Elevate training programs with learning preferences

Insights for a tailored approach to workforce development

WITHYOUWITHME

Contents

What are learning preferences?

Everyone experiences the world differently, and the way we perceive, and process information changes depending on our natural skills and lived experiences.

Scientific theories about individual preferences in learning style have been in circulation since the 1950's. Assessments to identify an individual's preferred style were popularised in the 1970's as a method for teachers to identify the learning requirements of their students and adapt their classroom methods accordingly.

In a modern workforce context, learning style assessments allow for the adaptation of learning and development programs to better maintain employee engagement, boost productivity and improve information retention. Empowering individuals with an understanding of their own learning style or preference also encourages them to seek out upskilling methods and training resources that will be of most benefit to them.

The learning preferences identified in WithYouWithMe's *Potential* platform are based on the popular VARK model, created by New Zealand teacher and researcher Neil Fleming in 1987. Fleming's VARK model uses a questionnaire to identify an individual's sensory preferences for learning and classifies them into four different modes: Visual, Aural, Read/write and Kinaesthetic.

Potential breaks these styles down further, identifying seven key learning preferences and the best methods for engaging them.

# How learning preference insights enhance L&D in the workplace

Streamlined training programs

Knowing employees' learning preferences allows L&D managers to streamline their organisation's approach to training, focusing on the methods they know will work best. Programs can be tailored to cover more information in less time as employees remain engaged and absorb information quickly.

Higher engagement

Learning styles provide deep insight into how employees prefer to engage with information in a training environment. Programs can be adapted to encourage more open discussion to target interpersonal learners or physical action for kinaesthetic learners, leading to more active participation in programs and reduced stress or frustration with the training experience.
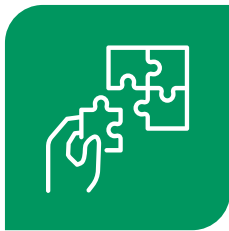
Improved problem-solving abilities

Having both managers and their teams understand their own learning preferences encourages the development of problem-solving skills based on each person's propensity to absorb information in different ways. Employees can be encouraged to play to their strengths when faced with on-the-job challenges.

Tailored onboarding experiences

Understanding the learning preference of new employees means the onboarding experience can be personalised to meet their individual needs. With tailored learning, new starters feel at ease when absorbing large volumes of organisational information and can settle into their roles faster.

Increased self-confidence

Once employees understand their preferred learning style, they start to recognise and utilise training techniques that are of most benefit to them. This improves their comprehension of new concepts and ability to remain productive, boosting their confidence and overall success.
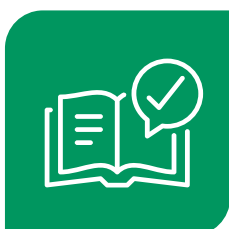
Enhanced information retention

With learning techniques adapted to their individual needs, employees' absorption and retention of new information is increased, allowing them to grasp concepts faster and upskill in new areas, without the need to go over old information.

What are the seven learning preferences?

Interpersonal (social)

Someone who prefers to learn in groups or with other people, both verbally and non-verbally. These individuals are both good listeners and good communicators.

Intrapersonal (solitary)

Someone who prefers to work alone and focusses best without the distraction of others. These individuals learn best when working through concepts independently.

Kinaesthetic (physical)

Someone who prefers using their body, hands and sense of touch. For these individuals, learning happens when they physically carry out an activity.

Auditory (musical)

Someone who learns using sound and music. These individuals prefer to hear something in order to learn and commit it to memory by saying it out loud.

Verbal (linguistic)

Someone who prefers using words, both in speech and writing. Learning methods for these individuals include mnemonics and repeating back what they have learned.

Visual (spatial)

Someone who prefers using photographs or pictures. When tasks and information are presented visually, these individuals use their visual memory to learn.

Logical (mathematical)

Someone who prefers using logic, reasoning and systems to learn. These individuals easily recognise patterns and connect concepts and prefer structure and logic when absorbing information.

Interpersonal
Social, engaging and communicative

About interpersonal learners

Interpersonal learners communicate well with others, both verbally and non-verbally. People tend to listen to them or go to them for advice as they are sensitive to others' motivations, feelings and moods.

They tend to enjoy leadership roles and mentoring others and typically prefer learning in groups or having one-on-one time with an instructor. Their learning is heightened by bouncing thoughts and ideas off others and listening to how they respond.

Preferred training style

These individuals learn best when working with other people and will thrive in a social training environment with team members or instructors who favour a similar approach. Working in groups enables them to practice behaviours or processes and understand how to deal with variations.

Training techniques

- Working in a group or one-on-one as much as possible
- Using mind maps or association diagrams and working through these collectively
- Asking individuals to explain their understanding of key topics and offering feedback
- Using role play to break down complex concepts
- Encouraging individuals to start a separate group to compare notes, thoughts and interpretations
- Asking individuals to teach concepts they've learned to others or an instructor.

