



CASE STUDY

Developing Excellence in Leadership using Thinking Styles®

Executive Summary

A County Council used the cognitive psychometric Thinking Styles within its leadership development programme to help their leaders understand more about their individual strengths and weaknesses, to accept how the thinking style preferences of themselves and their colleagues affected their working relationships and to develop excellence in their quality of thinking. Thinking Styles also helped them to identify which leadership competences required particular preferences of thinking style and where it might be necessary to develop flexibility in those styles.

Background

A high performing and forward thinking County Council wanted to create a leadership development programme, building on the "excellent" rating that it had recently received within the government performance rating system. The Council were aware that they needed to further develop and improve their leadership capabilities, in order to be able to respond to the Government's modernisation agenda for the public sector. High quality thinking and the ability to be flexible in adopting the appropriate thinking strategies required to approach different tasks and different people are key attributes of an excellent leader. Thinking Styles was used to help the Council's leadership assess their current capabilities and develop a programme to enhance them.

The Objectives

The Council had identified eight areas in which leadership needed to improve, including:

- Improving their leadership capabilities
- Demonstrating high levels of performance against new and measurable competencies
- Developing their staff
- Creating a continuous improvement culture

The achievement of their objectives in all eight areas would be measured against their competency frameworks and Government Benchmark standards in Public Service.

Using Thinking Styles

Developing excellence in leadership requires leaders to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and to develop strategies to help them flex their behaviour and communication style as appropriate. The County Council used Thinking Styles to help them do this in various ways. Firstly, the senior leaders completed their profiles to help them develop more self-awareness about how their preferences affected their communication style and working relationships. They then identified areas of development which would enable them to improve their leadership performance and mapped these into the leadership competency frameworks. Some teams further elected to map their profiles against the other people in their teams using Cognitive Team Roles™, to identify their team working preferences and team development areas.

The Outcome

People were surprised at how many types of thinking there are and how differently other people think compared to themselves. There was more conscious awareness of how thinking preferences generate different internal processes and strategies and a greater shared understanding of the complexities of cognition and how this leads to the variety of behaviours we see in the workplace amongst colleagues. It helped them understand, as leaders and managers, why they find some people easy to work with, and other people difficult to manage and lead.

Thinking Styles

Thinking Styles is a psychometric instrument which measures people's preferences for twenty-six different types of thinking, and therefore someone's likely approach to tasks, problem solving and relationships. The Thinking Styles report also gives techniques for developing flexibility in all the cognitive styles including their associated language patterns and behaviours.

For further information on this case study or Thinking Styles, contact the Cognitive Fitness Consultancy on:

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