

# What Are Your Natural Training Strengths?

Your strengths are an expression of who you are. They are connected to the way you think, perceive, and evaluate the world around you. Marcus Buckingham, who is often referred to as the leader of the “strengths revolution,” points out that our strengths are a composite of natural talent, skill, and knowledge. In other words, your strengths are directly linked to innate abilities (a talent for reading others or seeing the big picture) and the skills/knowledge (effective coaching skills or strategic planning skills) that you bring to the table.

For example, I have a friend who is a truly masterful networker. She has used her talent to generate a great deal of knowledge—connections and relationships she can tap into when needed. The skill she has developed is the methodical way she meets, greets, and follows up with her contacts. Taken together my friend’s strength has given her a network of valuable contacts. On the other hand, networking is not one of my natural strengths. Yet, I have managed to acquire the needed skills and knowledge to thrive in business through observing and learning from masterful networkers (like my friend) and figuring out what works for me.

### *Essential Questions*

- What are my natural training strengths?
- What role do they play in my success as a trainer?
- How do I build on my strengths to reach all learners?

# The Trainer's Strengths

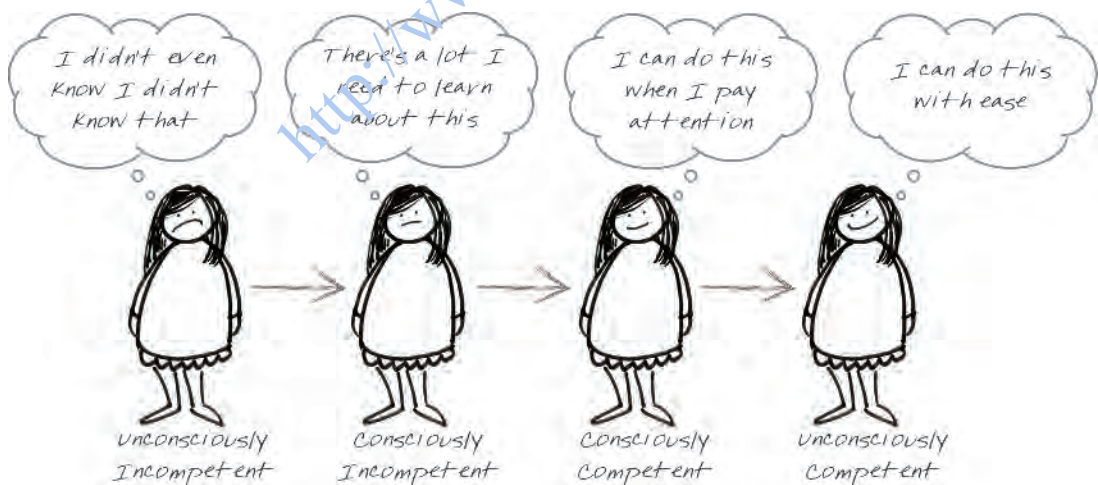
The ability to effortlessly deliver engaging and transforming learning experiences is a rare gift. Most trainers and instructional designers come to the craft with a natural ability in one or more training approaches (dynamic storytelling or organized delivery, for example). Other approaches require us to build knowledge and skills, just as I had to work on my networking skills.

As we develop skill, we move through a predictable process. The Conscious Competency Spectrum describes the stages we move through as we develop our abilities and build skill and knowledge. Learners begin in a stage of “unconscious incompetence” and move to the final stage of “unconscious competence” (Chapman).

In the unconsciously incompetent stage, we have little to no knowledge of a given subject and are often unaware of what we don't know. When we discover how much we don't know, we become consciously incompetent. We seek out new information and practice new skills, which brings us to the stage of being consciously competent. And if we continue to practice and gain mastery, we move to the stage of unconsciously competent.

In this book, you will become aware of skills you are unconsciously competent (even masterful) in because they are an extension of your natural strengths. And you will become aware of skills that, if practiced, can greatly enhance your ability to perform the real job of a trainer, which is to move learners through a complete learning cycle.

