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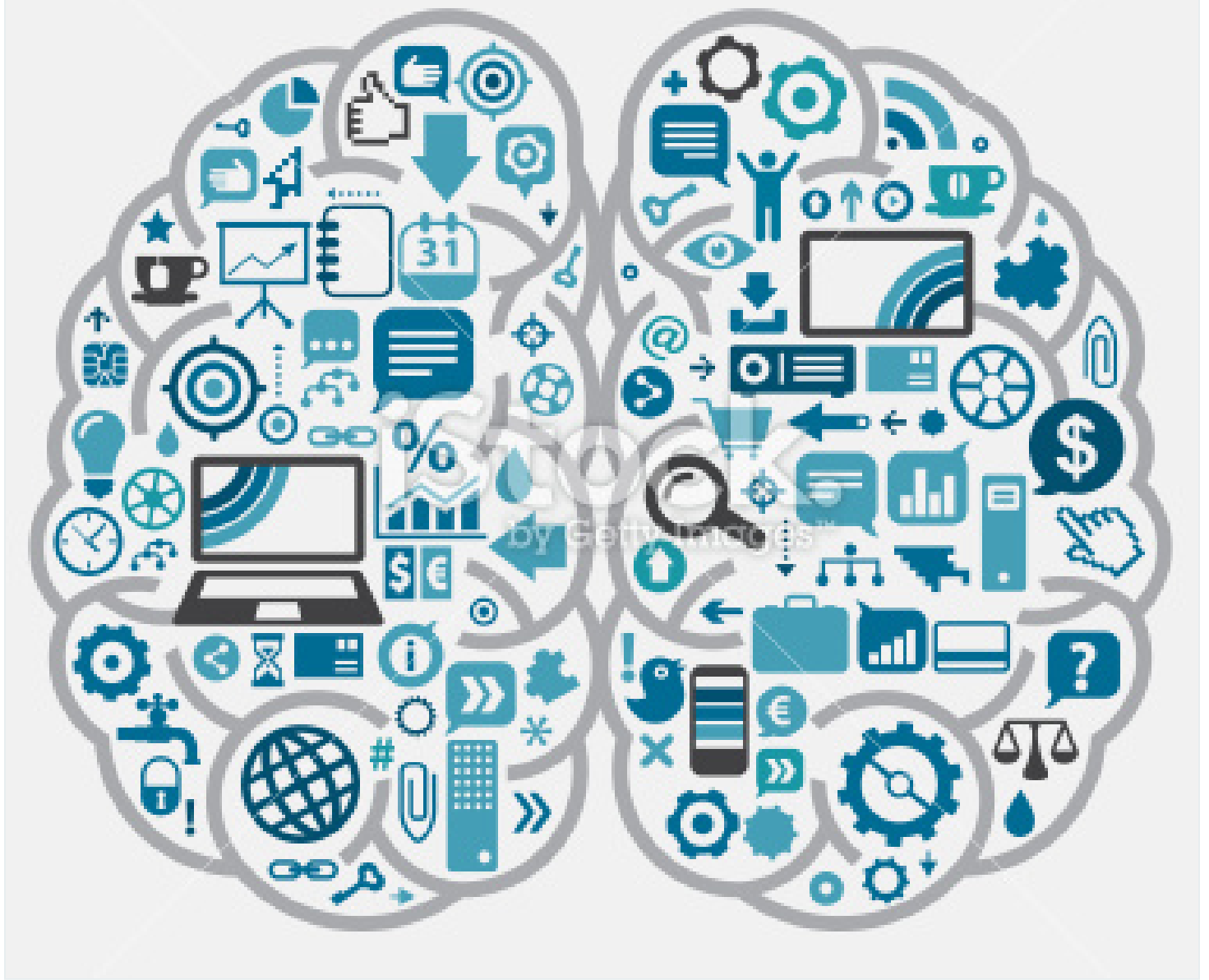
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SMALL BUSINESS

How to Retrain Your Brain for Business Success

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Dec. 19, 2014



Do you ever feel like you're drowning in the flood of data you receive each day? Are you simply reacting to challenges at work, instead of proactively addressing them? You are not alone. A new approach called "The Four Intelligences" can serve as a life preserver to help us master the flood of information we receive every day.

