

Left-Right Brain Leadership

I. What's it all about? An overview:

“Mastery of design, empathy, play, and other seemingly ‘soft’ aptitudes is now the main way for individuals and firms to stand out in a crowded marketplace.”

-- Daniel H. Pink, *A Whole New Mind...*, 34.

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

...It is an age animated by a different form of thinking and a new approach to life---one that prizes aptitudes that I call ‘high concept’ and ‘high touch.’

“...High touch involves the ability to empathize with others, to understand the subtleties of human interaction, to find joy in one’s self and to elicit it in others...the capabilities we once disdained or thought frivolous---the ‘right brain’ qualities of inventiveness, empathy, joyfulness, and meaning---increasingly will determine who flourishes and who flounders.”

-- Daniel H. Pink, *A Whole New Mind: Why Right Brainers Will Rule the Future*, pp. 1-3

II. How do we use our brains when collaborating?

In Collaborative Communication we actively engage *both* sides of our brains:

Note that “the left hemisphere handles *what* is said; the right hemisphere focuses on *how* it’s said---the nonverbal, often emotional cues delivered through gaze, facial expression, and intonation.” (Pink, p. 21)

Collaborative Communication integrates left and right brain thinking by focusing simultaneously on:

- The two “levels” of listening (for information/content and hearing on a “core”/needs level)
- A *skill* set (tools to collaborate) and a *mind*-set (intention/awareness/willingness to collaborate.)

Through practicing Collaborative Communication, you are developing right brain thinking and integrate the left and right brains.

The “Six Senses” of Right Brain Thinking (according to Pink) that we integrate and practice in Collaborative Leadership

1. Not just function but DESIGN

“...the human nature to shape and make our environment in ways ...to serve our needs and give meaning to our lives... a combination of *utility* and *significance*.” (Pink p. 69-70).
“Design in its simplest form is creating solutions.” (Pink, p. 75)

2. Not just argument but also STORY

“When facts become so widely available and instantly accessible, each one becomes less valuable. What begins to matter more is the ability to place these facts in *context* and to deliver them with *emotional impact*....Story is high touch because stories almost always pack emotional punch.” (Pink, p. 103)

3. Not just focus but also SYMPHONY

“...seeing the big picture, crossing boundaries, and being able to combine disparate pieces into an arresting new whole.” (Pink, p. 66)
“...the ability to put together the pieces...the capacity to synthesize rather than analyze; to see relationships between seemingly unrelated fields; to detect broad patterns rather than deliver specific answers; and to invent something new by combining elements nobody else thought to pair.” (Pink, p. 130)

4. Not just logic but also EMPATHY

“...the ability to imagine yourself in someone else’s position and to intuit what that person is feeling. ...Empathy is a stunning act of imaginative derring-do, the ultimate virtual reality---climbing into that person’s mind to experience the world from that person’s perspective.” (Pink, p. 159)

5. Not just seriousness but also PLAY

“People rarely succeed at anything unless they are having fun doing it.” (Southwest Airlines, as quoted by Pink, p. 187)
“Laughing people are more creative people. They are more productive people. People who laugh together can work together.” (Pink, p. 204)

6. Not just accumulation but also MEANING

“Our fundamental drive, the motivational engine that powers human existence, is the pursuit of needs.” (Pink, p. 217)
“Studies of our biological constitution make it increasingly clear that we are social creatures of meaning, who crave a sense of coherence and purpose.” (Steven Quartz, Caltech neuroscientist, as quoted by Pink, p. 222)

“Leadership is about empathy. It is about having the ability to relate and to connect with people for the purpose of inspiring and empowering their lives.”

-- Oprah Winfrey