DR. YVONNE SUM

Life's Paradox
Uncommon reflections of life matters

# Motivational Intelligence:
# How do you inspire a call to action?

**By Dr Yvonne Sum,** BDS Hons, NLPTT, ACMC
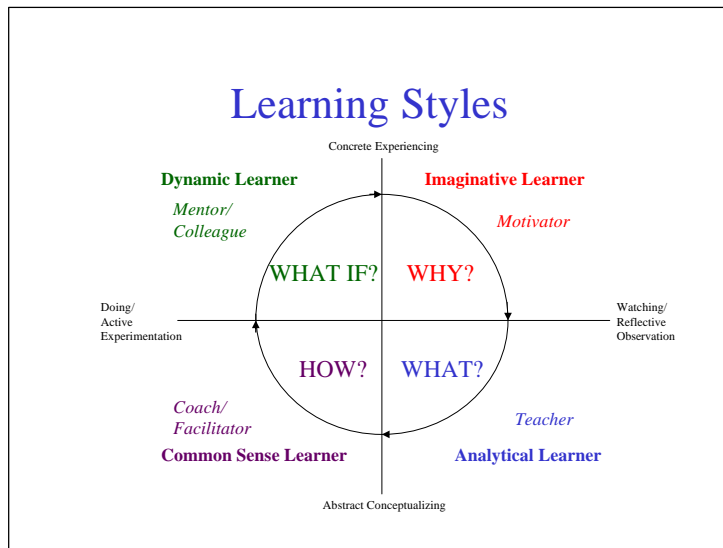**International Speaker & Personal Coach**

In the festivities of the last holiday season, I was mingling with some colleagues who are principals in their own businesses attending a Christmas cocktail party with their staff. The typical lament I heard from them: it is impossible to motivate some team members whilst seemingly simple to do so with others. One business colleague commented that if he could not motivate one staff member, his office manager seemed to be able to do so, and vice versa. He asked: "Could it be that our leadership styles are different?" Seemingly so. The question I then asked him was: "Do you know what your leadership style is and how do you make it work for you, or not?"

Let me run this question by you too. Do you know how you lead and inspire your team (whether at work or on the home front) to action, or is it just hit and miss? If there is a way of identifying your strengths and weaknesses in motivating your self and your team – would you be interested? Would you be more curious about how you can turn your weaknesses into strengths? How would it be if you can be so flexible that you can learn to manage all members of your team by adopting the style that most fits the team at any moment in time?

Sounds too good to be true? It isn't really. You will need to put some hard yards to become aware of which style you default to, and to have the intention and determination to try on the other styles when the situation demands it.

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## Learning Styles

Bernice McCarthy, an American educator, developed the 4MAT system to help teachers facilitate maximum learning by integrating the different learning styles of students in classrooms. She found that teachers were very much acting as motivators, coach and mentors using this system. Translating this to leadership application was a natural progression when the Learning Type Measure (LTM) was developed for teaching and leadership to provide guidance in all situations where the different learning styles play a role in communications and human interaction. Let us look at this in a little bit more detail and see whether you can identify your learning/leadership preference from the descriptions.

### Learning Styles

Concrete Experiencing

**Dynamic Learner**          **Imaginative Learner**

*Mentor/ Colleague*                  *Motivator*

WHAT IF?   WHY?

Doing/ Active Experimentation                              Watching/ Reflective Observation

HOW?   WHAT?

*Coach/ Facilitator*                              *Teacher*

**Common Sense Learner**          **Analytical Learner**

Abstract Conceptualizing

### The Imaginative Learner/Leader

They tend to perceive information concretely and process reflectively. They integrate experience with the Self. They learn by listening and sharing ideas. Discussing ideas to understand, they need a level of collaboration. They are imaginative thinkers who believe in their own experience. They excel in viewing direct experience from many perspectives. They value insightful thinking. They work for harmony, a sense of belonging, inclusion, fairness. They need to be personally involved, seek commitment, and are interested in people and culture. They are thoughtful people who enjoy observing others. They absorb reality; they seem to take in the atmosphere almost like osmosis. Being "People" people whose need to be liked may threaten

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progress when they join the model of the world of all concerned – the need for consensus could be limiting.