In my role as Senior Vice President of a business performance management firm, I commonly see executives struggle when attempting to answer two key questions:

1. Are you confident that your organization's performance will improve?
2. Do you believe that the information you have in hand is accurate?

The management team at one client in particular was providing their executives with mountains of reports, sometimes hundreds of pages. The execs were overwhelmed and didn't know how to make sense of it. They weren't sure what questions to ask, what data they needed or why they needed it. Leadership wanted to make a difference to impact and transform their organization, but found it too

difficult without insight into what was going on in their organization. That's what sparked my creation of the "Four Transformational Intelligences."

This new approach for business transformation blends practical strategies based on research from organizational psychology, neuroscience, business analytics, and multiple intelligences theory. These types of intelligences – financial, customer, data, and mastermind – are different but interrelated and, when coupled with key exercises, can lead to exponential organizational change. My original goal when creating this approach was to help my clients retrain their brains and drive value in their organizations, but I soon realized that this knowledge can benefit anyone from individual leaders up through entire organizations.

But what are the Four Intelligences?

1. **Financial Intelligence:** Collect and use financial data to generate insights that lead to increased cash flow, profitability, and growth, as well as quality and productivity.
2. **Customer Intelligence:** Understand your customers and how to find, attract, and connect with them on multiple, nuanced levels.
3. **Data Intelligence:** Create easily understood, organization-wide processes, procedures, and systems through collaboration. Communicate data in a timely manner and useful visual format.
4. **Mastermind Intelligence:** Build a non-judgmental, creative environment based on mutual respect and collaboration. Empower employees to be innovative when engaging and supporting partners and customers.

Each of the Four Intelligences encompasses a unique set of questions for every decision maker to ask himself or herself and their team. By training their brains to think along these lines, they will be able to use the outputs from these queries to identify, evaluate, and pursue transformational opportunities.

As I was building the methodology for this approach while consulting with my clients, I realized there is another major area to consider as you are about to embark on a new endeavor – your mindset.

“When the student is ready, the master appears”

This expression applies to the workplace as well. But, what does it mean to you? To me, it means that true learning and transformation can only occur when you have the right attitude, or mindset.

To make this mental transition, you must prepare, prepare and then prepare some more. Asking the proper strategic questions at the outset of a project can help you avoid costly rework, delays and deviations from strategy. Thorough and strategic assessment and documentation is key, as it paints a clearer picture of potential impacts on people, processes and systems. Through my work, I've learned that there is no tool or process that can replace the effectiveness of a meticulous requirements analyst. You may not have one at your disposal, but that doesn't mean that you can't learn to ask similar questions.

Get On the Same Page

Let's say you ask all the right questions and map out your strategy. Then you must be all set, right? Not quite yet. Does everyone who will be impacted – both internally and externally – by this project share the same definitions of key terms? Of necessary action items? Of who is responsible for what? By ensuring that all players are on the same page from the get-go, you establish a cohesive mindset that improves your odds of achieving impactful and lasting change.

An Iterative Cycle

The Four Intelligences are not a static tool – rather, they represent a dynamic, iterative cycle. By constantly reevaluating changing conditions through the lenses of Financial, Customer, Data and Mastermind Intelligence, you provide yourself with ongoing opportunities to refine and readjust strategy as needed.

Caution: May Be Habit Forming

Just like with any new pattern of behavior, harnessing the power of the Four Intelligences comes through practice. Your goal is to create a habit of automatically thinking along the lines of the Four Intelligences. It's not just rhetoric either – there are many engaging exercises you can try solo or as a team to really internalize the methodology. Once that occurs, you can easily spot what areas can benefit from your attention, and then improve them, helping yourself and your organization.

As you learn to cut through the clutter of daily data and collect and use critical information, you'll see that you have optimized business performance through a combination of strategy, technology and teamwork. Then, you will be able to confidently answer “Yes” to those two key questions.

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