Using Multiple Learning Styles in Workshop Activities

Reference Chapter 9, section "Fun and Games," in *Requirements by Collaboration* by Ellen Gottesdiener, Addison-Wesley, 2002.

Models about human thinking and learning provide clues for effective ways to use the whole brain. These models imply that using variety during our workshops can promote speedier delivery of high-quality products. Following is a selection of human thinking and learning models.

- The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator classifies preferences around energy (*introvert* versus *extrovert*), information intake (detailed *sensor* versus big picture *intuiter*), decision making (logical, analytical *thinker* versus personal, humanistic *feeler*), and living (planning and closure-seeking *judger* versus adaptable, open-ended *perceiver*). The four dimensions combine into a grid of 16 possible preference types.

- The Kolb model describes preferences for taking in information (concrete experience versus abstract conceptualization) and internalizing information (active experimentation versus reflective observation). These combine into four preference types.

- The Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument classifies learners' thinking modes as left brain-cerebral (logical, analytical), left brain-limbic (sequential, planned, structured), right brain-limbic (emotional, interpersonal, sensory), and right brain-cerebral (visual, holistic, innovative).

- The Felder-Silverman model classifies learners as sensing (concrete, practical) or intuitive (conceptual, theoretical); visual or verbal; inductive (specific to general) or deductive (general to specific); active or reflective; and sequential or global.

- Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences model tells us that beyond the classic two types of intelligences tested in most schools—logical/mathematical and linguistic/verbal—there are other modes, such as musical, bodily/kinesthetic, special/visual, and interpersonal and intrapersonal. Other learning experts point out that people learn mostly by seeing, next by hearing, and last by doing (touching, tasting, smelling).

The following table lists ways to incorporate different learning styles in your workshop.

Group Activities and Learning Styles

Group Activity	Appeals to this preference, learning style, or intelligence
Combine writing and drawing activities.	Active experimenter
Combine both text and visual versions of a type of requirement.	Intuiter, visual, left and right brain-cerebral
Use role playing.	Extrovert; active experimenter (for the people playing roles); reflective observation (for the observers); interpersonal
Play music to energize people on breaks; play "thinking" music during individual or subgroup work time.	Auditory, kinesthetic
Hold time-limited discussions.	Reflective observer, auditory
Start and end the workshop on time.	Judger, left brain-limbic
Clarify proposals and decisions.	Judger, left brain-limbic
Give directions both verbally and in writing.	Left brain-cerebral
Use small groups.	Introvert, right brain-limbic
Define and use criteria for categorizing, prioritizing, sequencing, and ranking.	Left brain-cerebral; thinker; logical/analytic
Display the agenda and return to it after each activity, checking off what was done.	Judger, left brain-limbic
During debriefing, spend time to name or discuss feelings and reactions.	Feeler; interpersonal; intrapersonal
Use a "negativity" hammer or similar toy when someone makes negative comments.	Thinker, feeler; intrapersonal, interpersonal
Provide an overview of each activity by stating the expected outcome (product), the reason you're doing it (purpose), and methods and procedures you will use (process).	Judger, left brain-limbic
Provide toys for thinking and playing.	Kinesthetic, right brain-cerebral, abstract conceptualization
Toss a ball around to generate ideas, act out use cases, and solicit quick reactions with little analytic thinking.	Intuiter; feeler; kinesthetic
Write stories (scenarios), and use a brainwriting pool.	Linguistic/verbal
Conduct gallery reviews, moving around the room to review work on the wall.	Kinesthetic, perceiver
Create mind maps to express ideas and their interconnections.	Visual/spatial; perceiver
Debate both sides of positions.	Linguistic/verbal; left brain-cerebral; thinker; logical/analytic