

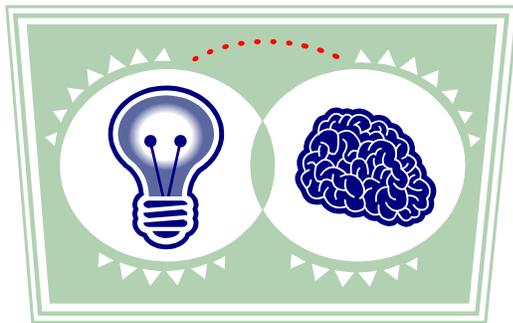
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Completing the CORE: Respect, Teamwork, and Communication with Cognitive Styles

Article by Christopher L. Montoya, MA

The work team I manage has gone through challenges over the past two years. In the past five years, I built a training department for our local 3,000-employee County Government Agency, expanding from offering a few classes in prior years to now offering a robust schedule. Our small team of four built and now operates two training centers and two conference rooms that provide robust curriculums to employees at all levels. We have forged strong partnerships with our leadership team for facilitation, conferences and strategic forums.

Growing that quickly comes with staffing challenges. In my short time building this organization, two staff members left, another two on-boarded, and I added a fourth employee to the team. One staff member joined us as an administrative specialist and retired after a year on the staff; her position has since turned over two times.

Rapid growth probably fueled communication misfires on projects, expectations, logistics, operations and work style approaches. I've been in the thick of change, challenge and chaos. During the summer, I determined it was time to do something to pull us into closer alignment.

So, what are Cognitive Styles?

Cognitive Styles is a new type lens based on Jung's eight cognitive processes, John Beebe's work, Berens Cognitive Dynamics, and the research Linda Berens and I have conducted to find the cognitive style patterns. Cognitive Styles uncovers what seemingly opposite types share in common as a cognitive personality type style. This four-style model helps people understand their biases and filters as they seek to understand the world around them. It also helps us understand the cognitive needs and dynamics of self and others.

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Four Cognitive Styles and their Quests

There are four cognitive styles: Enhancing, Customizing, Orchestrating and Authenticating. Behind each Cognitive Style is a mental quest directed towards something we want to receive or achieve in the world around us. While it operates outside our awareness, this quest provides us with a sense of purpose: to find what we believe is the most important information to pay attention to and to process that information towards a related goal. We discovered few people really understand how our patterns and preferences influence our thinking.

Here are descriptions of the four Cognitive Styles:

- **The Enhancing** Style is about looking at the world to find what's best about it, where compatibilities exist between new information and what is already known. Enhancing is about discovering what is at the essence of something and making it distinctive and excellent. Ultimately, it's about refining standard processes based on what is consistent.

- **The Customizing Style** is about looking at the world to find what is vital, where gaps exist between desired information and available information, given ongoing dynamics. Customizing is about discovering direction, movements, and purpose. Ultimately, it's about designing tailored approaches based on identified targets.
- **The Orchestrating Style** is about looking at the world to find what will work, making priorities between available information and what is achievable. Orchestrating is about discovering what is effective, influential, and expedient. Ultimately, it's about negotiating desired results based on what is persuasive.
- **The Authenticating Style** is about looking at the world to find what is moral, where value differences exist between agreed-upon information and information that is being honored. Authenticating is about discovering what is important, available, and accurate. Ultimately, it's about investigating appropriate actions based on what is morally right.

My Team's Cognitive Styles Map

Enhancing the Process	Customizing the Approach
N/A	Chris - Manager Flora - Specialist
Authenticating the Actions	Orchestrating the Results
Aubrey - Coordinator	Craig - Coordinator

* At time of article, hiring process is underway for a third Coordinator.

As the HR Training Manager, I have a Customizing Cognitive Style (INFJ). I find myself frequently determining the direction of our training organization, course content, taking the pulse of organizational needs, and trying to understand and tailor interventions to the core needs of our leadership. At times, my drive to produce results can make me impatient with my staff and blunt with my communication.