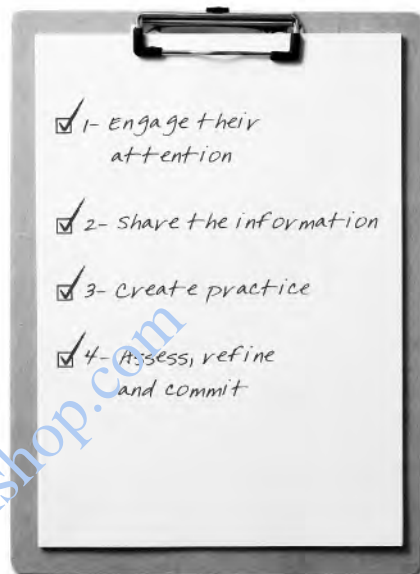
## The Conscious Competency Spectrum



# Job of the Trainer

As a trainer, you move learners through the competence spectrum by creating an opportunity for them to discover what they know, what they don't know, and the value of knowing more. You do this by guiding the learner through a complete learning cycle that includes four essential steps.

- 1 You gain the learners' attention and generate interest in the content so that they are aware of the value of the learning and appreciate that there is room for personal growth. If you have ever tried to "teach" people something they believe they already know, you know this is a "not to be missed" step in the learning cycle.
- 2 Next, you share information that will enable the learner to move into application. One of the most important jobs during this stage is to ensure that the learner is not overwhelmed with information. To accomplish this, the content must be refined to the essential information and delivered with clear and consistent organization.
- 3 You create an opportunity for learners to practice and build skill. As the learners practice and gain skill in real-world application, the job of the trainer is to coach and assist them as they evaluate their own applications.
- 4 To ensure performance transfer, you create an opportunity for the learners to assess their applications, refine for implementation, and commit to next steps. In this final step, you prepare the learners to move out into the real world and generate performance results.



# Value of This Book

This book will share with you the training skills you need to deliver a complete learning experience that appeals to all learning styles while moving learners through a complete learning cycle. To do this well, you must competently and confidently guide learners through the four unique parts of the learning cycle. You will discover what must happen for real learning transfer to occur. You will learn how to build on your strengths to design and deliver the four critical parts of the learning experience. You will have an opportunity to assess your training strengths using the 4MAT® Training Style Inventory (TRSI). As you move through this book, we'll explore the four critical parts of the learning cycle and show you how to build upon your existing strengths to enable you to be masterful in leading a learning experience that appeals to all learning styles.



# Let's Get Started: Taking the Training Style Inventory® (TRSI®)

In the companion site to this book, you will access your personal 4MAT Training Style Inventory. The Training Style Inventory will assess your strengths in four critical training approaches. You can access the Training Style Inventory (TRSI) at **[www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com](http://www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com)**. Use the access code found in the last section of this book.

Once you have completed the Training Style Inventory, you will have access to a comprehensive Training Strengths Report and Action Guide. This guide features an in-depth analysis of your training style strengths and will help you understand how your strengths relate to the diversity of learning style preferences. You'll discover what comes naturally to you and discover the dangers of over-using your natural strengths.



The Action Guide also provides you with skill development strategies identified specifically for your training style strengths and will help you put in place an action plan for developing existing strengths and building new skills. You should carefully read through the results of your assessment and review closely the suggested Action Strategies.

Finally, once you have completed the assessment you'll have the opportunity to connect with other readers through an online forum and explore additional resources to develop your skill and understanding in 4MAT design and delivery.

Take some time now to complete the Training Style Inventory and review your results.

» You can access the Training Style Inventory assessment at [www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com](http://www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com).



# The Four Training Approaches

After completing your Training Style Inventory, you should know your strength scores in four training styles identified in the 4MAT model: Type One, Type Two, Type Three, and Type Four. Your scores represent the level of focus you have on each of the four training style approaches. The scores do not indicate a level of skill in applying the approaches. We will talk more about assessing your skill in the later chapters of this book. For now, let's explore the focus of each training style and its relation to leading others in the learning process. Here's a quick recap of the focus of each training approach:



## **Type One Trainer**

Focuses on establishing personal meaning by answering the question, "Why?"



## **Type Two Trainer**

Focuses on transmitting knowledge by answering the question, "What?"



