



**BUSINESS
SCHOOL**

KNOWLEDGE CENTRE COGNITIVE STYLES

**JOIN THE JOURNEY OF A COMPETENCE THAT REALLY MAKES
THE DIFFERENCE**

Knowledge Centre Cognitive Styles

Today's workplace is all about 'processing the (overload of) information we are continuously confronted with, and consequently the need to expeditiously take the right decisions.' Lately insights gleaned from the field of cognitive styles has shed more and more light upon this intriguing aspect of mankind's nature.

Cognitive styles are the consistent and innate preferences individuals display when organising and processing information. As such, these styles influence individual behaviour and performance. One person may judge something as boring, whilst someone else may find that very same thing captivating. One colleague may consider particular information very useful, whereas another may adjudge it as mere anecdotic detail.

In order to understand the impact of cognitive styles upon our daily work behaviour, we embarked on a journey of exploring this intriguing field. Following upon an extensive literature review and well-focused research, we developed a unique theoretical model and measurement instrument – the Cognitive Style Indicator® (CoSI).

Four basic cognitive styles play a key-role in this model: fact-finding, planning, creating and co-operating. Depending on the dominance of one or more of these basic styles, a person will display a preference for particular ways of dealing with facts and figures, planning, creativity and cooperating with others. The majority of co-workers score high on a combination of two basic styles, which translates to six profiles: expert, inventor, adviser, go-getter, accomplisher and pacesetter.

The aforesaid preferences characterize a person's unique value within a team. Consequently, we are bold enough to state that failure to appreciate the logic related to cognitive styles makes hiring and the coaching of co-workers a daunting task. Composing teams without taking cognitive styles into account is therefore fraught with risk.

The perspective provided by the Cognitive Style Indicator® (CoSI) is very valuable in that it increases your insight into how people differ and how they complement each other in their working environments. When we understand each other's cognitive style this not only helps to improve interpersonal relations, but, as a consequence, also improves the performance of teams and of the organisation. By respecting diverse cognitive styles, sound problem-solving and creative thinking is enhanced, and the organisation's flexibility to cope with change is simultaneously improved.

The CoSI-model is easy to grasp at all levels of the organisation. The underlying approach is closely related to the basic ideas encompassed in positive psychology. Our experiences in working with the model has strongly proved its usefulness for organisations.

RATIONALE FOR THIS PROJECT

The first and foremost rationale for this project is the numerous requests we receive from a diversity of organisations that are seeking a workable model that helps them to easily understand what happens when people work together.

Our objectives:

- to develop state-of-the art tools and apps that are of use in the field;
- to optimise the underlying model and insights; and
- to investigate how cognitive styles connect to the wide-ranging variance in people behaviour and performance.

Together with you we will:

1. build a unique set of practical tools linked to the CoSI-framework (hiring, coaching, composing teams, self-assessment, ...), which you can use in your practice;
2. ensure that these tools (and the underlying theory) are relevant in an international context;
3. make these tools easily accessible for all co-workers wherever (by way of e-learning) or at whatever level they work;
4. explore the best ways of aligning the COSI-tools with the other HR-tools you use; and
5. further deepen the theoretical background by together setting up relevant research.

Based on our experience with the CoSI, we are confident that your participation in this project will enable your organisation to meaningfully save on training costs. You will be empowered to compose better balanced teams, increase co-worker understanding and appreciation of other team members, which will manifest in an improvement of the quality of the decisions teams take, and therefore also in their performance.

THE CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

The following draft agenda constitute the proposed points of departure for the suggested cooperation. Of necessity, you as a project partner will co-decide the final agenda!

DEEPENING THE APPLIED DIMENSION

1. Developing a coaching game based upon the different cognitive styles. This game will enable your co-workers to learn how best to deal with others characterised by a certain style style.
2. Adapting the questionnaire used for training purposes to the needs of your company. We wish to adapt this instrument to make it even more practical and of use to you.
3. Developing a CoSI app that includes two parts: one part to be used to process the questionnaire, and the second part to be used by line managers to compose project teams.
4. Composing an e-training booklet that enables co-workers who administer the questionnaire to get to know more about cognitive styles.
5. Composing a coaching guide for line managers, which will assist them in composing highly effective teams. Answers will be provided to questions such as: Do dyads with the same style perform better than those with a different style? What happens to a person's cognitive style when he gets stressed? Does style impact a 360° evaluation? ...
6. Currently, we use a cohort of several thousand international managers to benchmark against. We would, however, wish to build new reference cohorts, e.g. a cohort within specific organisations (to be used exclusively within such organisations). This could help to identify a specific 'cognitive style' culture within your company, answering questions on how best to deal with specific teams.
7. We will be opening our international research network to you, inviting our associates to enlighten your organisation with their approaches and insights.

Although we start out from a solid theoretical base, our desire is to further explore the following key questions related to the domain of cognitive styles.