As leaders, they:

- ? thrive on taking time to develop good ideas
- ? tackle problems by reflecting alone and then brainstorming with staff
- ? lead by their heart, involving other people in decision making
- ? exercise authority with trust and participation
- ? work for organizational solidarity
- ? need staff who are supportive and share their sense of mission

| | |
|---|---|
| Strength: | Innovation and ideas |
| Function by: | Value clarification |
| Goals: | To be involved in important issues and to bring harmony |
| Best role: | Motivator |
| Favourite question: | **WHY?** |

### The Analytical Learner/Leader

They perceive information abstractly and process it reflectively.  They form theories and concepts by integrating their observations into what is known. They seek continuity. They need to know what the experts think. They learn by thinking through ideas. They value sequential thinking. Need details. They critique information and collect data. They are thorough and industrious. They will re-examine the facts if situations perplex them. Paralysis by analysis could be a limitation. They enjoy traditional classrooms. Schools are made for them. They are more interested in ideas than people. They prefer to maximize certainty, and are uncomfortable with subjective judgements. Being credible is important.

As leaders, they:

- ? Thrive on assimilating disparate facts into coherent theories
- ? Tackle problems with rationality and logic
- ? Lead by principles and procedures
- ? Exercise authority with assertive persuasion, by knowing the facts
- ? Work to enhance their organization as an embodiment of tradition and prestige
- ? Need staff who are well organized, have things down on paper, and follow through on agreed decisions

| | |
|---|---|
| Strength: | Creating concepts and models |
| Function by: | Thinking things through |
| Goals: | Intellectual recognition |
| Best role: | Teacher |
| Favourite question: | **WHAT?** |

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### The Common Sense Learner/Leader

They perceive information abstractly and process it actively. They integrate theory and practice. They learn by testing theories and applying common sense. They are pragmatists, they believe if something works, use it. They are down-to-earth problem solvers who resent being given answers. They do not stand on ceremony but get right to the point. They have a limited tolerance for fuzzy ideas. They value strategic thinking. They are skills-oriented. They experiment and tinker with things. They need to know how things work. They edit reality, cut right to the heart of things. They want to get down and just do! (Analogy: May sometimes plant seeds before ground is fertilized; sort of *Shoot first, Aim second*!)Sometimes they seem bossy and impersonal.

As leaders, they:
- ? Thrive on plans and timelines
- ? Tackle problems by making unilateral decisions
- ? Lead by personal forcefulness, inspiring quality
- ? Exercise authority by reward/punishment (the fewer the rules, the better, but enforce them)
- ? Work hard to make their organization productive and solvent
- ? Need staff who are task-oriented and move quickly

Strength:              Practical application of ideas
Function by:           Factual data garnered from kinaesthetic, hands-on experience
Goals:                 To align their view of the present with future security
Best role:             Coach, Facilitator
Favourite question:    **HOW?**

### The Dynamic Learner/Leader

They perceive information concretely and process it actively. They integrate experience and application. They learn by trial and error. They are believers in self-discovery. They are enthusiastic about new things. They are creative, adaptable, even relish change. They are constantly reinventing the wheel, almost doing it for "difference" sake, to develop to yet another level. They are constantly stimulated, do not like letting things lie, and may lack focus. They excel when flexibility is needed. They can be accused of being "loose cannons", freewheeling with little planning and preparation: "I think I'll wing it" is a typical comment. They often reach accurate conclusions in the absence of logical justification. They are risk takers. They are at ease with people. They enrich reality by taking what is and adding to it. Sometimes they are seen as manipulative and pushy.