## **Type Three Trainer**

Focuses on developing skill by answering the question, "How?"



## **Type Four Trainer**

Focuses on real-world adaptation by answering the question, "If?"

See the table on the opposite page for more detailed information on the favorite question, focus, and approach of each training style. Read through all four descriptions in the chart and notice what applies to you.

### TYPE FOUR TRAINER FOCUS AND APPROACH

Favorite Question: If?

Focuses on: Innovation, Synthesis, Possibility

**If your preferred training approach is Type Four, you:**

- Are interested in enabling learner self-discovery
- Try to help people act on their visions
- Believe training should be geared to learners' interests and inclinations
- See knowledge as necessary for improving the larger system
- Encourage experiential learning
- Like to use a variety of training methods
- Are dramatic and seek to energize learners
- Attempt to create new forms, to stimulate life
- Try to frequently create new boundaries

### TYPE ONE TRAINER FOCUS AND APPROACH

Favorite Question: Why?

Focuses on: Relevance, Personal Meaning, Effectiveness

**If your preferred training approach is Type One, you:**

- Are interested in facilitating individual growth
- Create activities to enhance self-awareness
- Believe training should improve teaming success
- See knowledge as enhancing personal insights
- Encourage authenticity in people
- Use discussion, group work, and feedback about feelings
- Are supportive of others and seek to engage people in cooperative efforts
- Are aware of social forces that affect human development
- Focus on significant issues in the learning experiences you craft

### TYPE THREE TRAINER FOCUS AND APPROACH

Favorite Question: How?

Focuses on: Productivity, Competence, Efficiency

**If your preferred training approach is Type Three, you:**

- Are interested in productivity and competence
- Try to give people improved skill
- Believe training should be geared to competencies and bottom line pay-offs
- See knowledge as enabling people to be capable of making better decisions
- Encourage practical applications
- Like technical skills and hands-on activities
- Believe the best way is determined scientifically
- Use measured rewards

### TYPE TWO TRAINER FOCUS AND APPROACH

Favorite Question: What?

Focuses on: Clarity, Knowledge, Probability

**If your preferred training approach is Type Two, you:**

- Are interested in transmitting knowledge
- Try to be as accurate and knowledgeable as possible
- Believe training should further understanding of significant information
- See knowledge as deepening personal experience connections
- Encourage sequential thinking
- Like facts and details
- Are a traditional trainer who seeks to imbue a love of precise knowledge
- Believe in the rational use of authority
- Believe training should be presented systematically

# Four Trainer Type Assessments

What follows is a reflection exercise to help you further analyze your training style strengths. Review all four training style descriptions and highlight the strengths that apply to you.

## TYPE ONE TRAINER

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If you have high preference for the Type One training approach, you have a natural interest in the experiences and perceptions of others. You enter the learning experience with the belief that the learners are able to discover value in the content themselves, and your focus is heavily slanted toward the learner's experience.

Overuse of the Type One strength can lead to spending too much time in reflection and dialogue, which can lead to some learners becoming impatient to move into action.



The Type one trainer focuses on facilitating dialogue to encourage learner self-discovery



## TYPE ONE PREFERRED TRAINING APPROACH: FACILITATOR

### Your strengths as an instructional designer:

- You focus on the personal relevance of the information being learned.
- You attempt to organize the learning around important concepts.
- You likely rely on personal stories and anecdotes to make the learning come to life.
- You prefer to create an opportunity for the learners to reflect on their own experiences.
- You create situations where the group can discover commonalities of experience through comparison and contrast.
- Dialogue is often used as the means of processing information.

### Your strengths as a trainer:

- You attempt to read body language and other cues that learners give you to determine their level of engagement and understanding.
- You adjust your approach, based on your interpretation of the learner's reaction to what is happening in the learning environment.
- You have a strong ability to encourage others to share.
- You are willing to share your own experiences to illustrate the concepts you are sharing.

### Areas of opportunity:

- You may not focus enough on practical application.
- You may not spend enough time on organized and structured delivery of the information.
- You may not focus enough on measurable outcomes of the training.
- There may be little emphasis on post-event impact and follow-up.



