



Tailor Made

Whilst eagerly awaiting the introduction of the voluntary scheme, my team and I have been developing a suite of courses in anticipation. During this process we have taken into consideration the varying needs and abilities of the ADI industry and, with the wide range of resources and facilities available to us, we have been able to design products that will provide choice and flexibility to all our ADI Trainers and ADIs who wish to refresh existing skills, develop existing skills or be introduced to new ones.

Learning Styles

Being acutely aware that time spent off the road costs money, we have shaped each course with this in mind. At the same time we have endeavoured to provide a variety of learning methods in order to appeal to each individual's learning style. Indeed, one CPD module, designed by team member Geraint Lewis, covers this very topic of Adult Learning and Learning Styles. Jester & Miller¹ wrote: 'Your learning style is the way you prefer to learn. It doesn't have anything to do with how intelligent you are or what skills you have learned. It has to do with how your brain works most efficiently to learn new information. Your learning style has been with you since you were born.'

In terms of styles or preferences, there really is no 'right' approach to learning. However, if we all have our own preferred way of learning new information and are aware of how we, as individuals, learn best, it provides us with a better chance of studying and in a way that will pay off when it's time to apply the new knowledge/skills etc. During your lessons, you may have noticed that some of your



pupils become bored easily during your briefings - relax, it may not be your fault - whilst others won't do anything until you have given them all of the details or shown them how it's done. I can certainly recall some of my pupils who have tried something 'just to see what would happen'. What I didn't realise at the time was that this was their preferred learning style - though not always the safest!

As instructors, we have to be aware that the preferred learning style is just the best starting point in the learning cycle. The pupil has to go through each stage to learn fully.

Cutting The Cloth...

Following years of intensive research based on David Kolb's² learning cycle theory, Peter Honey and Alan Mumford³ developed their own learning styles system as a variation on the Kolb model. Honey and Mumford identified that: 'People on courses behaved in a variety of different ways that impinged on how much they learned from the course.'

For example, they noticed that some attendees were willing to talk or give information, whilst others were reserved and unwilling to talk freely; some were cheerful and quick to volunteer themselves for key roles such as presenter, yet others

seemed more serious and 'hid' themselves from these opportunities and kept a low profile.

As a result of this research they concluded that there are four basic learning styles, which have been termed:

- Activist - What's new? I'm game for anything!
- Reflector - I'd like time to think about this.
- Theorist - How does this relate to that?
- Pragmatist - How can I apply this in practice?

Activists - tend to involve themselves fully, without bias, in new experiences. They are happy to tackle things head on with a 'have a go' attitude, whilst enjoying and living in the here and now. They tend to act first and consider the consequences later, taking risks for the sake of it.

Reflectors - tend to prefer to stand back to ponder experiences by collecting information from different sources. They would rather consider all alternatives before coming to a conclusion. They are happy to deal with detail, yet are cautious, thoughtful. Therefore, although they enjoy discussing and putting things into perspective, they are usually unable to make a quick decision. Their philosophy is 'Let me think about this'.

Theorists - tend to adapt observations and abstract ideas into logically sound theories. However, they are usually reluctant to test these theories in practice, preferring to think problems through in a step-by-step and logical way. Their philosophy is 'What's the relationship?' By their nature, they tend to be low risk takers. They are true perfectionists and won't rest until things fit into a logical scheme. They prefer to work alone and take their time.

Pragmatists - are keen to take the first opportunity to experiment with applications and try out new ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. In addition to this, they have a commonsense, practical approach to making things work. Their philosophy is 'I wonder what would happen if...'. Having said this, they are impatient with reflecting, open-minded discussions and theory, preferring to get straight to the point and say what they think. They like to get things done efficiently, yet they will break the rules if there is a 'better' way to do things. By their very nature, they are problem solvers, produce spontaneous ideas and make hasty decisions. They see problems and opportunities as a challenge.

You may already have an idea of your preferred learning style, but to find out for sure you can visit www.peterhoney.com where you can also purchase a licence to use the questionnaires with your pupils - go on, try it and see how much less frustrating teaching and learning can be. **adi**

¹Introduction to the DVC Learning Style Survey for College written by: Catherine Jester, Learning Disability Specialist.

Adapted for the Web by: Suzanne Miller, Instructor, Math and Multimedia.

²David Kolb, www.dkolb.org

³Peter Honey & Alan Mumford, Peter Honey Publications Ltd, 10 Linden Avenue, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 6HB www.peterhoney.com

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