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with Barbara Best

Transcript: Learning Styles (interview)

Barbara: Hi, I'm Barbara Best, and this is humans working remotely. A podcast where I'll show you how to meet the expanding needs of your organization by utilizing alternative solutions for operational staffing, through expert insight and meaningful conversations with business professionals will talk about common challenges and proven strategies that will provide you with more time to focus on your organization's mission, relationship building and other high value growth activities.

Did you know that there are three basic types of learning styles, the three most common are visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. To learn, we depend on our senses to process the information around us. Keep these ideas in mind when you're presenting to your next potential client, to let them know how great you are, are when you're doing your presentation. With me today is my colleague, Kerri, and we're going to discuss and explore these areas of learning and provide more insights. So Kerri, what do you think? What do you think about these three areas? Or do you find one more popular than the other or so everybody different?

Kerri: I think everybody's different. And the challenge is creating presentation, because you can't go to everybody and say, so what kind of learner are you?

Barbara: Yeah, exactly.

Kerri: A lot of a lot of people know. And then there's another chunk of a lot of people that have no clue. They just, they learn. And then and they couldn't tell you what it is about learning that works. And if they have had a bad experience, they don't necessarily blame it on the way it's taught, but the teacher, and a lot of times, that's not the case. But that's so that's the challenge. It's I think it's a it's a mixed bag, it's just a matter of finding ways to create a presentation that will help everybody from each area.

Barbara: Yeah, and I think everyone has maybe different amounts of each type of learning style in them. There's a combination of all three and it depends on the delivery mode, I'm sure, learning via zoom, which we all do today, is much different than learning in an auditorium for example.

Kerri: Yes. Or or at a big boardroom table. Yeah, again, yeah, so totally different. But what we have that's the key, right, we have to find a way to make sure we can reach everybody on some level, and then hope that they can grasp and move forward from there with what they need to know.

Barbara: Yeah, yeah, for sure. I'm a visual learner first, when I need to learn something, I read books, I collect books, but I also read a lot of books, I do a lot of reading. That's how I learned. And as I'm

reading, I also take numerous detailed notes. I've got stacks of tape flags that are right next to me. And I especially remember when that book came out The Da Vinci Code, when it was first published, it was this fantastically huge, it looked almost like an encyclopedia glossy pages, and there was pictures in it and as well as the the text or narrative of the book. And I just happened to open it, it was my husband was reading it at the time. And I happened to open it one day and I I literally got sucked right into those pages. Because it's it there was color pictures, there was this wonderful context and text in this lovely writing and everything. And I could not put that thing down. And so that's when I learned hey I must be a you know, I'm a visual learner, because I just, it just draws me right in. And I've never forgotten the book, which is one of my favorites, not because it's controversial, but when it was in first print, it was in this lovely, almost encyclopedia bound issue with, you know, lots of color, and you know, it was just a wonderful experience that I still remember to this day.

Kerri:

I don't have a specific book like that. But I do have, when I I have reactions to books that I can feel the paper difference. And where I can so, because I know I'm a kinesthetic learner. I mean, for me, it's when all else fails, read the directions. I unless I'm studying for school, I used to write notes constantly, because that's how I studied. But when it comes to learning, I would rather sit there and watch it and then have somebody let me do it so they can watch what I'm doing and learn. But with a book, I get sucked into books. I love to read anyway. But if I had a book that has the gold leaf that you can feel, or the really old, like not even old, sometimes old, sometimes new, but the way that they're bound, and the materials they're bound in, that feeling to me will just make me that much more engaged in the idea of the book, regardless of what the books about. Yeah, feels nice. So yeah, I'm all about that experience. That personal experience.

Barbara:

Yeah, I agree completely. And I, I'm a paper book person, I'm I do have an E book reader, I'm not so keen on the e-books. For that reason. I love the smell of the ink and the paper. And the smell when you open an old book, or you take off the flyleaf, or, you know, it just it's just a totally different experience. And that's where visual learning comes into play I think.

Kerri:

Even the turning for me I find it's the turning of the pages.

Barbara:

Yes, yes.

Kerri:

It's scrolling or pushing a button. I have an old COBOL so if you push a button, and it moves, because it's old. I miss turning pages. I mean, I was never one to fold down pages. But I missed the sound of the pages turning?

Barbara:

Yeah, I know.

Kerri:

It's just it's, it's bizarre. The other thing I wanted to stick in here about visual learners that I discovered when I started doing presentations, you can't give somebody a presentation where you want them to listen to you, and you want them to read. Because it uses the same part of the brain, to read and to listen. So they can't, they can't do both. And if what so when I was doing it, I was always having I would have imagery on screens, and then I would talk to it or just like a total not words. Total, not words, that makes no sense. But anyway, imagery and and, you know, stuff that would make the point without it's all you have to read this. Because a lot of times I've been in workshops or presentations, and basically they're putting on the screen, the exact same words that they're reading. And if they're not exactly, they're so close that you notice when there's a mistake. Totally defeats the purpose as far as I'm concerned. Anyway, it was a really good it was good to, for me to learn that because I'm not a visual learner. So I wanted to, you know, when I found that out, I was really grateful, because I know it makes it easier for people who do learn that way to do it right for them.