## TYPE TWO TRAINER

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If you have a high preference for the Type Two training approach, you are naturally interested in sharing information in an organized, sequential manner. You come into the learning experience with the belief that learners must understand the content before they can apply the content. You always have a plan for what will be shared. You are careful to stay on track. You methodically move through the information, step by step. You make sure the learners understand the knowledge before you ask them to practice applying that knowledge.

Over-use of the Type Two training approach can result in spending too much time in lecture. Some learners may become bored and impatient to “do” something.



## PREFERRED TRAINING APPROACH: PRESENTER

### Your strengths as an instructional designer:

- You focus on the accuracy of the information being shared.
- You emphasize logical organization of the information.
- You are careful to be accurate in what you share, citing references and sources.

### Your strengths as a trainer:

- You prefer to deliver information in a structured manner.
- You likely prefer to use written training materials and visual aids that lead the learner sequentially through the information.
- You emphasize the conceptual coherence of the content.
- You thoroughly cover the content.
- You seek structure and value models and frameworks that help learners make sense of information.

### Areas of opportunity:

- There may be too much lecture.
- There may be a tendency to spend too much time on transmitting knowledge and not enough time on practice.
- You may be hesitant to encourage learner dialogue because of concerns about staying “on track.”



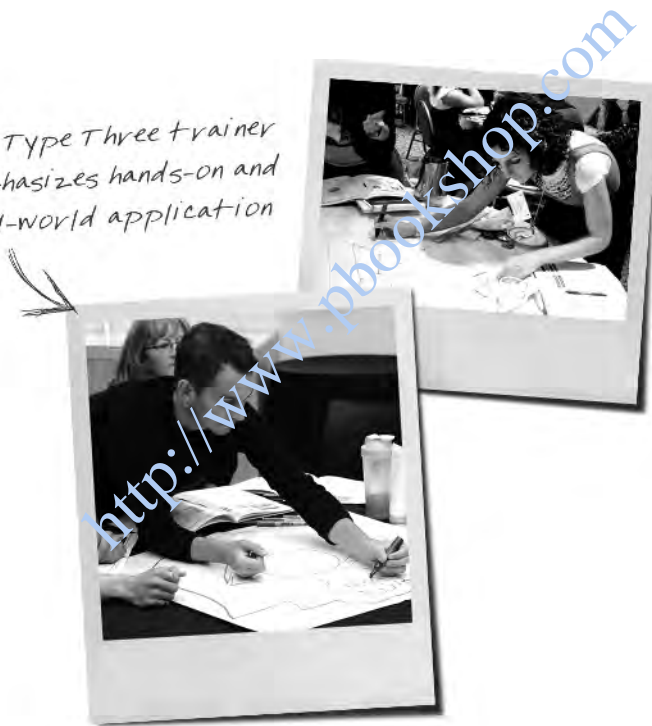
### TYPE THREE TRAINER

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If you have a high preference for the Type Three training approach, you see the value in having learners practice applying the information. You likely create opportunities for the learners to practice using the information. You prefer to include real-world examples such as problem-solving scenarios or case studies. You are good at editing content down to the essential and are comfortable answering application-oriented questions.

If you over-use the Type Three training approach, you can lose some learners by rushing too quickly into hands-on practice. Some learners may feel rushed and become overwhelmed.

*The Type Three trainer emphasizes hands-on and real-world application*



### TYPE THREE PREFERRED TRAINING APPROACH: COACH

#### Your strengths as an instructional designer:

- You focus on the practical.
- You bring the real world into the learning environment.
- You focus on preparing learners to be successful.
- You edit the content down to what is useful.

#### Your strengths as a trainer:

- You emphasize hands-on practice.
- You set up situations for learners to receive feedback.
- You create simulated real-world application scenarios.
- You focus on usefulness and higher productivity.

#### Areas of opportunity:

- You may lose some learners in your haste to get to application.
- There may be a missed opportunity to engage learners at a deep, personal level.



## TYPE FOUR TRAINER

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If you have a preference for the Type Four training approach, you see the value in developing the learners' ability to assess their own performance. You recognize the ability to adapt information based on real-world constraints is a critical contributor to successful implementation.