My specialist, Flora, also has a Customizing Cognitive Style (ESTP). She is quick to determine what needs to be done, is good at figuring out what is vital to achieve the work, and fulfill her role in moving toward our agreed-upon objectives. Flora can work fast, but not always accurately, with detailed reports. She can be blunt and critical with her communication about people who bypass the objectives we've discussed as a team.

One training coordinator, Aubrey, has an Authenticating Cognitive Style (ENFP). She is usually clarifying everything she hears ensure that it makes sense to her, whether in team meetings, on the phone, or in casual conversations. She seems to need a lot of reason-based information before she can move forward with the work. Aubrey likes clear direction concerning what is expected and cares about organizing principles regarding training design. She always does what she agrees to do.

The other training coordinator, Craig, has an Orchestrating Cognitive Style (ISFP). He is usually involved in a variety of projects, as determined by our department leadership or organization-wide leaders who contact him independently. He has a good reputation in our leadership body, is incredibly optimistic, and is skilled at selling our team's commitment and capabilities as we juggle multiple projects. Accuracy is not always his strongest skill, but he has an amazing ability to rapidly generate training programs that hit the mark. He is very

connected with many people in different peer groups and social circles.

When I took the team through a session about the Cognitive Style differences, they quickly saw biases in their attitudes toward each other. Flora (ESTP) and Craig (ISFP) had daily communication breakdowns because she was very direct while Craig was very polished and deflective. Flora had judged him as deceptive because he'd sometimes say one thing and do another, or he'd embellish his stories. She had also felt that his output did not target the overall objectives I set forth. Craig felt that Flora was rude and offensive, trying to get him in trouble or keep him from his priorities.

After the training session, Flora realized that Craig's heart is in the right place, and her bias toward believing that everyone should customize their approach based on the targeted objectives just wasn't his style. This realization meant that she could give Craig space and accept their differences. She also discovered that Craig's Cognitive Style was the same as her 'difficult' son's, which triggered stress reactions for her. This came out in the discussions she and I had after the training. Flora has stopped treating Craig like her son and is friendlier toward him.

From our Cognitive Styles session, I learned to show patience with Aubrey (ENFP), to be courteous when she asked informational questions, and to find opportunities for her to investigate organizational information with other business partners. The trust between us has grown immensely since the training session. Now I work with her guidance on most projects. She helps me challenge and/or validate my habitual assumptions and I help her infuse creativity into projects.

One truth I've discovered is that communication is at the heart of Cognitive Styles. We cannot form language without using our cognitive faculties. Our intentions when we communicate emerge through our language. While not always

apparent in quick communications, there are four distinct styles of communication, based on our psychological needs.

I've discovered that Craig's style has him naturally mediating in conversations, with the goal of reconciling information toward a result. As his manager, I naturally facilitate in conversations, with the goal of simplifying information for an effective approach. We miscommunicate when he tries to get clarity about heading toward a result he wants, while at the same time I'm trying to give him information toward an approach I think is most effective for the scope of the project. This causes frustration for both of us. We don't naturally speak the same language. Through the Cognitive Styles framework, I've learned to listen to his informational needs and help him gain perspective toward his goals.

Note that based on the usual way of looking at personality types, one would expect ESTP and INFJ to have difficulties in communication. However, the Cognitive Styles framework emphasizes what these types—and other opposites—have in common. For example, when I communicate with Flora, we naturally speak the same language and communicate effortlessly with each other, even during feedback sessions. Our communication breakdowns are almost non-existent, and we find ourselves completing each other's sentences. Our work time together is enjoyable.

A few weeks ago at a team lunch, Flora observed that we are now a close team and that she has greater respect for all team members. She thanked everyone for letting her communicate naturally and served gelato sundaes to show her appreciation. In the two short months we have been applying Cognitive Styles, the team has quicker conversations, can articulate feelings, and has tremendous team trust. This was a genuine transformation that has stabilized the team for greater work success.

