change effectively. Are you dealing with the same kinds of problems, opportunities, and work environment that you faced five years ago? Or even a year ago? Change is happening so fast that it’s not uncommon for most businesspeople to be coming up against challenges and issues that have no precedent on an almost daily basis.

This level of change requires you to fully leverage all the mental muscle you have in order to move away from resistance and seek out new thinking. When you can engage the kind of specialized thinking that is more inclined to embrace novelty, you’ll be better able to make critical decisions after the facts have run out. To compete effectively in a world characterized by change, everyone has to be able to function using all of the brain’s different modes. This has never been truer than it is today.

Mentally diverse heterogeneous groups produce more creative, effective solutions than do similar-thinking homogeneous groups. This isn't an altogether new thought. The saying "two heads are better than one" has been around for a while. We just didn't have research to explain it or a way to measure it, manage it, and describe it, which is what the Whole Brain Thinking concept allows. We now have the research that demonstrates why we need all the diverse thinking in our organizations working together if we are to get the best results, particularly as the challenges we face keep getting more complex. The good news is that most organizations have those cognitive differences within their ranks; they just have to know where to seek them out and how best to leverage the diversity.

With greater thinking diversity comes a unique challenge: heterogeneous groups are often much harder to manage. Classic management approaches no longer apply—they're too constricting, and therefore they're usually counterproductive. To manage these diverse groups, leaders need to be more like translators than like traditional taskmasters. The upshot: if we're going to tap the power of the Whole Brain team, we have to learn Whole Brain ways of managing.

Certain modes of thinking will increasingly dominate an organization as it matures unless the leadership applies Whole Brain Thinking to consciously cultivate and encourage the breadth of thinking that is necessary for ongoing success. We tend to hire, coach, promote, and otherwise reward in our own image. It's natural to be drawn to those who think the way we do. It's easy. We have our own shorthand. But if we limit ourselves in this way, we're missing the other perspectives and mental frames of reference we need in order to solve complex problems and find more innovative solutions. All that single-mindedness will lead to stagnation or worse. In the face of increasing complexity and intense competition, companies won't be able to survive over the long term if they don't deliberately look for, develop, and leverage the full spectrum of thinking.

As you read this book, you'll discover that the way you communicate, learn, make decisions, plan your work processes, choose your career, deal with customers, manage people, allocate attention, and handle every other aspect of your business performance is rooted in how you prefer to think. Imagine how much you'll be able to accomplish—how much more productive, more

.....
 It is what you learn
 after you know it
 all that counts.

—Ethel Barrymore

focused, and more flexible you'll be—once you understand and know how to use all your thinking to your advantage.

The Brain Has Everything to Do with Business: How to Put It to Work

EXERCISE: Answer the following critical business questions to learn more about how understanding your thinking can help you improve your learning and your performance and to discover which chapters can help you most in that effort:

Career aspirations: Think of a person you know who is a “misfit” in his career. How does that impact this person’s effectiveness?

To learn how a person’s thinking patterns make him or her a better “thinking fit” for particular positions, refer to Chapters 4, 6, and 10. Read Chapter 3 for insight on how you can work smarter and align your work and competencies.

Communication: When was the last time you had a communication misunderstanding or mishap? How much time and energy did you lose?

Chapter 8 shows you how to build communication bridges to save time and effort, make the most of all the available talent in your organizations, and encourage people to bring their best thinking to the table.

Corporate culture: How flexible is your corporate culture in these times of constant change? How does inflexibility get in the way of success and agility, and what impact does it have on innovation?

Read about how leaders can keep their corporate culture agile, especially for dealing with change and preserving innovation vitality, in Chapters 15 and 19, and learn how best to deal with disruption and reorganization in Chapters 17 and 18 .

Creativity and innovation: How might creativity help you and your organization better adapt and grow? How often do you feel creative at work? How innovative are you?

Refer to Chapters 21 through 23 to explore real examples of how an organization can establish a climate for creativity, build a creative team, and manage that team to unleash greater personal and business potential.

Customer relationships: How well do you really know your customers?

Read Chapter 13 for stories and examples of specific ways to connect faster, create stronger partnerships, and establish more mutually beneficial relationships with both internal and external customers and stakeholders.

Cognitive diversity: Do you leverage diversity or get frustrated by it?

Learn how to get optimum results and a competitive advantage, rather than frustration, from cognitive diversity in Chapters 5 and 7.

Job design and productivity: Are you as productive as you could be? How about your team? Your organization?

Chapter 10 explores how work and jobs can be designed to gain 20 to 40 percent in additional productivity.

Managing: Do you ever get frustrated with employees or peers who need to change their behavior but aren't doing so? How well do you manage, motivate, and engage them?

Managers can significantly improve the engagement and management of those they work with by understanding and aligning thinking. Learn about managing, motivating, coaching, and delegating with thinking in mind in Chapters 7, 9, and 11.

Planning: Is your planning more strategic or more operational?

Discover what differentiates strategic planning from operational planning and how to make sure you have enough of each when and where you need it most in Chapter 16.

Teamwork: Think of a time when you were on a high-performing team. Why haven't all of your team experiences been like that?

In Chapter 12, you'll find data-based approaches to building and developing the most productive teams, and how a manager and his or her team can better relate in terms of their thinking.

Leadership agility: How well do you and your leaders truly expand leadership capabilities to prepare for the future?

Read what competencies twenty-first-century leaders need, considering the growing complexities and uncertainties of the business world and the ongoing, rapid pace of change, in Chapter 14, and discover how CEOs think and lead in Chapter 20.

Learning and growth: How easily do you flex your thinking to meet the demands of the world around you?

Learn how to stretch your thinking, see past blind spots, and become more entrepreneurial and adaptive in Chapters 24 through 26.

Every organization has a wealth of thinking diversity within it, but only those that know how to access and apply that diversity will fully benefit from it. The good news, as this book will show you, is you don't have to be a neuroscientist to do it.

From improving mentoring at the U.S. Naval Command and developing the next generation of global leaders at IBM to creating a widely popular new video game at Microsoft Game Studio and coming up with killer marketing ideas at Brown-Forman, leading organizations around the world are applying the Whole Brain Thinking system to outthink, outpace, and outperform the competition. You'll read many of their stories in these pages and learn what you can do to apply the same concepts to your challenges. Their examples are both a reminder and proof that no matter what kind of business you're in, the most successful businesses run on Whole Brain Thinking.

With this book, you'll have the background and the tools to start putting your own whole brain to work.

SO WHAT?

- > Now more than ever, the brain has everything to do with business.
- > The brain is complex, but its application to business shouldn't be; it should be relevant, practical, and easy to use.
- > By recognizing, adapting, and applying all the thinking resources available in your organization, you'll be able to improve every aspect of business and performance.
- > Because every business runs on thinking, the ones that can optimize that thinking will have a distinct competitive advantage.

