

# Building Leaders in the 21st Century: Brains 3.0



Ann Herrmann-Nehdi, CEO  
Herrmann International

The number of books on the topic of leadership found on a recent search at Amazon.com is now at 365,539. An impressive number. When further explored it becomes apparent that the extensive theory and literature on leadership has evolved slowly over the last century, often with a lagging view backward rather than a much-needed, forward, leading view articulating the skills our leaders will need in the future and how we will get there.

Mitch McCrimmon puts it this way:

The fundamental meaning of leadership has not changed in all of recorded history. It has always been about the person in charge of the group. Being a leader has always meant having power over people and the authority to make decisions for the group. We have tweaked the meaning of leadership a little bit, thus moving from dictatorial to more participative styles but the essence has remained basically unchanged for centuries.<sup>1</sup>

The world around us has not slowed, however, and the significant changes that had begun several years ago have now been accelerated by the current global economic crisis. These changes include:

- ◆ New technologies accelerating information transfer around the globe anytime, anywhere, without boundaries, breaking down barriers and democratizing the power of information.
- ◆ Continued shift in “Western countries” toward knowledge work and service industries and away from more traditional manufacturing
- ◆ Rapid growth in BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China), redefining “second world” as a strong contender in the global economic marketplace.
- ◆ Accelerated rate of change across industries and countries, creating an unprecedented need for strategic thinking and tolerance for ambiguity at all levels of management and leadership.
- ◆ Increasingly complex and changing demographics around the globe requiring new levels of global dexterity and sophistication in leaders.

In addition, there has been a shift in power from administration to management to leadership to network (see model).

## The Evolution Of Power

1950s and 1960s	1970s and 1980s	1990s and 2000	2010s and 2020s
<b>Power As Administration</b>	<b>Power As Management</b>	<b>Power As Leadership</b>	<b>Power As Network</b>
Conformist Chain of command Stable Introspective Apprenticeship	Exception driven Ad Hoc Turbulent Market-driven Mentoring	Visionary Instant Sustaining Positioning Coaching	Integrator Virtual Global On Demand JIT Coaching

<sup>1</sup> [http://businessmanagement.suite101.com/article.cfm/21st\\_century\\_leadership#ixzz0P4pVDsSP](http://businessmanagement.suite101.com/article.cfm/21st_century_leadership#ixzz0P4pVDsSP)

In the last decade, we have seen the definition of leader evolve somewhat from “One who is in charge or in command of others” to a much broader framework extending far beyond previous limits to only the most senior of leaders.

Peter Senge offers his different view: “The capacity of a human community—people living and working together—to bring forth new realities. Another way to say this is that leadership energizes.” See the article, *Senge on Leadership*, for a more thorough review of Senge’s perspective.

Thus this new environment places a burden on all of us, especially leaders, to be more adaptive, responsive, and innovative than ever before. These new, rapidly changing and unpredictable situations require new kinds of thinking.

When leaders approach a new situation with their habitual thinking, they severely limit their ability to generate new ideas or solutions. If our thought patterns continue to be processed by our brains using the same neural pathways as in the past, our ability to lead in different ways will not evolve to meet the new demands of the situation. **Leading in new ways requires new connections and processes in the brain, breaking our existing patterns.**

As David Rock and Jeffrey Schwartz describe in their article, *Neuroscience of Leadership*, “Cognitive scientists are finding that people’s mental maps, their theories, expectations, and attitudes, play a more central role in human perception than was previously understood.”

In the article they go into further detail about how difficult it can be to change our thinking and our way of being, since that literally requires we change our brains.

There is broad consensus that the world around us will require a different and changing approach to leadership, and that change will present challenges.

Most of us have tried to change not only our own mindsets but other minds as well. My guess is that more often than not, we have failed. The following excerpt from my article on [Change](#) helps us understand why:

1. Mindsets are part of our ‘cognitive unconscious’ where we have already formed mental maps that become our point of reference as we look at the world. Most of the time we are unaware of these mental maps or the impact they have. Our mental maps are literally built from our experiences in life. As we process information, most often unconsciously, we are looking for patterns and scanning the mental maps we have already formed neuronally based on our experience. Sometimes our maps are helpful and sometimes they are not.

You are often encountering mental maps when you travel to a new place, and attempt to make change in a currency you are not accustomed to. This is also true when interacting with the differences that may appear in dress, road signs, habits, customs, food etc. Our maps are often of little help and create confusion as we are challenged by some subtle differences in a system we think we already know. In fact, our experience and knowledge actually stops us from looking around for other options and ideas that might help us solve those challenges.