You likely encourage learners to evaluate their own learning applications. You create interaction in partner and group exercises. You allow for peer feedback and use questions to draw the learners' attention to gaps in knowledge.

Over-use of the Type Four training approach can result in learners feeling "overwhelmed" by too many options or confused by a lack of clear guidelines and structure.



## TYPE FOUR PREFERRED TRAINING APPROACH: EVALUATOR

### Your strengths as an instructional designer:

- You invite big picture thinking through facilitated exercises.
- You create learning projects that encourage self-assessment.
- You prefer to leave room for flexibility in the agenda in order to encourage adaptation.
- You encourage self-assessment.

### Your strengths as a trainer:

- You are open to what emerges in the dialogue.
- You are flexible and can adapt to the needs of the learners.
- You weave in seemingly unconnected elements to create a cohesive picture.

### Areas of opportunity:

- You may lose some learners who have difficulty following your mental leaps.
- Some learners may perceive the delivery to be disorganized or incomplete.
- There may not be enough emphasis on application and post-event implementation.



# Your Learning Style: What You Look for, You Find

In the introduction of this book, you were asked to think about a particularly transformational learning experience. Let's revisit that experience. Take a few moments and reflect on a powerful learning experience that made an impact on you. How would you describe the experience? What made the experience impactful? What learning elements were present?

What do you notice about the connections between your most powerful learning experience and your Training Style Inventory results?



To help illustrate the differences in how each training style values learning experiences, we asked trainers with different training style preferences to share reflections on their favorite learning experiences. Notice how the experiences shared connect to the learning style preferences of each individual.



## TYPE ONE TRAINER CASE STUDY: JEANNINE LANOUX

Learning and Development Consultant, Waste Management

### Favorite Question: Why?

The focus is on meaning.

The trainer who focuses on "why?" would likely describe an effective learning experience as meaningful, relevant, and engaging.



Jeannine

"One of the most interesting learning experiences I have ever experienced was a 2-day conference hosted by authors Pine and Gilmore (authors of The Experience Economy). They completely immersed us in the content from the beginning. The session opened with 'one world music' and everyone sitting cross-legged on pillows creating music together using river rocks on a wooden floor. This activity immersed us in an 'experience' which we then were asked to go back and dissect. In groups, we identified all the elements that added up to the 'experience.' By connecting me to a great experience, I was then able to see how the learning concepts related within my own work."

## TYPE TWO TRAINER CASE STUDY: JULIA WATT

Director of Salons and Spas, Dillard's Department Stores

### Favorite Question: What?

The focus is on data, structure, and coherence.

The trainer who focuses on "what?" would likely describe an effective learning experience as structured, organized, and knowledge-rich.



Julia

"To experience the difference between right and left processing, our facilitator invited us to draw a self-portrait. Next, we were given an upside down image on a piece of paper. We covered the majority of the image with blank piece of paper. While slowly moving the cover page down, we were asked to draw the image as it was revealed, line-by-line. Once the upside down drawing was complete, I turned it around and saw that I had drawn a fairly good, detailed picture of a woman. As a Type 2 Learner, this helped me to see how details support the bigger picture. This exercise gave me a much clearer, visual understanding of the differences between right and left brain thinking."

**TYPE THREE TRAINER CASE STUDY: HEIDI MATTHEWS**

Regional Employee Development Supervisor, Grundfos Pumps

**Favorite Question: How?**

The focus is on practical application.

The trainer who focuses on "how?" would likely describe an effective learning experience as practical, hands-on, and results-focused.



Heidi

"My favorite college class was a history class with a professor who pushed us to move beyond just memorizing facts for a test. He wanted our writing to be about what we thought that part of history had taught us. Had we applied the lesson learned and how? It stretched my thinking of history into a problem solving mode of why did we or didn't we change our behavior. In my professional life, completing the 4MAT Advanced Training Certification was a successful learning experience because I could apply the information immediately. I can use what I learned to reach every audience from well drillers, to plumbers, to engineers."

## TYPE FOUR TRAINER CASE STUDY: ALAN STERN

Founder, Stage Right Organizational Development

Favorite Question: If?

