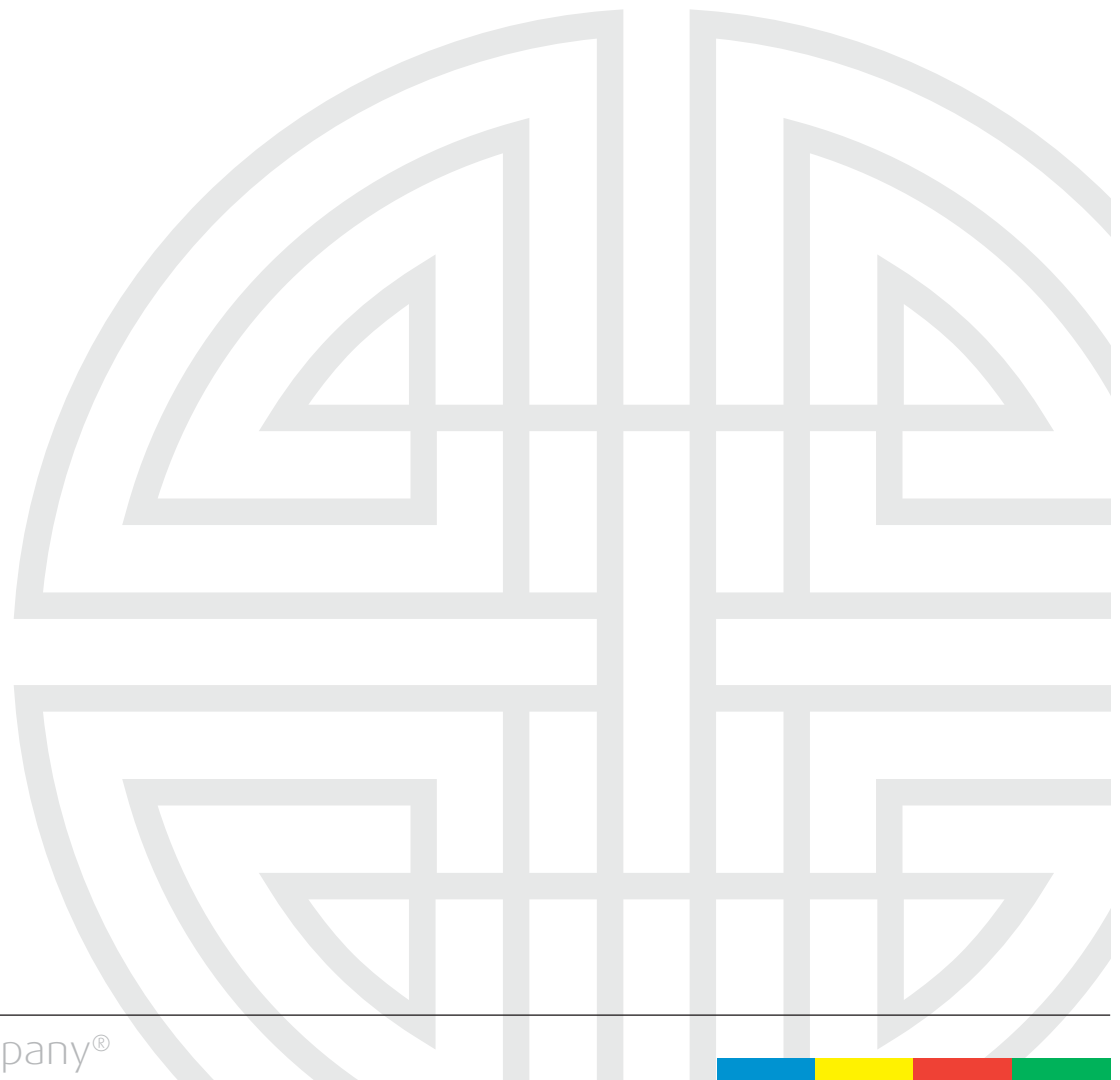


## Case Study

Coca Cola® goes for Olympic gold with the help of Whole Brain® Thinking





# Globally, Coca Cola had a successful track record using Whole Brain® Thinking and the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®) as a unifying framework and system for achieving better results in a variety of business areas and applications.

*Preparing for what was dubbed the 'logistical minefield' of the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay was its own Olympian feat for organisers and sponsors. In this article, Coca Cola discusses how they used Whole Brain® Thinking methodology and tools to prepare its teams for the Olympic Torch Relay, explaining why the framework will continue to play a key role in the organisational culture going forward.*

Seventy days, 8,000-plus miles, 1,000 towns, and one momentous flame.

Preparing for what was dubbed the 'logistical minefield' of the 2012 Olympic Torch Relay was its own Olympian feat for organisers and sponsors. The 8,000 people carrying the torch throughout the UK were accompanied by a convoy of media, staff, security and sponsors, so the complexity of the task required flawless communications, dynamic agility and a gold-medal-worthy team showing.

