



## The Learning at Work Week 2022 theme is 'LEARNING UNCOVERED'.

Lifelong learning helps us become more confident, curious, purposeful and skilled. It enriches us, bringing joy, connection and understanding of the world, enhancing wellbeing. By learning we can achieve personal aspirations and organisational goals, we can address and deal with challenges big and small. How can we build motivation and overcome our barriers to learning to make the most of what learning offers?

This is an approach to help uncover everyone's hidden powers and talents, with activities that encourage colleagues from all parts and all levels of the organisation to connect, share and learn from each other.

**Understanding, empathy, trust, honesty....**all important factors in developing motivation, loyalty, effective teamwork and improved performance. But how do you start to really learn about others in the workplace so that you can uncover, recognise and support their needs, use people in the most appropriate roles and help them to challenge themselves in the future? Many psychometric tests are available to raise awareness of individual differences. However, being aware of preferences is not enough. Awareness has to translate into behavioural change if relationships and results are to improve. In most cases, this requires active practice and reflection, individually or in groups.

Here is an outline of an RSVP Design process designed to help learners to hear, see and value different preferences and then use specific activities to develop the associated workplace skills. Step 1 uses the free resources described below to explore some responses to different 'characters'.

**Step 1: Recognising how different learning and thinking preferences play out in the workplace.** Learners work with the four character sketches of people they may encounter in any working day. These are included later in this document: Danny, Kim, Tamara and Maria. The characters are 'extremes' - almost stereotypical - in order to highlight specific areas of difference. Send each learner a copy of all four character descriptions and ask them to read them, and then individually explore their own responses to them by answering the following questions

- Which character do you resemble?
- Or are you a hybrid person who draws characteristics from more than one?
- Who would you most like to work alongside + why?
- Who might you struggle to work alongside + why?
- Who might complement the skills you bring to your work as part of a small, strong team?
- Who might you choose to evaluate your work and give feedback to help you improve?
- What specific skills are most likely to be highly developed in each of the characters? What areas of development may they have?



Bring the learners together to explore the different responses from each person, comparing and contrasting how each character might provoke a different response to yours, and what might be done to mitigate any challenges or potential conflicts with these characters.

### Step 2: Developing the skills associated with different preferences.

This optional second step involves using four different experiential learning activities from RSVP Design, which can be used independently or combined into a full day's team learning experience. Over the course of four sessions, each lasting between one and two hours, learners focus on each of the skill sets in turn. They can be purchased in a discounted package here:

<https://rsvpdesign.co.uk/learning-uncovered-package.html>

#### 1. Hollow Square.

An activity designed to develop skills in time and resource planning, paying attention to details, operating within strict guidelines and briefing and instructing others. This activity develops awareness of many of the skills needed in administrative, operational and supervisory roles. These 'operational' skills are then transferred to the next activity.

#### 2. Colourblind.

An activity that applies skills from Hollow Square but extends to encourage careful listening, appropriate choice of language, awareness of the 'state of mind' of colleagues and a sensitivity and willingness to be flexible in how things are done in order to support others in ways they respond to. The focus of the debrief is to understand more about personal constructs and values and how they differ, even in apparently homogeneous groups.

#### 3. Innovation Images and Mystery Object.

Applying the listening and coaching skills from Colourblind in activities that encourage and develop big picture thinking, imaginative and creative responses, risk taking, pattern recognition and the exploration of new possibilities. Next, bring all of these skills together in the challenging strategic and tactical Webmaster activity.

#### 4. Webmaster.

A complex logical and analytical problem-solving task that requires understanding of the challenge, evaluation of options, selection of an appropriate strategy, management of time and people, monitoring of progress and ongoing process improvement.

At the end of these sessions, learners will have uncovered hidden or unconscious preferences in their own working patterns, deepened their understanding of others and identified the skills that come most naturally to them and those skills or areas of competence that would benefit from further development.

# Managing Conflict

**How do differences in our individual thinking styles create the potential for conflict?**

**How can we recognise those different styles when we meet, or work with, others?**

**What can we do to ensure that those differences lead to creativity, not conflict?**

## Danny is a Community Worker

Danny thinks of himself as a 'people person'. He is employed in a caring role and enjoys building relationships with people, demonstrating a natural empathy.