1. Currently the questionnaire, which is used for training purposes, comprises 24 so called forced choice items. We would wish to extend this instrument to further improve its reliability, and to make it applicable to a broader range of people.
2. Research to date indicates that cognitive styles hold true in different cultures. But we need to increase our understanding on how exactly culture impacts cognitive styles and the tools we use to measure cognitive styles. We need to understand the implications when you are about to use the CoSI in a subsidiary somewhere in the East or South.
3. We want to further improve our insights into the profile of entrepreneurs. Exploring which styles are representative of the real 'intrapreneurs' in your company. Do social entrepreneurs differ from "entrepreneurs"?
4. Is there a link between cognitive styles and certain managerial approaches/attitudes, e.g. operational intelligence, client intimacy, product leadership? Furthermore, investigating whether there is a relation with the so-called interaction styles?
5. Exploring what happens when you negotiate, and whether certain styles have a preference for certain techniques. But as well what is the style of the coaches in your company, does their style influence their advice?
6. Working with you in a partnership to think outside the box and seek answers to vexing questions. Answering curiosity questions on the styles of leaders such as Obama and Merkel? What are the profiles of some of our top politicians? What are the styles of our top athletes and sport coaches?
7. Launching a new doctoral research project on cognitive styles within a year, which will further strengthen our International research network by virtue of the theses doctoral students will deliver.

As mentioned, we will invite scholars from our international network to enter into interesting discussions with us, e.g. Dr Kobus Neethling (South Africa), a dear colleague and a specialist in creativity.

JOIN US AS A PARTNER OR A MEMBER: YOUR ADDED VALUE!

A key objective of the Vlerick Business School is to assist the business community in applying new knowledge. With this in mind, this knowledge centre offers you a unique opportunity to stay in touch with state-of-the-art theory and practice. It is focused on a well-described managerial problem. Customised research, together with related workshops and a toolbox of useful apps promises to ensure that your participation will translate to recommendations and tools that are ready to implement.

PARTNERS AND MEMBERS WILL:

- have the privilege of firsthand use of the developed tools;
- be afforded opportunities to network with colleagues to share best practices, and to benchmark their practices against other companies;
- gain access to an information gateway to relevant research findings, reference works and documents written by the research team that 'translates' these findings for you;
- gain increased visibility by virtue of publications, press releases, and the developed tools;
- contribute to sustainable, rigorous research that is relevant to organisational practice; and
- attend four meetings per year to exchange experiences and participate in practical workshops related to the developed tools.

DO YOU WISH TO CONTRIBUTE AS A PARTNER?

As a partner you will enjoy the possibility of a one-to-one relationship with a faculty member that will, together with you, explore approaches to problems your organisation may experience, offering you individualised help.

Our aim is to have 10 network members around the table. In addition, we wish to enlist one or two companies as partners to enrich this project.

JOIN US IN MAKING A TELLING DIFFERENCE!

Professor Herman Van den Broeck, Professor Karlien Vanderheyden, and Dr Eva Cools are eager to talk to you on how to best enrich the agenda for this knowledge centre.

herman.vandenbroeck@vlerick.com

karlien.vanderheyden@vlerick.com

eva.cools@vlerick.com

Contact us or our assistant: inge.degraeve@vlerick.com (00 32 9 210 97 58)

YOUR TEAM

PROF DR HERMAN VAN DEN BROECK

Herman Van den Broeck is a partner and full professor at Vlerick Business School and at the University of Ghent, Belgium. His major fields of interest are cognitive styles, leadership, professional skills, change management and emotional intelligence . In addition to his scientific publications, Herman has published several other books; his most recent being "Beyonders. Transcending Average Leadership." (2011), which he authored together with David Venter. During his career he has worked with large organisations in a variety of sectors.

herman.vandenbroeck@vlerick.com



PROF DR KARLIEN VANDERHEYDEN

Karlien Vanderheyden obtained a master degree in Industrial and Organisational Psychology at Ghent University in 1990. She was Visiting Research Fellow at University of Maryland (1994-1995) and became Doctor in Psychology at Ghent University in 1998. She teaches people management in degree programmes as well as in customised programmes. Her interest in managing people becomes also clear in her research, e.g. decision making and intuition, diversity in teams, individual differences and performance. Her book 'Essentials Communicatie' is a nice illustration of how to combine theory and practice. Based on her experience and knowledge she coaches managers to optimise their performance in organisations.



karlien.vanderheyden@vlerick.com

DR EVA COOLS

Eva Cools earned a KU Leuven master degree in Pedagogical Sciences (2000) and graduated as a Doctor in Applied Economics at UGent (2007). She currently works as Research Manager and Academic Research Coordinator at the Research Dean's Office of Vlerick Business School. Her research activities focus on cognitive styles, person-environment fit and career preferences, team research, entrepreneurship and management education. She is co-editor of a Routledge book on cognitive styles. Eva was the academic leader of the 13th Education, Learning, Styles, Individual differences Network (ELSIN) conference in Ghent, Belgium. She is member of the ELSIN executive committee, serving as Secretary.



eva.cools@vlerick.com

INGE DEGRAEVE

Inge Degraeve has been working at Vlerick Business School for a number of years. She started as a secretary, doing the administration of the executive education programmes where she was responsible for the programmes on people management. Afterwards she became the assistant of some professors and is now also responsible for the follow-up of several online tools and application, working on feedback, interaction and teamwork.



inge.degraeve@vlerick.com



BRUSSELS - GHENT - LEUVEN - ST. PETERSBURG
VLERICK BUSINESS SCHOOL - THE BUSINESS SCHOOL OF GHENT UNIVERSITY AND KU LEUVEN
STICHTING VAN OPENBAAR NUT - PUBLIC UTILITY FOUNDATION - VAT BE 0424 244 049
HQ: REEP 1 - 9000 GHENT - BELGIUM - T + 32 9 210 97 11
INFO@VLERICK.COM - WWW.VLERICK.COM