Barbara: Yeah, that's all. And that goes back to talking to a potential client. If at all possible, try and find out how they learn. So then when you're speaking or giving your presentation, you have the most impact. And they'll go away thinking, Oh, yeah, I've really got what they do. Now. I've got to remember that yes, you know, right.

Kerri: Yes. And it's not about the challenge. It's the challenge is not always easy to get the information from them. But if you're talking about doing a presentation for them, say they asked you to do one for your team. Find out which one of the presentations they've had, were most successful with the team. That would be a good way. Because it's not like, again, can't really say well, how do you look to learn? But if you can find out how you know how the team has responded to different types of presentations, then you've got an end like you say, and you come up, you know, shiny as a gold diamond or gold bell, because you've come through and you've given this great thing, meanwhile, you're just using the information they gave you that said,

Barbara: That's a great idea.

Kerri: Yeah. Because then you find out

Barbara: Great idea. Yeah. So then how does that impact auditory learners? Kerri, what do you think there?

Kerri: The, for me, the most important thing that I have heard for with auditory learners is they, you need to have an environment that lets them convey back to you what they've heard. And that's the way that I have been taught to teach is, you say something, and then you clarify that they heard you properly. When you have an auditory learner, I think it's very important to always have an opportunity for questions. It cannot not questions to go into detail that might be answered later in the presentation. But a clarification question, because sometimes when something is explained, and you use, you might use phrases that are not familiar, but if you can reframe it, for that auditory listener, you're giving them the opportunity to get it because maybe again, like you said earlier, somebody may be an auditory, but then they may have another aspect that's important to them. So, some, somebody might hear something auditory, but they've got it, they can visualize an experience in their head when they're having it. And if they don't get the right words to mesh, then they're not able to get that clarity. So I, I find, it's always good to say, is there any questions? Or does this make sense or something along those lines, just to give people chance for feedback, so that they and they have, and it's really important to give it so that it's not, doesn't seem like you're impatient. And I know that nobody would set out, I want to believe nobody would set up just to be impatient. I just want to get through this presentation. But sometimes that's how it comes across. So I think it's really important that we, you know, take our time and take a deep breath, and imagine we're talking to a little tiny person, and, and being kind. And it's like, Do you understand what I'm saying? And this is, but you're not you're not being condescending at all, but you're giving them that that safety of, you know, the opportunity to have the form to challenge what you're saying, say, I'm not really sure what you mean, or do you mean like this or this? Right, because that can make a huge difference in how people walk out of a meeting.

Barbara: Yeah, for sure. And it is always the good technique to ask people to confirm back. And that invites dialogue and open conversation. So it's, you know, a combination of all those things that really goes a long way to engagement, especially on the auditory side of things as well.

Kerri: And that's where you were mentioning to about the difference between being on zoom. And that's again, that's even that can that's that that applies to visual as well as auditory, and kinesthetic. Kinesthetic, all the next one we're going to talk about is the case. Yeah, all three of them. Auditorium versus a boardroom versus zoom.

Barbara: Yep.

Kerri: And all three different learning styles can be there. So that's that. And that's a key. Oh, one more thing about auditory listeners, people who are people a lot, some people who are auditory listeners are called Why Listeners. They're very impatient. People listen for different reasons. If you are talking to somebody who is a why listener, they want to know why they should give you their attention right away. And if you miss the boat, and you don't give them that what's in it for me answer, you're going to lose them. So that's another thing to keep in mind when you're talking and you're presenting or developing a presentation. You want to make sure that you're able to identify the very beginning, why they should give you their attention in the first place. And then, I mean, besides the fact that that's what business is like, please, give your attention. I'm asking for it. Let me tell you why. Right away.

Barbara: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, yeah.

Kerri: When you have a why listener that's a key, because if they don't get it right away, you won't get them back.

Barbara: They're gonna walk away. So you know, that you have, what's that phrase? You have?

Kerri: Oh, with the 30 seconds?

Barbara: 30 seconds to make a good impression or something?

Kerri: Yes.

Barbara: Yeah. Well, there it is. Right there. If you can answer their why question, especially a prospective client, you're gonna lose them.

Kerri: Sure enough.

Barbara: Right.

Kerri: Most definitely. Yep. And that's and then you can't usually get them back because of the patient thing that usually turns to anger. It's all gone. It's a waste of my time.