As leaders, they:
- ? Thrive on crisis and challenge
- ? Tackle problems by looking for patterns, scanning possibilities
- ? Lead by energizing people

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? Exercise authority by holding up visions of what might be
? Work hard to enhance their organization's reputation as a front runner
? Need staff who can follow up and implement details

Strengths:           Action, getting things going
Function by:         Acting and testing experience
Goals:               To bring action to ideas
Best role:           Mentor, Colleague
Favourite question:  **WHAT IF?**

## Putting it all together

Let's see how we can put those styles in a meaningful contrast to illustrate their differences. Have you ever been to those DYI stores and bought a kit to say, put a bicycle together?

Well, if you are an **Imaginative Leader,** you will ring up your friends to come help put it together. You will likely to lobby and *motivate* them to come over (by consensus of course) by giving them 101 reasons **WHY** it will be beneficial for all to do this project together. When the collaborative process of putting it together is complete using everybody's expertise fairly, you celebrate by going on a cycling trip together. A sense of community is vital to you. In order that there is inclusion, and that you remain liked, you also let everyone involved know that they can borrow this bicycle anytime.

If you are an **Analytical Leader**, you will first sit down and unwrap the package carefully. You will read through the manual carefully from cover to cover to determine **WHAT** needs to be done. If you have any enthusiastic friends or family around wanting to dive into the assembly, you tell them that they have to remain patient while you organize, identify and sort out the parts and the procedure according to the printed instructions. Once you have your facts, you then organize who you perceive to be best at specific procedures, and put them in a set assembly line to put the bike together. You are in your element if you can *teach* them how to do this by taking them through the manual, step by step. Once the bicycle is put together, you complete a checklist of details before road testing the bike by the best rider in the group. (You will naturally obtain evidence from your team to find out who is the best.)

What if you, the **Common Sense Leader** has a hand in this? You will just want to get down and just do it! The package is ripped quickly and the manual tossed aside – only to be referred to if you get really stuck. You quickly assemble people around you into task groups eg one for putting the stationery framework, another for the mobile elements such as handle bars & wheels, the next for the mechanical parts such as pedals, brakes, chain and gears. Your brief to the teams – just put it together

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efficiently and quick as possible. You remind them that they all know what a bike looks like – **HOW** to put it together is just common sense. You will jump in to *coach/facilitate* them with all the tasks when they run into problems – referring to the instructions manual is the last resort. You hate being asked "stupid questions". When the bicycle is fully assembled, you start looking for the next project to work on. It is not that you do not acknowledge the great performance of the team. It is your assumption that the well assembled bike is evidence enough to the team that they have done well.

Should you the **Dynamic Leader** get into the project, you will find that you are likely to challenge your team to self-discovery. You will throw away the packaging and the manual with it! You will challenge your people first to nominate what it is you are assembling based on the parts laid out! Once all of you have made a *collegiate* decision that it is a bicycle, you expect them to discover what is the best way of putting it together, without the instructions. Your aim would be to *mentor* them to build a bike that is quite unique. **WHAT IF** we put the handle bars where the saddle usually is? What if the wheels were not in the same plane? What if they were parallel rather than the usual tandem set-up? What if it cannot be ridden at all??!! What if there is another use for this "different" vehicle, rather than being a bicycle?

Are you now seeing yourself in one of the styles? So what does it all mean? Being aware of your preferred leadership style, how does that impact your inspiring your team to action, or not?

## Learning Styles of your team

You are probably aware that just as your leadership style is linked to your learning preference, your team's preferred learning style also impacts their response-ability to how you lead and manage them.

In the business arena: An Analytic Leader can be perceived by a Dynamic Learner in the team to be anally retentive, overwhelmingly boring and frustrating. This experiential, inventive team member thrives on making a difference to the organization s/he works for by being creative and actually thinks that the time spent on changing the systems over and over is smart. By contrast, the detailed, procedural leader considers this member to be a drama in business, who wastes time on mundane things and a loose cannon who does not follow the rules.

On the family front, you have a son who is an Imaginative Learner, whose mother is a Common Sense Leader. This practical, just-get-it-done, hands-on mum may be perceived as bossy and impersonal relative to the son who prefers a more inclusive, community sense of collaboration leadership, and who expects a more overt

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acknowledgement of a job well done. He just needs a kind word and a pat on the back, Ma!