He believes that communication is vitally important and enjoys discussion with people, especially sharing his ideas and beliefs and listening to others in an attempt to understand them.

Danny knows that some people feel that he is too sensitive and emotional but he feels that it is very important to acknowledge and work with the emotional aspects of people's behaviour. Danny values trust, honesty and personal integrity and fights hard to protect his own rights and the rights of others.

When he is forced to make a tough decision, Danny says that 'the heart rules the head'. He reacts to his intuitive feeling about what is right, even when it might be difficult to see things through.

Sometimes, Danny finds it hard to get things done, as he tries to take everyone's ideas into account. He is always happiest working in a team, where he is considered to be a natural mediator and team player.



Consider Danny's working relationship with Kim, Tamara and Maria.

What will he find most difficult about working with each of the others?

Who is Danny most likely to describe as 'like-minded'?

Which of these working relationships do you think have the most potential for conflict and why?

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## Kim is an IT specialist

Kim is a very structured thinker and likes to build logical arguments based upon proven facts. He enjoys technical problem-solving and likes to be sure that anything he suggests makes sense. He enjoys looking for the reasons why things happen and exploring cause and effect, and prides himself on his ability to think critically.

Kim does not like to display his feelings, even when he is under pressure, and believes self-control is important. He gets frustrated with what he describes as 'woolly thinking' and finds it difficult to handle situations in which people seem to be responding with an emotional, rather than a rational, response.

Kim enjoys the challenge of building convincing business cases, once he has evaluated a range of possible strategies. He will not be rushed into decisions and spends time ensuring that he understands the issues he is dealing with before jumping to any conclusions.

Kim always considers all the financial implications of a project to ensure value for money. He analyses data and seeks evidence for his choices.



**Consider Kim's working relationship with Maria, Tamara and Danny.**

**What will he find most difficult about working with each of the others?**

**Who is Kim most likely to describe as 'like-minded'?**

**Which of these working relationships do you think have the most potential for conflict and why?**

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## Tamara is a Creative Designer

Tamara says that in the past, she saw herself as “a bit of a wild child” but has now found a creative role in a marketing business that allows her to channel her imagination and ideas into her work.

She enjoys new ideas, playful concepts and spends a lot of time thinking about the future and new possibilities. She is easily bored and often moves on to a new project before the current one is complete.

She acknowledges that she can be ‘a nightmare to work with’, especially in situations that require attention to detail and structured reasoning. She says that she frequently works on ‘gut instinct’ and cannot always justify her decisions – but in the majority of cases, she is proved to be right!

Tamara loves working with patterns, both physical ones in her design work, and also in the patterns and connections between ideas and concepts. She likes to view the same thing from different angles in order to find a new perspective. Tamara hates to feel ‘pinned down’ and thrives on change and the chance to do something she hasn’t done before.



**Consider Tamara’s working relationship with Kim, Danny and Maria.**

**What will she find most difficult about working with each of the others?**

**Who is Tamara most likely to describe as ‘like-minded?’**

**Which of these working relationships do you think have the most potential for conflict and why?**

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## Maria is a Personal Assistant

Maria is a highly organized, hard-working PA to the CEO of a charity. She likes to keep everything under control and enjoys creating systems and procedures that enable her to work efficiently.

She hates disorder and uncertainty and never leaves a job incomplete. Maria enjoys having everything prepared in advance of her boss's meetings and ensures that all his administration is completed with the minimum amount of fuss.

Maria dislikes interruptions to her normal routine and feels uncomfortable when she finds herself in uncertain situations or dealing with ambiguous information. Maria pays careful attention to detail in everything she does and finds it difficult if she is asked to submit something that she does not feel is perfect.

Maria likes the responsibility her boss has given her to manage his diary and expenses, even though he frustrates her with constant changes to his plans!

Maria's preference is to take the safe option, avoiding risk, and ensuring that she remains in as much control of her workload and life as possible.



**Consider Maria's working relationship with Kim, Tamara and Danny.**

**What will she find most difficult about working with each of the others?**

**Who is Maria most likely to describe as 'like-minded?'**

**Which of these working relationships do you think have the most potential for conflict and why?**