Barbara: Mm hmm. That's right. Yeah, it is. Yeah. You know? Yeah. And then what about kinesthetic learners? I, I remember as when I was going through college, I just, you know, I realized that, that I learned better or learn, maybe it depends on the context too of what you're learning, that I do enjoy learning by doing as well as by reading. So I, what are your thoughts on that?

Kerri: Well, I, as I said earlier, I'm, I am primarily a kinesthetic learner, I would much rather get my hands in and get them dirty. I do like to read direction. Like you said, there's a little bit of both in everybody. The biggest thing that I learned about kinesthetic learners, I didn't know, when I was a kid, I never knew what it was, they didn't take pay attention to stuff like that when I was young. And I'm in my 50s, so that's dating myself, but that's okay. But we didn't know. And yet my daughter when she was in school, she was identified in grade three as a kinesthetic learner. And so they knew that she needed to be up and moving so she was the one that would hand out the pencils, or she was the one that would take attendance down to the office, right. And by the time she got into grade five, they had a corner of the classroom that was all carpeted off, so she could lie on her stomach and swing your legs. So I discovered with her the different things that people need to do like the movement, and I mean, you know, just being able to, like when I was

saying about the the differences with the three different forums that you mentioned earlier with the auditorium, and some places you can sit and swing your leg, some places you can't. If you're a kinesthetic learner, and you can't swing your leg while you're listening, you know, when you can't move, or you can't stand up and stretch when you need to, you're going to lose that person. So you want to again, those are the things that you want to keep in mind when you're creating the environment that you're going to be presenting into. Have a chance every 20 minutes to stand up and do a stretch. I say, focus for more than 20 minutes at a time without changing direction, have everybody get up and move a little bit, do a little dance and be goofy. And then you're going to be able to keep everybody's attention.

Barbara: Yeah. So and you also need to actually if, like, if you're in a board meeting or something, you do need to invite engagement. And let people relate to them their experience that we can contribute to the meeting or to the group.

Kerri: Yes.

Barbara: And that too is involved in there as well in kinesthetic learning, to engage and I don't know if give permission is the right phrase, but allow other people to relate their experiences to the context that you're talking about.

Kerri: Yes. And I think that I think that's that's an excellent point Barb, because what I have found is that until one person speaks up, nobody will.

Barbara: Exactly.

Kerri: And if you can get if you can get one person engaged with the feedback and come across that you're in a safe environment, you can ask questions, share your experiences, that's going to benefit everybody, no matter how they learn, everybody's going to benefit. But it always, I find, it always takes a little nudging to get somebody to come right up, and when I'm in a group, I'm always the first one to volunteer, because I want my answer.

Barbara: Doesn't surprise me.

Kerri: But what I find, though, is I'm the first one, and I always wait, I don't just put my hand up first, like, you know, the kid we hated in high school. And then I don't I never do that. I always wait. Because I know that I have no qualms with asking questions. But when nobody else asks, then I do and then people will start to ask if other people do, I hang back. And I wait. And then you know, as as the questions kind of peter off, then I'll ask, but if nobody's asking, I jumped up, and I'll jump right in and I'll say, I don't understand or, and I, and I'm being honest about what I need for more information. But I also feel like I'm setting the stage to say, I'm here, and I'm ignorant. And I need to ask the question, so feel free to ask one with me and we'll be learning together. Right? Because a lot of people are really nervous about asking questions, right? They walk away from the meeting. It's like, I don't know what the hell that was about.

Barbara: Yeah. And I do that too sometimes in a meeting, I will quite often ask a question, just for the benefit of those in the room.

Kerri: Yes, I've done that too.

Barbara: Whether I know the answer, or I don't, I'll still ask a question. Just to you know, like you just said, Kerri, get the ball rolling and get people, you know, start to thinking about, you know, maybe speaking up a little bit. And I've also noticed, too, the context of a meeting is much

different too if you're in a smaller group, right, say a room of I don't know, five people, it's a much different dynamic than if you're in a room of 50 people.

Kerri: Oh, and even 10. 10 or 15, from 5.

Barbara: Much different energy there. So I think people are more much more comfortable in small groups. Anyway.

Kerri: I agree. Further to what you said about asking the question, even if you know the answer for the sake of the room, I think it's also a good, that's a good practice for the presenters to hear, because it's letting presenters know that maybe they could be a little more detailed in their explanations, so that they're not ending up having to have somebody say, well, can you clarify, because that's kind of vague.

Barbara: Yeah. Right.

Kerri: If somebody did that to me, and I was presenting, I'd be making a note of that going, oh, I need to tweak how I say this because clearly my message is not coming through without clarification.

Barbara: Yeah. Right.

Kerri: So you're actually helping the presenters when you're making those asking those questions. But more so you're helping the people in the group. Because then they're oh, yeah, she's asking I can ask now.