Starting to see a pattern here?

## Managing a diverse team

You can now see that as a leader, we do not just manage people who have similar learning styles. When it happens – great, the team finds it easy to understand and work together. In most teams now, we have been encouraged to form groups that complement one another with their differing strengths. Child psychologists have commented that each child in a family tends to develop different ways of gaining attention from the parents – so is it any wonder that there are so many differences in behaviour/personality/learning styles in children of each family unit?

How do we manage this diversity?

The leader, having become aware of his/her default learning style, then learns to adapt the leadership style to suit each member to motivate every individual to come on board say, the implementation of changes, a call to action to realize a new vision or direction, or just simply to get along.

## How to incorporate the learning styles in your leadership

1.  Become aware of your preferred learning/leadership style – be it Imaginative, Analytical, Common Sense or Dynamic.
2.  Develop the other three non-preferred learning styles – using the roles of Motivator, Teacher, Coach/Facilitator, and Mentor/Colleague as a guide
3.  Incorporate all 4 learning styles in your leadership – using the Favourite Questions* of WHY?, WHAT?, HOW? and WHAT IF? when rallying your team.

*Note that these are Virtual Questions. You may never overtly use these questions, but your decisions and actions demonstrate them as underlying your thoughts and behaviours.

So let's use what happened with the businessman at the Christmas cocktail party who was concerned about his leadership style to illustrate how this works.

After I described to him the different 4MAT learning/leadership styles, he decided that he was more of a Common Sense Leader. Upon further reflection, he realized how the different people who bugged him tended to prefer the other three learning styles. He also recognized that his office manager was more an Imaginative Leader.

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Hence, he could see how some team members would be more amenable to her over him, and vice versa.

I described the inclination of each style to their best roles (Motivator, Teacher, Coach/Facilitator, or Mentor/Colleague) and favourite (virtual) questions of WHY?, WHAT?, HOW? or WHAT IF?. He found it useful to now start developing his Motivator, Teacher and Mentor/Colleague role to reach the other team members that did not respond to his Coach/Facilitator style. Having those Virtual Questions in the back of his mind is another easy way to jog his memory of what to say. If he isn't sure which learning styles each team member is more inclined towards, he can actually use all 4 Virtual Questions when making a call to action to inspire his team to come on board a project, to manage a change in direction, or to remediate day-to-day operations.

## It's a matter of flexibility

The more flexible the leader, the easier it is to align team members to the purpose of the business or family unit, and to facilitate productivity and efficiency by bringing out the best in each team member.

So the next time, you encounter barriers to changes you wish to put in place with your team (at work and at home), resistance to a new vision, team members that seem abrasive and difficult to motivate, why not reflect upon yourself to see whether you are defaulting to your preferred leadership style. Imagine what it would be like to appreciate and take on the four different learning styles. Incorporate them in your call to action to inspire your team heart and soul to come along with you.

Trust now that you can begin to motivate and lead your team in any direction you choose to bring your business or your family. So the next time you come up against what seems like in the past to be an impasse to any changes in your life, consider it an exciting new opportunity to further develop your Motivational Intelligence.

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## Transformational Leadership Challenge™ (TLC):
### *Unleashing your children's potential through you*

The overall outcome of the TLC (Transformational Leadership Challenge) for actualizing parents is a simple one. This workshop (endearingly dubbed "***The Greatest Challenge on Earth"***) treats parents as leaders not only in their family, but more so as a leader in their own lives. By setting the example as a role model for the rest of the family, they become aware of how they can lead the best lives for themselves and hence be a credible mentor, effective manager, coach and leader of their families. For instance, a parent can sometimes call upon their child(ren) to do their utmost best in life to achieve their highest potential in their chosen contexts – eg. career, family, health, physical, intellectual, emotional, or spiritual. In the process, the parent may place most of their family resources in the endeavour. However, the parent themselves short change themselves on opportunities to personally develop themselves. For instance, the parent may not pursue their own love of a talent or a gift – and hence, do not maximize the potential themselves. They do not walk their talk, so to speak. As we know, children are by far the best role modelers. As is commonly said: "Monkey see monkey do!" So what message are we truly conveying to our children when we do not "go for gold" ourselves – at the expense of letting the children savour all the opportunities? TLC truly brings that home. Live your dreams and values, and your children will follow suit – with unsolicited respect.

