



a leader's smart best friend

[back >](#)**Title:** Seeing How Change Works Right Inside Your Head**Author:** Linda Pickard**Date:** 2007-01-30

Whenever I get the chance to work with anyone aspiring to reach further as a leader, I invariably start with the workings of our brains. As we well know, the original gifts from our ancestors plus our cultural and educational environments play significant roles in shaping our beliefs, values, knowledge and ultimately our personal effectiveness. The tough part is really seeing ourselves clearly. That's essential for mapping what next to change.

By happenstance, one of the participants in a session I was running on leadership shared a quick test Daniel Pink uses during his presentations. Daniel's most recent contribution is his easy-to-read book **A Whole New Mind** in which he invites us to take greater advantage of the creative capacity of our brains.

Try the test out to see where you fit. I cannot attest to its reliability. That will be your decision after completing it. At the least, it's a fun tool for helping a team understand members "thinking diversity" and hence ways of approaching change and challenges.

The Brain Dominance Test

Directions: Every time you read a description or characteristic that applies to you, write down its number on a blank sheet of paper. There is no certain number of characteristics you must choose.

1. I constantly look at a clock or wear a watch
2. I keep a journal or diary of my thoughts
3. I believe there is either right and wrong way to do everything
4. I find it hard to follow directions precisely
5. The expression "Life is just a bowl of cherries" makes no sense to me
6. I frequently change my plans and find that sticking to a schedule is boring
7. I think it's easier to draw a map than tell someone how to get somewhere
8. To find a lost item, I try to picture it in my head where I last saw it
9. I frequently let my emotions guide me
10. I learn math with ease
11. I'd read the directions before assembling something
12. People tell me I am always late getting places
13. People have told me that I'm psychic
14. I need to set goals for myself to keep me on track
15. When somebody asks me a question, I turn my head to the left
16. If I have a tough decision to make, I write down the pros and the cons
17. I'd probably make a good detective
18. I learn music with ease
19. To solve a problem, I think of similar problems I have solved in the past

20. I use a lot of gestures
21. If someone asks me a question, I turn my head to the right
22. I believe there are two ways to look at almost everything
23. I have the ability to tell if people are lying or guilty of something, just by looking at them
24. I keep a "to do" list
25. I am able to thoroughly explain my opinions in words
26. In a debate, I am objective and look at the facts before forming an opinion
27. I've considered becoming a poet, a politician, an architect, or a dancer
28. I always lose track of time
29. When trying to remember a name I forgot, I'd recite the alphabet until I remembered it
30. I like to draw
31. When I'm confused, I usually go with my gut instinct
32. I have considered becoming a lawyer, journalist, or doctor

Next to every number on your paper, write whether it was an L or an R. Count up the number of L's and R's. Whichever number is higher represents your dominance. If the numbers are close, that means you use both sides of your brain equally.

1. L	12. R	23. R
2. L	13. R	24. L
3. L	14. L	25. L
4. R	15. R	26. L
5. L	16. L	27. R
6. R	17. L	28. R
7. R	18. R	29. L
8. L	19. R	30. R
9. R	20. R	31. R
10. L	21. L	32. L
11. L	22. R	

The dominance of your thinking style is one way to demonstrate your preferred way of using the abilities you have. For example, if you tend to perceive knowledge in an abstract way through ideas, concepts, and feelings, that is more "right". Alternatively, if you mentally register data through the physical, concrete senses, that manner is more "left".

On ordering information, there are two preferences: sequential and random. Sequential involves gathering and ordering information in a systematic, step-by-step, precise and logical manner; thus, it is more "left" in orientation. Random reflects the organizing of information in a non-linear, "galloping" manner, pulling information from what appears to be unrelated sources. This reflects a more "right" thinking preference, as the common vernacular goes.

In practice, any one of us may use different combinations of perceiving and ordering information to make sense of the world around us and relate to people accordingly. For example, if you prefer a "concrete" and "sequential" world of information, you likely must "see to believe" and put weight on experts' opinions. Alternatively, if you are more "abstract" and "random" in organizing information, you likely prefer examples of people "who have been there" as evidence. Both are valid means of working through challenges. In combination, they are even more powerful.

Daniel Pink provides some examples below of leaders' approaches to work situations depending on thinking preference:

<i>Leaders who are left-brain dominant</i>	<i>Leaders who are right-brain dominant</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve problems through the use of data • Perform statistical analysis of data. • Develop solutions using logical analyses of facts • Have work done by individuals who are assigned to study a system using an orderly approach • Define quality as conformance to definable requirements that can be measured • Establish controls in the early stages of a system that will ensure quality is controlled throughout the system's life cycle • Improve quality by studying specific variation within a system • Identify root causes of problems by elaborately categorizing possible causes and using strict rules for questioning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve problems through the understanding of relationships • Use cause and effect diagrams. • Develop solutions using creativity and brainstorming • Have work done by teams that will raise many questions and work multiple issues. • Define quality based on a holistic concept such as total quality • View quality as a process for continuous improvement in which controls are only temporary. • Improve quality by starting with a holistic strategic quality plan. • Identify root causes of problems by using the five-whys method, barrier analysis and process diagrams

If only life in an organization were so simple. It's not! Regardless, the framework of thinking style can be a touchstone for discussion to better understand each other. Steven Covey in his classic **7 Habits** book emphasized that successful people "seek to understand". By opening up our eyes to differences in thinking preferences, we are guaranteed to take better advantage of our collective strengths to get on with the big tasks at hand.

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