

# thinksmart

## Facilitator Manual



# What is Think Smart?

Think Smart is a short self-perception instrument, designed to measure how you prefer to think across 10 styles of thinking. How we prefer to think affects how we behave, how we communicate, how we learn and how we process information. Think Smart identifies whether you have a High, Moderate or Low preference for the following thinking styles:

## SENSORY

- Visual: involves looking and watching, the use of pictures, diagrams and visual memory
- Auditory: focuses on language and the use of words, listening and talking things through
- Intuitive: involves feelings, emotions and intuition

## PEOPLE

- Conforming: wants to fit in, dislikes confrontation and will take a non-challenging approach
- Challenging: dislikes being told what to do, will challenge and confront, can be argumentative

## TASK

- Troubleshooting: a focus on problems or potential problems, makes contingencies, may worry
- Creative: multi-tasks, works things out 'backwards', has an untidy workspace, enjoys creativity
- Logical: systematic and sequential, ordered and structured, completes one task at a time
- Simplicity: will simplify complex issues, has a perception of simplicity, prefers things to be easy
- Complexity: enjoys the challenge of difficulty and complex issues, motivated by complexity

## WHAT DOES THE REPORT TELL ME?

The report maps your personal preference level for each style. It describes the likely behaviours and some of the thinking strategies that you might see in someone who has a high preference for that style of thinking. It then gives a brief summary of the behaviours and thinking strategies that you yourself are likely to prefer.



The report then highlights your three highest preferences – your ‘thinking strategy strengths’ - and your three lowest preferences – your ‘potential development areas’. It identifies your natural style when dealing with conflict and confrontation at work, followed by suggestions for a step-by-step personal development plan.

## WHAT CAN I LEARN FROM IT?

The Think Smart report helps you to increase your self-awareness, helping you to understand how your different thinking style preferences drive your behaviour and your approaches to people and tasks. It might help you understand why there are some people who you get on with immediately and others who you never understand – you might have completely different thinking style preferences. It also helps you to value other peoples’ preferences and value the differences that these can bring to a team.

### PLEASE REMEMBER:

There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ thinking styles, although some might be more appropriate in certain situations than others. Any combination of preferences in the ten Think Smart styles is possible, although some combinations are statistically more likely than others. As each style is statistically independent it is possible to have similar preferences across all the styles.

## HOW CAN I USE THINK SMART?

This pack provides more detailed examples of how Think Smart is used to support coaching, within teams and how you can use it as a manager.

### IN COACHING

Understanding more about how you prefer to think also helps you understand more about how you prefer to learn. As a coach you can develop flexibility across the styles to facilitate communication with your client; as a coachee Think Smart helps you understand more about your strengths and potential development areas that you might want to focus on.

It is simple to integrate Think Smart into any coaching programme. It is easy to administer on-line and does not require any accreditation to use it. The report is easy to understand and helps clients recognise and build on their thinking style strengths as well as learn to develop flexibility in other styles.

The on-line administration system allows you to manage how the client receives the report as part of the coaching programme. Think Smart helps makes the link between thinking and behaviour explicit and helps clients understand the potential impact of



their thinking styles on their colleagues. The report provides a framework that can be used to create the agenda for the coaching discussion.

## WITHIN TEAMS

Think Smart helps you identify the strengths each person bring to the team and helps all team members to understand and value other people's cognitive and behavioural strategies.

## AS A MANAGER

Understanding your personal preferences helps you understand your own management style and how that affects your team, your colleagues and your boss. Once you have understood your own style, and those of others, you can learn to become more flexible, adapting your style so that you can always get the best out of people, including yourself.

## THINK SMART AND COACHING

### USING THINK SMART AS A COACH

As a coach you need to be aware of and understand your own thinking preferences and how these affect the language you prefer to use, your approach to people and your preferred behaviour at work. Think Smart helps you develop your own self-awareness and a flexibility of approach towards your clients who might have different thinking style preferences to you.

### USING THINK SMART WITH YOUR CLIENTS

Think Smart helps those being coached to develop their own self-awareness and helps identify any potential development areas, particularly where there are extremes of preference in certain thinking styles. Using Think Smart you can work with your client on developing flexibility where it would be beneficial. Think Smart can be used at the start and the end of a coaching programme to measure changes in your client's preference levels.