The focus is on adaptation.

A trainer who focuses on "if?" would likely describe an effective learning experience as innovative, possibility-oriented, and focused on future implementation.



"In one of my favorite learning experiences the facilitator invited learners to create images using tangrams, an ancient Chinese puzzle consisting of 7 flat shapes. Each group of learners was given one set of tangrams with instructions. Some groups were given specific pictures to try to recreate and others directed to simply create as many different pictures as possible. This was a wonderful experience in possibility as the shapes could be combined in infinite ways. It was also a lesson in how structure shapes possibility - important for strong 4's like me."

# Common Descriptions of Ideal Learning Environments

Over the years, our team has had the opportunity to work with thousands of trainers in our train the trainer and instructional design courses. In an exercise in our 4MAT Advanced Instructional Design course, we ask trainers with different training style results to describe the most important elements that must be included in a learning experience. Not surprisingly, the descriptions vary greatly by training style.



## Type One Trainers

Type One trainers emphasize the need for dialogue and group interaction. They tend to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning based on the personal exchange between learners and the depth of sharing.



## Type Two Trainers

Type Two trainers emphasize the need for structure and organized delivery of information. They tend to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning based on the information absorbed by the learners.



## Type Three Trainers

Type Three trainers emphasize the need for practical application of the information. They tend to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning based on the competencies gained and ultimate productivity of the learner.



## Type Four Trainers


Type Four trainers emphasize the need for adaptation of the learning to ensure real-world usefulness. They tend to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning based on the degree of ownership of the information by the learner and the enthusiasm generated for future implementation.

# Your Style: The Four Parts of the Learning Cycle


Being aware of your bias can help you develop your skills in all four approaches. Imagine you are a Type One trainer and you are observing a colleague presenting a training course. You notice how she uses an interactive exercise to create a sense of community in the room. Because you value learners getting to know each other and meaningful dialogue, you find this exercise valuable. You might find yourself saying, “Hmmm, I could use that exercise in the class I am teaching next week.” You add the exercise to your toolkit and you become even better at the Training Style One approach. Oftentimes, the training strategies we adopt are predominantly focused on appealing to learners who share our learning style preferences. Without conscious intention, we continue to build strength in only one of the four approaches.

It's important to remember that learning style refers to the part of the learning cycle on which a learner tends to invest more time. Regardless of style, each learner must move through all four phases of the learning cycle.

- 1 In the first step, the learner's attention is gained. Type One trainers have a natural advantage in this step. We call this step “Engage.”
- 2 In the second step, the learner absorbs information and data. The Type Two trainer's focus on organization and structure helps him or her do this step well. We call this step “Share.”
- 3 In the third step, the learner moves into action and applies the information absorbed. The Type Three trainer's focus on real-world skills makes this step easier for learners to accomplish. We call this step “Practice.”
- 4 In the fourth and final step, the learner adapts the information and applies for results. The Type Four trainer's willingness to encourage the learner to adapt information to make it useful is critical to successfully implementing this step. We call this step “Perform.”




Learning style refers to the part of the learning cycle in which a learner tends to invest more time. Regardless of style, each learner must move through all four phases of the learning cycle.



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In our instructional design programs, we frequently invite trainers to share the factors they believe must be present in an effectively designed and delivered learning experience. Not surprisingly, a trainer's preferred training approach greatly influences his or her description of an ideal learning environment. The learning strategies that one training style emphasizes, another may avoid altogether. In the chart on the next page, you will see examples of what each training style defines as essential elements in the learning experience.