The Cognitive Styles provides a type lens that completes our understanding of the core of personality type styles. Going deep into Cognitive Styles reveals your needs, talents and things in common with the other styles, especially your “opposite types.” As a manager, it’s helped me understand how to leverage my team for greater output, deeper trust, and faster identification of thinking biases. As a trainer, it helps me clarify type and bring issues into the open. It helps participants identify their thinking constructs and biases. The work we have developed around Cognitive Styles is continuing to challenge what we know about type – it’s expansive, broader and more inclusive than we once thought. If you want to deepen your consulting, coaching or training experience, explore Cognitive Styles.

Cognitive Styles was developed by Linda V. Berens, Ph.D. and Christopher L. Montoya, M.A. For more information about Cognitive Styles visit:

<http://www.lindaberens.com/resources/>

<http://chrismontoya.net>



Christopher Montoya, M.A. is the co-author of *Cognitive Type Styles*. He offers type training and coaching on Cognitive Styles for organizational leaders, employees and career seekers.

Chris has presented at APTI's International Conference and the EAPT Conference about Cognitive Styles with co-author Dr. Linda V. Berens, Type Industry Expert.

Chris had many early experiences in his supervisory career and life with difficult employees and painful personal relationships. This history motivated him to learn about organizational learning, psychological type, effective management techniques and healthy relationship practices. As a result he has trained and coached type systems and human dynamics for hundreds of people.

Chris has trained thousands of employees and customers for Highfiber Network, CB Richard Ellis, Gap Inc., Conergy, Bernalillo County Government, Valencia County Detention, and the Albuquerque Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. He currently works as a Human Resources Training Manager in a 3000-person organization and lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico with his partner and their horse, Tomcat.

President's Corner



Linda V. Berens, PhD

I'm very pleased with my year as APTi President and the work that the Board has done this year. In reality, APTi is ahead of the trend to have shared leadership. Sharon Richmond has

continued to make a huge contribution by helping us devise a board structure that makes sense for the work we have to do. Susan Nash came on as President Elect and quickly got started on some projects that have made us more efficient in many ways. So between the three of us, we have made a great start on the work of the board. And this next year we will have only one new board member, Julie Wright, who is a seasoned APTi Chapter President and organizer of two chapters. Having this much continuity on our board will be a great benefit in this time of transition.

The work we have to do is indeed transformation work needed to meet the needs of an evolving audience that is very different than the one that was at the formation of APTi. In the beginning APT was the only place to get information and 'talk type' together and learn together. Today there are many sources of that information on the web, some good, some not so good. By contrast, APTi is in a position to provide information you can trust.

There are many instruments and models that address psychological type instead of only the MBTI® instrument and Keirsey's temperament theory to add to Jung's theory. In this issue of the Bulletin you will find even more to think about. There are more and more competing frameworks besides psychological type. The shift that is happening is that APTi is becoming more inclusive, ecumenical, or agnostic if you will. Yet we still stand for quality, ethics, and high standards.

This year I took on the role of acting Bulletin editor when Paul Edward had to resign. It has been quite a journey as we realized this important charge we

have to set some standards and guidelines for all of our content. This year saw the passing of two luminaries, David Keirsey and Otto Kroeger. Their legacy lives on in their students and their publications. We have a tremendous treasure in our Bulletin archives with articles by all the major contributors to the psychological type world. We are currently making these available on our website to members in a searchable format. So even if you were not a member when the articles were published you will find many useful articles that are still relevant today.

Looking forward, we can expect APTi to be more active in the international arena. We have some incredibly productive chapters. I would wish for more to provide the in person opportunities to learn. With some website changes, we will have a place for Interest area chairs to provide more targeted learning experiences. And our membership experience leaders will be looking at ways to bring you more educational experiences via web based learning and maybe some mini conferences.

As I went to thesaurus.com to find a word, there was a quote in memoriam of Nelson Mandela.

After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.

-Nelson Mandela

It occurs to me that APTi as an organization has recognized that with knowledge comes responsibilities to curate that knowledge and to keep it growing, so while my year as president is at an end, I dare not rest for my work is not finished as we continue our transformation into a more inclusive and agile organization.

Please spread the word to your colleagues to join us and look for ways to be more actively involved. It's been a great, growing year. Thank you all.