And that was only part of the story.

As a Worldwide Partner of the London Games, Coca Cola would also be hosting 61 free evening events up and down the country, four city celebrations, a Torch Relay finale bash with an audience of 80,000, and a wide range of sponsorship activities to bring the magic of London 2012 to every corner of the UK.

With a goal of inspiring change, participation and legacy, Coca Cola Great Britain realised the Olympics also presented the company with the

ideal opportunity to put a framework in place for quickly getting everyone in the organisation working together successfully, both during the Games and after.

The fastest, most effective route to the finish line turned out to be an approach they were already using at the global level: Herrmann International's Whole Brain® Thinking system.

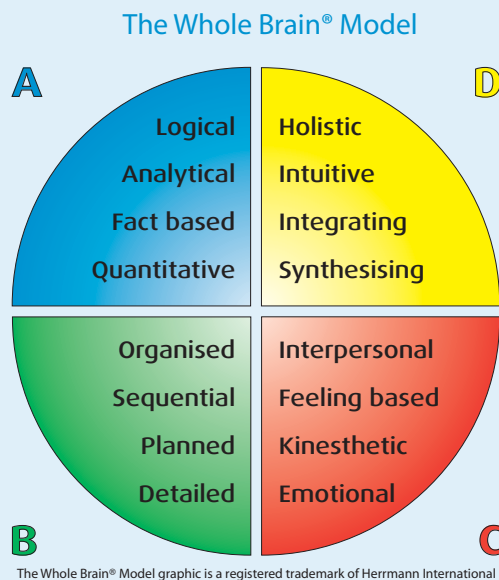
## Whole Brain® Thinking at Coca Cola

Globally, Coca Cola had a successful track record using Whole Brain® Thinking and the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®) as a unifying framework and system for achieving better results in a variety of business areas and applications. With the Olympic involvement and other business changes occurring, the timing was right to bring it to the UK, particularly in light of the complexities involved with the Olympic sponsorship.

According to David Barker, Strategic HR Business Partner for Coca Cola's London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games project teams, the teams working on the Olympics were brought together from various parts of the business, including outside contractors and agencies, and they had grown organically, starting small and expanding rapidly. Establishing a baseline—a common understanding for moving forward together—would be essential to making sure everyone could communicate, collaborate and function at world-class levels.

## What is Whole Brain® Thinking?

Research has shown that thinking styles directly affect behaviour, performance and results. Whole Brain® Thinking acknowledges that while different tasks require different mental processes, and different people prefer different styles of thinking, organisations will get better results when they can strategically harness the diversity of thinking available—analytical, organisational, strategic and interpersonal (the four quadrants of thinking preferences as depicted in the Herrmann Whole Brain® Model). By applying Whole Brain® Thinking, people and teams can learn to leverage their thinking preferences more effectively and think and act outside their preferences when necessary.



The Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®), is the 120-question thinking styles assessment at the core of the Whole Brain® approach, and it reveals an individual's thinking preferences in the form of an HBDI® Profile.

Because its premise is that we all have brains, we just use them differently, the HBDI® assessment doesn't pigeonhole people or put them into 'types.' Instead, it shows people that while there are some areas they may be less comfortable with, they aren't limited in what they can do. It also reveals how teams and groups can work together in the most productive way by drawing on their cognitive diversity to tackle specific tasks and problems.

And in the race to get ready, there would be no time to spare.

"The Olympics is our single biggest asset, so it's absolutely vital we get it right," said Joel Morris, Communications Director, Coca Cola Great Britain and Ireland.

## The preliminaries

A little over a year before the Games began, the company initiated a 'test' rollout of Whole Brain® Thinking and the HBDI® in the UK with 12 people at the leadership level. The goal of the test was to see if this was a framework they could (1) embed, (2) sustain and (3) then apply across other functions.

According to David Barker, the answers to all three were a resounding yes.

"Unlike some other tools," he said, "Whole Brain® Thinking is something you can apply to any situation—a project, project teams, a problem or issue—and it gives you a neutral baseline and common ground to start with. It's such an easy process for people to take on board and connect with."

From this test and the ensuing implementation, they made several key discoveries that reinforced the value of using the Whole Brain® framework as a foundation for preparing for the Games:

- ◆ The process itself helps people become more self aware and understand their thinking preferences, which is essential, David notes, because if you understand yourself you can connect more effectively with others.
- ◆ Whole Brain® Thinking would play a key role in their efforts to build what they called a 'high-performance team' for the Olympics, first by giving the diverse team members from both inside and outside the organisation a common language. In fact, the language is part of the culture now. "You hear it being used all the time," David says.
- ◆ The methodology would help them build more balanced groups and teams, both

**“It balances a simple and easy-to-understand structure with a richness and depth that really help you understand your own default mindset, and also that of the people you work with,” James Eadie, Olympics Portfolio Director**

intentionally and on-the-fly, so they could collaborate and execute faster and more effectively. Armed with an understanding of the role thinking preferences play on results, and using the data and insights gleaned from the HBDI® Profiles, people could quickly determine gaps in thinking preferences and identify resources they needed to bring in to balance the group’s thinking for better results.