Most change requires that we challenge our mental maps and form new connections in the brain. This takes energy and motivation. When we understand how our mental maps are working and how they have created our mindsets, we are better prepared to adapt and respond to the change that is constantly occurring around us

2. Mindsets are firmly engrained in the brain. They are reinforced by the structure and very nature of the brain itself.

The brain is where we go as we are processing any new information, and we need to learn how to develop, practice and maintain it. Dr. Michael Merzenich, an expert on the brain’s

ability to change (known as plasticity) at the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) stated it this way: "The brain was constructed to change." It is the single body organ that is the central processor of all our mental processing. Our neurological system is involved in all aspects of the change process. Each and every brain is as unique and different as your thumbprint. We literally build that print throughout the course of our lives, creating and fine-tuning our own unique style and building our mindset.

Our maps lead the brain to fill in gaps we might initially see and then quickly move on, but often with incomplete information. This is helpful when the map matches the situation and provides us with great efficiency so we do not have to sit and think about how we start our car every day. However, this is critical to understand as all learners are constantly filling in the blanks unconsciously, based on their prior experience. Look at the diagram and read what you see: What did you say? Ice cream is good?

ICE CREAM IS GOOD

Groups around the globe who have completed this exercise are 100% sure that is the phrase provided. However, when you reveal the entire phrase you see: JGF GPFAM JS CQQD. (If you do not believe me take a piece of paper and cover up the lower portion of the letters, JGF GPFAM JS CQQD and you will see how this works.) Thus all of our experiences will preprogram what we see and how we think about or feel about a given topic or model. Years ago a participant in a program stood up during a segment and declared: "Excuse me, I do not DO metaphors." It was clear that this person was shutting down his own mental process because of a previous experience. Think of the times that has happened to you, to your team and to your organization. When we engage others in a change process we are asking them to challenge their previous mental maps and make new neural connections in their brains.

3. Isolated facts have little effect on mindsets. If the fact does not fit the current mindset it gets rejected instantly.

When 90% of heart patients do not take action after their doctor instructs them about changing their lifestyle in order to prolong their life, then you know something is wrong. What is it about how our brains that resists change so tenaciously? Why do we fight even what we know to be in our vital interests?

The reason is that our thinking relies on our mental maps and mindsets, not facts. Neuroscience tells us that each of our mindsets, the long-term concepts that structure the way we think, are instantiated in the synapses of the brain.

Dr. Michael Merzenich found in his research that habits actually showed up on MRI scans. In studying flute players he found their brains had developed larger representational areas that control the fingers, tongue and lips. He could see that flute playing had physically changed the brain.

This is why mindsets are not things that can be changed by someone telling you a few facts. Facts that do not fit with our mindsets, and the mental maps that form them that are wired into our synapses, get rejected.

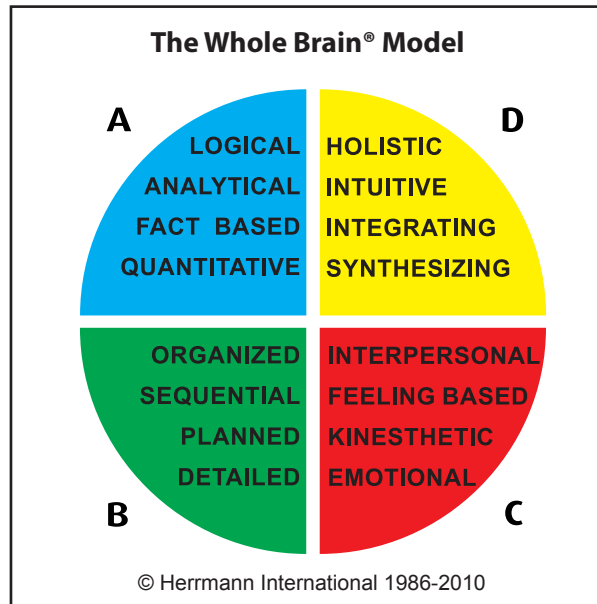
Leaders are just like flute players. They have developed thinking habits or mindsets which have changed their brains. The cumulative weight of knowledge and experience and the mental maps that have formed make it very hard to change their approach to leadership.

## A Whole Brain® Approach

An important filter for our mindsets is our thinking style preferences across the Whole Brain® Thinking Model and measured by the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®).

The concept of Whole Brain® Thinking is based upon our distribution of specialized modes throughout the brain system. The metaphoric model, developed from research done by my

father, Ned Herrmann, while head of Management Education at GE (Crotonville), is divided into four separate quadrants, each one different and equal in importance. The model has been highly validated over the last 30 years with over 2 million learners worldwide.



In the Whole Brain® Model, a more logical, analytic, quantitative and bottom-line approach appears in the Upper Left A quadrant. The more planned, organized, detailed and sequential style is processed in the Lower Left B quadrant. Synthesizing, integrating, holistic, and intuitive approaches reside in the Upper Right D quadrant. Finally, the interpersonal, emotional, kinesthetic and feeling modes are associated with the Lower Right C quadrant.