Intrapersonal
Solitary, independent and introspective

About intrapersonal learners

Individuals who prefer an intrapersonal or solitary learning style tend to be more private, introspective and independent. They can concentrate easily – and for longer periods of time – focusing on the task at hand. They spend time on self-analysis, and often reflect on past events and the way they approached them.

They take time to ponder and assess their own accomplishments or challenges and may keep a journal, diary or personal blog to record their thoughts.

Preferred training style

These individuals learn best when working alone through self-paced programs. One-on-one time with an instructor would only be used to clarify information or concepts they've been unable to understand on their own.

They will often consider questions like what's in this for me? Why does this matter? And how can I use this skill in my day-to-day role? Their inner thoughts and feelings towards certain topics will have a noticeable impact on their motivation to learn.

Training techniques

- Setting clear goals and making plans ahead of each training program
- Aligning learning topics with their current or future role requirements
- Proactively building interest in learning topics
- Finding quiet, solitary spaces and allowing uninterrupted learning wherever possible
- Encouraging them to keep a journal that includes information on their personal thoughts and ideas relating to certain concepts
- Setting aside time to review challenges in depth once they've had a chance to work through concepts alone.

Kinaesthetic
Physical, active and energetic

About kinaesthetic learners

Kinaesthetic learners rely on their body and sense of touch to engage with the world, and they tend to use large hand gestures or other body language to communicate. They typically enjoy sports, exercise and physical activities such as gardening or woodwork.

They like to think out issues, ideas and problems while moving and would rather go for a run or walk if something is bothering them, as opposed to sitting at a desk. They notice and appreciate textures in clothes or furniture and like getting their hands dirty, making models and solving puzzles.

Preferred training style

These individuals learn best when they're able to use touch, action, movement or hands-on activities to explore concepts or ideas. When engaging with a new topic or learning a skill, they prefer to jump in and explore practical applications as quickly as possible.

Having objects such as flash cards or posters to physically touch and manipulate while they learn helps them to memorise information.

Training techniques

- Exploring concepts by writing or drawing diagrams on big pieces of paper using colourful markers
- Using breathing techniques or physical activities to refocus before training commences
- Using touch, action and hands-on activities wherever possible
- Implementing role playing to explore key concepts and finding ways for them to act out or simulate what they've learnt in the physical world
- Using physical objects including post-its or flash cards.

Auditory
Aural, musical and rhythmic

About auditory learners

Auditory learners like to work with sound and music and have an innate sense of pitch and rhythm. They often sing or play a musical instrument and can easily differentiate between the origin of sounds. They will often notice music playing in the background of movies or TV shows and certain songs spark emotional reactions. They often find themselves humming a song and themes or jingles pop into their heads without prompting.

Preferred training style

These individuals learn best when they're able to incorporate sound, rhyme or music into the process. Listening to podcasts or videos which include aural explanations of concepts helps them to absorb information more easily.

Creating associations between training and certain types of music will enable them to remain more focused on the task at hand, regardless of location.

Training techniques

- Incorporating podcasts, sound clips or videos to break down complex topics
- Engaging in group or one-on-one discussions about key concepts
- Creating mnemonics or acrostics that use rhythm and rhyme for memorising
- Allowing individuals to complete self-paced learning with music in the background to help maintain concentration
- Using sound effects to visualise concepts
- Encouraging them to repeat back what they've learnt or explain it in their own words.

Verbal
Confident, linguistic and expressive

About verbal learners

Verbal learners find it easy to express themselves to others, both verbally and in writing. They love to read and write and tend to have a large and varied vocabulary. They also know the meaning of many words, and regularly seek out the meaning of new words they come across. They enjoy tongue twisters, rhymes and poems and feel confident debating verbally with others or speaking in public.

Preferred training style

These individuals learn best when using written or spoken words and creative language to explore ideas. They take plenty of notes while training and will regularly look back over what they've written, taking the time to read important concepts out loud.

Mnemonics and acrostics help them remember words or phrases and offer opportunities for them to be creative with language.