- ◆ The methodology and easy-to-apply tools would quickly improve communications across the entire team. “We saw it was something people could easily apply to more quickly and effectively communicate once the team expanded out into venues and the Torch Relay,” says David. “It ensures you articulate effectively and are understood quickly.” Both would be critical once the Games were underway.

“There is a lot of self-discovery and team discovery tools out there, but the Whole Brain® approach is really different,” says James Eadie, Olympics Portfolio Director. “It balances a simple and easy-to-understand structure with a richness and depth that really help you understand your own default mindset, and also that of the people you work with,” he says.

### The relay team in training

From music agency liaison officers and event coordinators, to convoy team specialists and PR/communications professionals, the Olympic Torch Relay team was comprised of people from a wide variety of backgrounds and included

both permanent employees from across the business and external contractors and agency representatives. Whole Brain® Thinking would serve a key role in unifying these disparate team members and preparing them to work together for flawless execution.

David says the first goal was to focus on self-awareness and the individual’s own thinking preferences.

“It’s very rare that we spend time on ourselves, but there are so many insights you gain. You’re typically so focused on what you know about yourself that you miss out on other possibilities and your full potential. This was an important first step.”

Team members received their HBDI® Profiles and explored how thinking preferences impact their own communications, behaviours and personal performance, as well as the role thinking preferences play in achieving overall results.

Next, they participated in pair exercises that David equates to a ‘speed dating’ experience: People sat in chairs facing each other and debriefed each others’ profiles.

“Because this was a new team, it was a really effective way for them to get to know each other quickly and learn how to communicate with people based on their own and the other person’s preferences,” he points out.

Another key component of the preparations was scenario planning, using the Whole Brain® Communicator process. The team went through

**“Whole Brain® Thinking has given us not just a theoretical model but something that is easy and quick to apply. There are so many different and practical ways to use it.”**

a series of hypothetical exercises of potential situations that could occur during the relay and practiced using Whole Brain® Thinking techniques and tools to communicate with each other. They learned to ‘walk around’ the thinking quadrants of the Whole Brain® Model to provide a complete picture of the situation in a way that would quickly translate the scenario into actions to address it: What’s the situation? Who are we communicating to? What do they need to know? What could happen next?

“We wanted to give them practical experience on how to quickly and effectively articulate and make sure they’re being understood,” David says. “We got great feedback from the participants on this exercise. They appreciated that it has such practical application.”

## **A legacy in place, new milestones ahead**

As the 2012 Games become part of Olympic and Paralympic history, the reflections and analyses begin. [The Holmes Report](#), a PR business and consulting report, said Coca Cola has earned its place at the gold level of the podium.

Coca Cola, who basically wrote the book on sponsorship activation, did it again through a multi-faceted campaign that included an original ‘Beat TV’ entertainment series and Olympic Torch Relay sponsorship.

For those involved on the ground, it’s been a whirlwind. The run-up to the London Games

progressed at a particularly rapid pace, even in a business environment that has become more hectic every day. But David Barker sees tremendous value in the front-end time investment in Whole Brain® Thinking.

“Time has been a premium on this project, so taking time out of the day to spend on yourself doesn’t seem like a good investment in the short term,” he told us. “but it adds so much value in the long term. Whole Brain® Thinking has given us not just a theoretical model but something that is easy and quick to apply. There are so many different and practical ways to use it.”

While the Olympic teams are disbanding after the Games, the impact and ongoing application of Whole Brain® Thinking lives on at Coca Cola.

“We did the training as the Olympics leadership team and it has now become a key currency we are all comfortable with,” James Eadie says. “One of the most useful aspects is that it helps a team perform better under pressure. When the heat is on it gives you an awareness of how people, including yourself, behave.”

David says he is actually ahead of the core business because of the work with the Olympic teams, but the Whole Brain® framework will be embedded into the core business going forward.

“For those who will be redeployed, this will be so useful in their next role, either as an individual contributor or leader,” he points out. “It will become the currency of the business.”



better results through better thinking

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Herrmann International Asia's clients include:

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<b>Bank SA</b>	<b>IBM</b>	<b>Transfield Worley</b>
<b>Bendigo Bank</b>	<b>Manukau City Council</b>	<b>The Warehouse</b>
<b>Coca Cola Amatil</b>	<b>Manukau Water Limited</b>	<b>Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority</b>
<b>CPA Australia</b>	<b>Microsoft</b>	<b>Warehouse Stationery</b>
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<b>Blue Cross Blue Shield</b>	<b>IBM</b>	<b>Procter and Gamble</b>
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The Originators of Whole Brain Technology® and the Creators of the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument® (HBDI®)

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