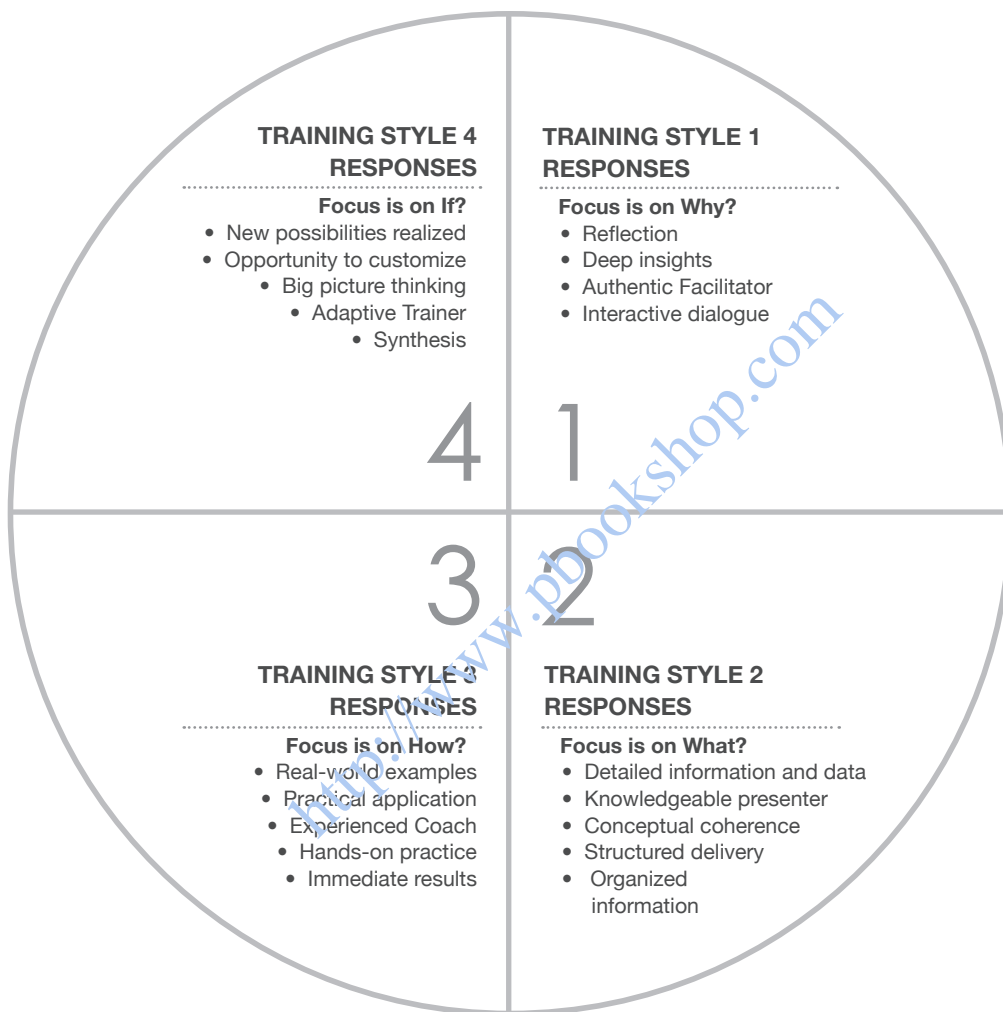


*Learning style, n.*

*1: refers to your preferences  
related to how you take  
in and make meaning of  
new information*



## Effective Training Strategies as Defined By Each Training Style



# Summary

Some of us began our careers with the intention of being involved in creating learning experiences. Maybe you are someone who chose to study instructional design. Most trainers share that they landed in the role of trainer through a process of evolution. If this is your experience, you were likely good at a particular skill and you soon found yourself training others in this skill. Eventually, training became more and more of what you do. Either way, you added new tools to your toolkit as you gained more experience. These tools include strategies, models, and techniques.

The variety of learning programs you have experienced and your training style influence the quantity and type of tools you have at your disposal. When we develop or deliver learning experiences, our creativity is limited by the tools available. If all you have is a hammer, everything begins to look like a nail. This book is designed to expand your toolkit using proven strategies and techniques which engage all learning styles.

In this chapter, you discovered your preferred training approach. In the next chapter, you will explore the strengths and needs of each of the four primary learning styles. You will also discover how your natural learning style strengths relate to the needs of each learning style. You will identify the learners you reach easily with your preferred training approach and those who will require you to consciously utilize new training strategies. With this knowledge, you will be prepared to leverage your existing training strengths while building new skills using the tools and strategies shared in the remaining chapters.