Training techniques

- Asking to explain learned concepts out loud
- Keeping training journals and writing notes
- Reading aloud when learning by written methods and using a dramatic and varied tone
- Using mnemonics or acrostics to remember key words or phrases
- When training alongside others, using role-playing or debates to explore ideas
- Writing and recording scripts when learning new concepts and listening back to them later.
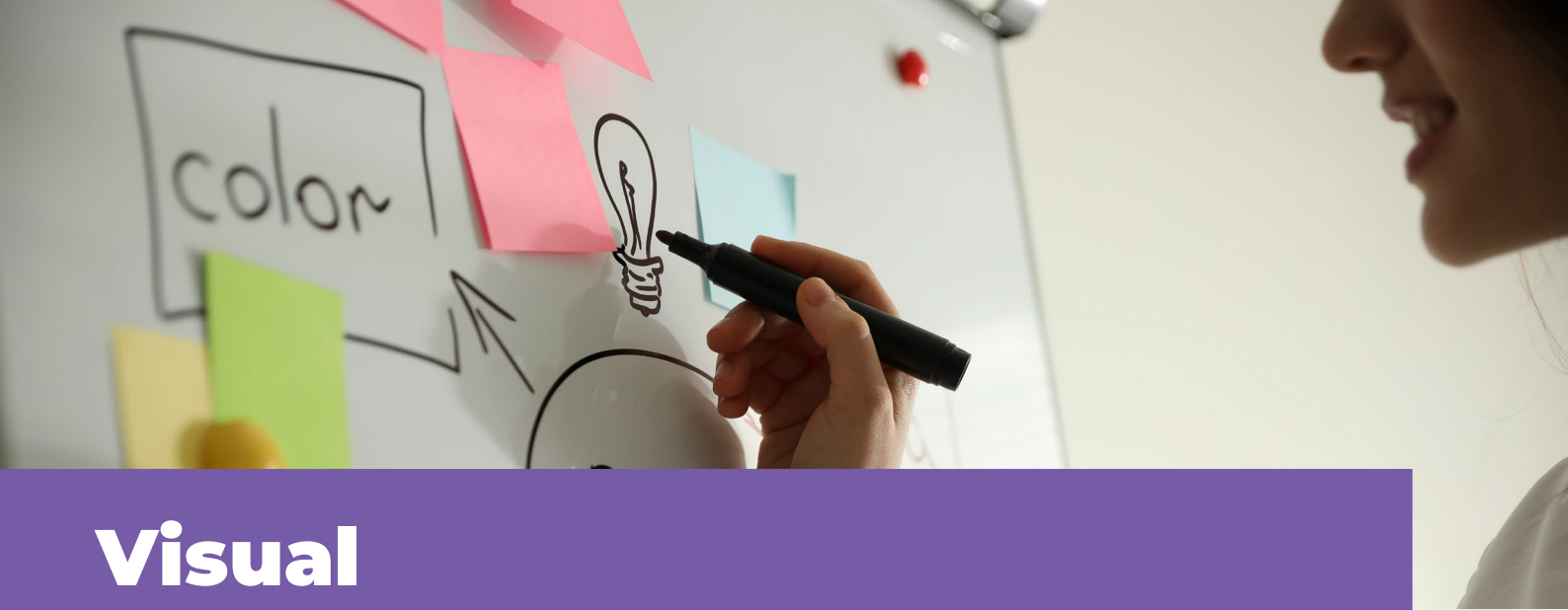
Visual
Spatial, artistic and instinctive

About visual learners

Visual learners prefer using images, colours and maps to organise information and communicate with others. They can easily visualise objects, plans and outcomes in their mind's eye. They also have a good spatial understanding and an innate sense of direction so they can easily find their way around using maps, and rarely get lost. They love drawing, scribbling and doodling, especially with colours.

Preferred training style

These individuals learn best when exploring concepts visually, using pictures, spatial arrangement, colours and drawings to describe or associate concepts. They will benefit from replacing text with images and colours wherever possible.

Creating mind maps – either digitally or on paper – will allow them to better organise and understand ideas.

Training techniques

- Using colour, spatial organisation and diagrams
- Finding visual means to describe key concepts including photos, drawings or maps
- Creating mind maps using colour and images in place of text
- Color-coding study notes to create visual links with concepts
- Creating a visual journey or story to help memorise content that isn't easy to 'see'
- Seeking out or drawing diagrams where possible
- Pinning up posters or using a whiteboard during training programs to trigger visual memory queues.

Logical
Mathematical, scientific and systematic

About logical learners

Logical learners typically work through new information and address challenges in a systematic and methodical way. In conversation, their scientific approach to thinking means they support their points with examples or statistics and are aware of logic flaws in other people's words, writing or actions.

They recognise patterns easily, work well with numbers and like using their brains for mathematical reasoning. They will often play brainteaser games like sudoku, backgammon or chess.

Preferred training style

These individuals learn best when they have to-do lists, agendas and numerical targets to track their progress against. When faced with difficult concepts, classifying and grouping information together will help them understand it.

Mapping out connections between different concepts and considering the practical applications helps them memorise information.

Training techniques

- Identifying repetitive processes for learning and absorbing new content
- Creating and using summary lists by extracting key points from learning materials
- Making use of 'systems thinking' to explore broader concepts and trying to build a full understanding of the whole picture
- Noting down links between different concepts and mapping out connections
- Considering the practical applications of the content as opposed to rote learning.

Unlock powerful workforce insights including learning preferences via the *Potential* platform.

[Get in touch](#) to find a solution for your organisation.