If you think of each of these quadrants as four different leaders, imagine how each might approach the leadership process. Or better yet, imagine one leader embracing all four of these approaches.

In fact, the role of CEO, a classic leadership position, actually requires Whole Brain® Thinking by design because it necessitates working with and leading a wide range of functions, from finance to strategy to people issues to execution. Our research on CEO HBDI® thinking styles data has demonstrated that CEOs have a high percentage of the rare (less than 3% of all profiles) Whole

Brain® profile – one that has preferences equally distributed across all four quadrants.

The demand for Whole Brain® Thinking is no longer limited to the CEO ranks of leadership. Our world now requires the adaptive and integrative thinking that spans all four quadrants. We no longer have the luxury to relegate ourselves to “limited brain bandwidth.”

The effective leader of the future will be a “**thought leader**,” a highly skilled thinker that is able to situationally access the different thinking styles across the Whole Brain® Model required for any given challenge, as needed, irrespective of their natural preferences. Recent informal analysis of current leadership programs in Fortune 200 companies across the globe shows that we are woefully behind in the development of such leaders.

We know that by actively engaging the brain’s capacities from both hemispheres and all four “quadrants,” you have a larger “playing field” from which to draw your thinking – there is more cross fertilization between neural synapses, providing the opportunity for new connections to form.

### Questions to consider:

- ◆ What organizations have you experienced that are doing this well?
- ◆ For those that are not, what do you believe is the greatest barrier?
- ◆ How prepared are you personally as a leader for what we will need in coming years?

The model below shows a Whole Brain® Map of the critical leadership elements for 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rapid problem solving</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Managing an endless stream of data, facts &amp; information</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Effective financial know-how and global business acumen</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Decisive, in less time, under pressure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Leveraging new technologies &amp; technical approaches</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Analyzing new types of global business issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Solving complex business &amp; competitive challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Embracing constant rapid change</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Being future focused</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Thinking as a global, holistic “citizen of the world”</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Decision making in a world of greater ambiguity</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Intelligent risk taking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Building a culture where innovation and creative thinking thrive</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Effective at scenario planning and strategic thinking</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Managing complex operational issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Just in time planning and deadlines</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Staying on task &amp; focused in a changing world</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Delivering results, implementation and taking action</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Driving flawless execution and zero defect quality initiatives and evaluations</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Managing conflicting priorities requiring</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Simultaneous processing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive to diverse people and generations in virtual and co-located environments</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Good emotional intelligence (EQ)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sensitive to community &amp; environmental issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Responsive to increasing interaction with associates, customers &amp; stakeholders</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Culturally and globally savvy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Driving a customer &amp; service focus</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration and teaming</li> </ul>

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## Other key questions:

- ◆ How do you define the “new normal” we will see post recession, and what will be the impact on the leadership requirements?
- ◆ How will younger generations emerge as leaders? Do you think their very different life experiences influence their level of interest and capacity for this breadth of thinking?
- ◆ How will social learning and networks impact how we look at developing leaders and the leadership function?
- ◆ What are the most radical “pictures” you have of the new organizational models, which will, of course, require different leadership?
- ◆ Should we look for ways to devise a “leadership chip” to insert into peoples brains once we can do that safely? If so, what would be the characteristics? What we would want to keep? Let go of?

better results through better thinking

## Clients

The Herrmann International clients, for whom better thinking has become integral to their business culture, include:

**American Express**

**Bank of America**

**BB&T**

**Blue Cross Blue Shield**

**BMW**

**Boeing**

**Chevron**

**Cintas**

**Cisco**

**Coca-Cola**

**Columbia Business School**

**Disney University**

**DuPont**

**Gardian Life**

**GE**

**Global Lead**

**Harris Corporation**

**HBO**

**IBM**

**Johnson & Johnson**

**JP Morgan Chase**

**Kaiser Permanente**

**Limited Brands**

**Microsoft**

**Milliken & Company**

**MTV Networks**

**National Semiconductor**

**Nortel Networks**

**North Carolina Courts**

**Novartis**

**Perdue Pharma**

**Procterand Gamble**

**Rogers Communications**

**St. John's University**

**Schering-Plough**

**Shell Oil**

**Target**

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**The Clarion Group**

**Tommy Hilfiger**

**3M**

**University of Pretoria, S. Africa**

**US Navy**

**Vanderbilt University**

**Victoria's Secret**

**Wharton Business School**

**Weyerhaeuser Corporation**

**Xerox**



The Originators of Whole Brain® Technology and the Creators of the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI)®  
794 Buffalo Creek Road. Lake Lure, NC 28746. Phone: 1-828-625-9153 or 1-800-432-hbdi Fax: 1-828-625-1402

[www.hbdi.com](http://www.hbdi.com) 03-10