At the end of each chapter, you will be invited to “Reflect” and “Act” on the ideas shared. Take a moment to reflect and determine your action steps related to leveraging your training style strengths.

# Identifying Areas of Opportunity

Reflect on your training style strengths. Below, you will find suggestions on areas of opportunity for each training style approach. Review the suggestions and highlight areas you would like to focus on as you explore the rest of the book.

## TYPE FOUR TRAINER

If you are a Type Four trainer, your training could likely benefit from more structure and practical application.

Your training could benefit from:

- More structured approach to delivering the content
- Being clear in what the learner needs to know
- Giving clear direction and firm standards for performance (more black and white with less gray)
- Clearly defining the desired outcome and staying focused on that outcome throughout the design and delivery of the learning experience

## TYPE ONE TRAINER

If you are a Type One trainer, your training could likely benefit from more practical application.

Your training could benefit from:

- More practical application
- Structured approach to delivering content
- Emphasis on results and tracking
- Plan for how you will implement and measure post-training results

## TYPE THREE TRAINER

If you are a Type Three trainer, your training could likely benefit from more group dialogue and reflection.

Your training could benefit from:

- More time for interaction and meaningful dialogue
- Focused attention on the step-by-step delivery of the information before the learner applies the information
- Plan for addressing learners' challenges in implementing the information after the learning event is complete

## TYPE TWO TRAINER

If you are a Type Two trainer, you likely could benefit from more interaction and flexibility in learning approach.

Your training could benefit from:

- More interaction
- Higher level of learner engagement, at a personal level
- More hands-on
- Greater emphasis on post-learning application and real-world impact

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# FAQs

**Q: Is it possible to be tied in two styles?**

Yes. Read the descriptions for each style and see whether if you notice a distinct preference for one approach.

**Q: What does it mean if I am a “square” (all four scores are equal)?**

When all four scores are equal, it means that you are either fairly balanced in your training approach or unclear about your preferences. It is important to remember that the Training Style Inventory assesses where you focus attention in the design and delivery of learning experiences. It does not measure skill in each approach. While you may have a balance in all four scores, you may find that you are more skilled in one area than others.

**Q: I have taken the Learning Type Measure® and the Training Style Inventory. Why is there a difference between my learning style and my training style?**

When you take the 4MAT Learning Type Measure, you are assessing the combination of preferences in how you take in new information and how you make meaning of that information. The Training Style Inventory assesses your preferred approach to transferring information to others. It is not uncommon for trainers to adopt a training approach that is different from their preferred learning approach. This may be a product of an awareness of a tendency to lean too heavily on our preferred learning approach at the expense of missing important parts of the learning process.



» You can find the Learning Type Measure at  
[www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com](http://www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com).

If you haven't already completed the Training Style Inventory (TRSI), it is recommended that you do this before continuing further. You will find your unique e-code in the back of this book. Go to **[www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com](http://www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com)** to access the online assessment.

- Review the results and read through the Action Guide. Highlight insights that resonate with you.
- Visit the Discussion Forum to post any questions or insights that are emerging for you.

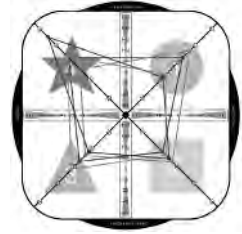
Complete the following personal reflection:

How have my training style strengths served me as a trainer? As a leader?

What is the biggest opportunity for growth for me?

If you are reading this book with a group, here are some action items to facilitate deeper conversation:

Create a composite graph of your training team's strengths. You can do this by downloading the Training Style Inventory graph found on the companion site of this book, **[www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com](http://www.trainers-guide-to-learning-styles.com)**. Mark each team member's scores on the graph, using different colored markers. Your graph should look like this when complete:



After viewing the graph results, reflect on the following questions:

What do you see as your team's composite strengths?

How do our individual strengths show up in our results, as a team?

Which area needs the most attention?

How can my individual strengths support the team in areas of needed attention?

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"Knowing others is intelligence;  
Knowing yourself is true wisdom.  
Mastering others is strength;  
Mastering yourself is true power."

~ Lao Tzu  
*Tao Te Ching*