5 Ways to Use Your Head to Get Ahead and Accelerate Your Career

Thinking is at the core of everything we do, yet is often taken for granted. If we think of our brain as the hardware, our thinking is the software that allows you to use all of the information and skills you have available to you in your brain. Try these 5 steps to use your head and shift your thinking to accelerate your career in these tough economic times:

1. Be SMART and SAFE: There is an old adage, “If you do not know where you are going, any road will get you there.” You can only move forward if you know what direction you want to go.

   **Use your analytical left brain** to set career goals that are **SMART**: Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely

   Jerry Lopper suggests a great approach that may appeal more to your **intuitive right brain** – **SAFE**: See the end result, Accept the end result, Feel the end result, Express the end result.

   It is critical that you clarify your objectives, ideally communicate them to your manager and then stick to them. This is the best way to get where you want to go as quickly as possible.

2. Star in your Own Movie: Follow Arnold Palmer’s example of “seeing” a successful golf shot before it happens.

   **Use your visual brain** to think about the career future you want, and play the movie of your desired outcome happening in your head, in real time (not in slow motion or fast forward). Here is a video to get you started.

   Play the movie until it ends, and play it again when you need a boost. Pay attention to what you are doing that is working and use that to help you stay on track toward your desired future outcome. It is always a good idea to show your employer the growth you are capable of. Use this technique to help you successfully take on new challenges in your current position. Find the visualization techniques that work best for you, and you can develop your own script for success.

3. Network Juice: Tap into your **interpersonal brain** and work your network and connections well before you need them.

   Who can you learn from? Who would be good to know in order to achieve your goals? Who has influence? Make a list of those you can connect with locally. Use LinkedIn or other social networking sites to stay connected with people at a distance and to find personal routes to the contacts you would like to reach. Be authentic, be prepared and be willing to reciprocate! HBDI® practitioner Karlin Sloan shares some great tips for Pursuing the Power of Professional Connections.

4. Become an Addict and Get a Habit: You can think about doing all of the above all day long, but you will not make progress unless you work on it daily.

   Repetitive action helps you lock in habits, so use your **organized brain** and try this for 30 days. Set aside time every day to do this work, and set yourself up for success: schedule it for a productive time of the day, not when you are rushing out of the door in the morning.

   Try using time on your lunch break, and devote at least 15 minutes to clarifying your goals, building relationships and visualizing success. Follow these tips for developing new habits, and the activities will become second nature.

5. Cross-Train Your Brain to Jazz up Your Thinking: All employers want flexible thinkers on their teams.

   Use your **Whole Brain®** to stretch your thinking by learning tools and techniques outside of your comfort zone and natural preferences. You can learn more about your thinking preferences in this video.
This fall Ann Herrmann was invited to teach with Doug Hall at the University of Maine as part of their exciting Innovation Engineering minor program, designed to give skills to boost and ignite new thinking in any major of study and thus any career. The program teaches you to cross-train your brain, using skills and techniques from your analytical, visual, organized and relational brain to improve the outcome of any challenge you are facing.

What training can you engage in to become more Whole Brained? Just practicing the techniques mentioned above is a good place to start. Use your head and you will get ahead!