## COACHING FOR LEARNING

How an individual thinks drives how they prefer to learn. Some people are more aware than others of their learning preferences and therefore the learning strategies that they adopt. The three highest preferences highlighted in the report could be the client's highest motivators for learning. The Think Smart styles can relate to learning in the following ways:



The Sensory styles the client prefers to use:

- Visual: learning through looking, watching, making visual representations either in their head or on paper.
- Auditory: learning through listening, talking things through and the use of words
- Intuitive: learning through intuition, something needs to 'feel right'

The Challenger:

- Whether the client needs to challenge in order to understand, often through questioning

How the client prefers to process information:

- Creative: whether the client prefers to learn by making connections, or often finds a solution and needs to work out how they got there afterwards
- Logical: prefers a step-by-step and structured approach to problem-solving
- Simplicity: is motivated to learn the 'easy' way, or prefers to simplify in order to understand
- Complexity: may see the underlying complexities, is motivated by difficulty

## COACHING FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

The Challenging and Conforming thinking styles are critical in identifying how someone might approach potential conflict situations at work. For example, by using Think Smart someone with a high preference for Challenging thinking can learn to appreciate why they need to challenge and can also learn more about the effect this can have on their colleagues. Someone with a high Conforming preference can learn to understand that the Challenger rarely challenges another person, but rather it is the task, the process or the information that they are seeking to clarify and re-organise for themselves. Understanding this can help to de-personalise conflict.

## THINK SMART AND TEAMWORK

### USING THINK SMART WITH TEAMS

Think Smart helps people to manage their relationships at work, particularly within their own teams. If you are a consultant or the manager of a team how you use Think Smart with a team will largely depend on how much time you have available to work with the team or the investment budget your client has. Whatever the answer to those two questions however, your objective when working with a team will probably always be the same: to increase the self-awareness of all team members in ways that also increases their cognitive and behavioural flexibility for each of the ten types of



thinking within Think Smart. You will also want to enhance everyone's appreciation (and possibly respect) for people with 'opposite' preferences to their own. You can design your own exercises to do this. At the Cognitive Fitness Consultancy we have found that people particularly enjoy 'spatial anchoring' for example - moving to different places in the room depending on their preferences. You will find that people are naturally creative (have you ever met a two year old who wasn't?). If you say to the team that "we need to find a number of ways of .....", - developing our flexibility, learning from each other, sharing our strategies, valuing people's preferences, integrating and embedding this learning into our workplace practices, you will find that the team will come up with 101 ways of making Think Smart work for them. You will need to guide, coach and facilitate them, and your leadership will be invaluable. Our research has shown time and time again that it is the leadership of the team that is the critically differentiating factor between acceptable and excellent performance. If the team's leader understands, values and integrates Think Smart into their thinking and behavioural strategies at work, then so will the team. If they don't, although the exercise will always be valuable to some, ultimately any lessons learned will be forgotten and the team and the organisation will continue to 'reinvent the wheel'.

## THINK SMART AND MANAGING OTHERS

### DEVELOPING YOUR SELF-AWARENESS AS A MANAGER

Managers at all levels need to understand about themselves and how their behaviour affects others. Think Smart helps managers to understand the implications of their personal thinking and behavioural preferences in relation to how they prefer to communicate, manage and motivate others.

### CREATING BALANCE

It is important to understand about the need for balance, both within the manager and within the team. Think Smart helps the manager recognise both their strengths and those of others, as well as any potential development areas, thereby helping the manager to identify potential weaknesses within the overall make-up of their team.

### CRITICAL AREAS

Consider preferences for the following dimensions:

- **Troubleshooting:** This might be an area that a proactive and forward thinking manager shows a lower preference for and might even become impatient with. However, it is vital for a successful team to have someone with a Troubleshooting preference. If you are a manager think carefully about your preference level and whether you need to develop greater flexibility in this area. Alternatively, you could ensure that you have someone in the team who can take on this role for you. Just remember to listen to them, to value and to respect them if this is the option you prefer to take.

- **Simplicity/Complexity:** It might be an advantage for a manager to have a moderate preference for both these styles of thinking. Understanding complexity, whilst being able to simplify issues back to their core elements, can be very useful in business.

## UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE

A manager's cognitive and behavioural style has a profound impact on the culture of their team. Think Smart highlights some of the implications of this for the team's success. For example, managers often need to be task focused in order to achieve an objective. How does their Think Smart profile reflect this? Are they so task focused that they forget to value the people within the team? Or are they so people focused that they lose sight of their objectives? Ideally, your management style should be flexible enough to 'give you the ability to dance' and to balance the necessary requirements of both, effectively and professionally, being personally supportive of others whilst maintaining your focus on your objectives and the tasks at hand. To give you another example: if a manager has a high preference for Challenging in what ways are they difficult to work with? If they have a low preference for Challenging will they always recognise the value of the Challenger to their team or will they try to promote harmony and unity to the detriment of creativity or debate?