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Respect is not automatically deserving just because you are a parent these days. That more traditional Confucian ethic is not alive and well! Respect is earned. You show children respect, and it is more likely to be reciprocated. One way to show respect is to be consistent with word and deed. In the "old days" – the boundaries were clear about what is expected of parent roles, and that of the kids. It tended to be set by social norms. Behaviour considered as "right" was more black and white then. Today, it seems it runs mostly into the grey area. Hence, each family has to clearly define what their values, goals and boundaries are, and to run their unit accordingly. There is no hard and fast rules.

As leaders of corporate organizations spend time and money planning their goals, vision, values and purpose so everybody within it understands the culture and expectations. Do we as leaders of our family unit do the same? Have we even thought about what it is we are about? What are our individual dreams? Are all members aligned in values? Do we have useful methods to communicate amongst each other about how we envision our family unit striving synergistically towards individual goals whilst respecting each other's values? Can we all contribute towards each other's goals whilst satisfying each other's needs? What are our beliefs about our children – do these hold them back or drive them forward? The TLC program strives to constructively take these issues and put them into realistic Life Plans for individuals whilst being aligned to a greater Family Vision.

**Review of NLP, NS as models that drive TLC**

Neuro Linguistic Programming (or NLP for short) and Neuro Semantics (or NS for short) describe programs by which we naturally (and mostly unconsciously) run our brains by default – out of habitual use of those patterns. Many of these patterns serve us – and we take them for granted. The awareness will allow the parents participating to utilize these patterns more consciously and consistently. Some of these patterns however may not always be useful. The TLC parenting workshop instils processes that will create awareness of these patterns in ourselves and provide an opportunity

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for the parents to discover new ways to replace or override these unresourceful patterns whenever we choose to obtain new results. For example, there may be an emotional outburst from the parent every time a teenager comes home later than expected from an evening excursion leading to further shutting down of already poor communications between parent and child. It may be useful to attempt to generate a new response to that trigger. NLP and NS can provide a variety of ways to override the habitual pattern above with a new one that may get a more appropriate result.

Another example: a parent may have a belief that there is a need to shelter their child(ren) from the world for there are too many hazards out there. The more protective they are, the paradox is – they are preventing the child(ren) from learning life skills that continue to hamper their independence and self-sufficiency. NLP and NS can intervene through one of their many belief change patterns to give the concerned parent new choices of how to protect the child from the dangers of our world by giving the children opportunities to learn self-initiated life skills of managing when their parents are not there.

The TLC program offers opportunities for individuals in each family to maximize satisfaction of each other's needs through awareness of the issues that drive each of us. Another outcome of the program is to create a Family Vision that continually develops over time through a mutual understanding of the ever-changing boundaries that affect each family unit. Hence, it is a program by which you can truly unleash your children's potential through you.

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**About the Author: Dr Yvonne Sum** is a pioneer in Parent Leadership coaching. She is on a quest to co-create joyful learning partnerships between parents and children to simultaneously bring out each other's authentic best.  She inspires parents to learn from our children mirroring to us what we most need to learn about ourselves and vice-versa. Through her series of ***Transformational Leadership Challenge™ (TLC)*** programs, Dr Sum is committed to transform leaders of tomorrow today by highlighting family values and celebrating parents as role models and heroes in life who proactively unleash our children's potential through self actualization, intentional living and powerful leadership centred on love and high purpose. She expresses this passion to bring out our authentic best through her roles as an international speaker, writer, transformational corporate facilitator, executive and parent Meta-Coach, Neuro Linguistic Programming trainer, business woman, wife and mother. Please visit **www.dryvonnesum.com** for more information.