Barbara: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. We're so human eh? We're just so human. Do you have any other perspective, Kerri, on any of those three areas of learning?

Kerri: Oh, my, the one thing that I can say is when you know how somebody learns, keep it in mind always because, and again, this goes back to my daughter, and she was young. But it made such a difference for her knowing that she learned in a different way. And she advocated for herself. So it's and it's it's similar to what I was saying about making giving the opportunity for people to feel safe asking questions, right. When my daughter was growing up, by the time she got to high school, she had advocated for herself. And it's like, well, you need this. Well, you need to ask for this. Well, I don't want to ask, do you want me to come to school? No! God forbid, mom comes to high school, right? And instantly, she started advocating, but it's that same kind of thing for adults who aren't accustomed to saying number one accustomed to admitting something they might see as a weakness where it is not a weakness. And they're so they're not accustomed to admitting it, and they're not accustomed to seeking extra information to make it more palatable for them. Right. So I think it's really important that yeah, that you, as long as you create a an environment that feels safe for your listeners, to have the freedom to ask questions asked by locations, given experience of their own, you know, then you're going to want you're going to have people walking, but I've really enjoyed that presentation. Because more often than not, meetings are boring. And if you host meetings with, yeah, with the engagement, all of a sudden, it's better. So yeah, what about you? Have you had like, any, any awfulness that you had to deal with where people were not as receptive or if you were in it, and you didn't have the you were given the opportunities to do the learning styles, and you were finding and noticing a difference in your class? Have you had any opportunities to to talk about that?

Barbara: Um.

Kerri: That was kind of convoluted the way I just.

Barbara: Yeah, I'm still trying to figure out what you were trying to say. Because, you know, not an auditory learner.

Kerri: No no if your experience of yours. Have you found that when you were able to engage the learning styles as you learn them from your group, did you have a better experience?

Barbara: Yes, of course. And it's, it's quite often, in my experience anyway, kind of a tough thing to nail down. You know, you're delivering your content, I prefer small rooms, small meetings, as you're delivering your content you, in my experience anyway, I didn't know learning styles of the people I was working with. Right, right, you know, beforehand. And then as I started presenting material, I kind of got a sense you kind of, I guess, the way people act or what they say or they don't say, or if they're not engaged, they're not even looking at you. You can kind of figure out what kind of learning style they have.

Kerri: Yes.

Barbara: And then I learned how to adapt very quickly. And then I just customize my presentation to the people in the room. And before I know it, the energy is lifted. It's much more engagement because I'm paying attention to each person's needs. I know the person. Yeah, the person at the back of the room who's not looking at me, but I know they're listening. Yes, I know. They're an auditory learner. Yep. And then the person who is looking impatient or pissed off or whatever, they are an auditory learner.

Kerri: Yes.

Barbara: And then you've got the person who's, you know, kind of looking anxious like, when are we going to actually learn this stuff? Like, what? I gotta do something. Of course they're kinesthetic learner.

Kerri: Yeah. Yeah.

Barbara: And then you've got the people who are, you know, you say something or you present a concept, oh, where do I find that? Where can I read? They're a visual learner.

Kerri: Yes. Or they're always in the front yes. You know, though, it's so good that you are aware of those things because someone less experienced than you might be offended if somebody was in the back listening and not not not they might not know that they're listening, all they see is they're not looking. And that could make somebody feel really...

Barbara: Offended.

Kerri: Yes. Offended or or crestfallen if they work really hard on their presentation so that's, that's a really good piece to mention, I think because people will, people will realize can realize that, just because you're not seeing the engagement doesn't mean it's not there.

Barbara: Exactly. Right. Exactly. I found that with I was giving a lecture at Ottawa U, Telfer University, about oh, five or six years ago, and it was in one of those lecture halls where the seats rise, they go to the back of the room. And the professor said, See those guys at the back of the room there, they're staring at their laptops, they're actually listening to you. They just don't look like they are. So just do your thing. And I thought, oh, okay, cool. I'll do that. Yeah, yeah.

Barbara: And the other thing I've learned too, and I'll leave you with this thought, I read in a book called, The Way We're Working isn't Working by Tony Schwartz. I learned in there and it still sticks in

my mind that the brain cannot do two things at the same time with 100% attention. It's not possible. The brain is not programmed that way. So this concept we have, especially in this day and age where everything's fast track and got to do it. This concept of multitasking, quote, unquote, is a total myth. Yeah, just we may think we're multitasking, we've got all these things on the go. But the brain is not giving 100% attention to any one of them.

Kerri: No, we're just stretching our stress, stretching ourselves and stressing ourselves at the same time for no reason.

Barbara: That's right. Yeah. So we made our mistakes, or we missed something or miss a deadline or a meeting or whatever. That's could be the reason why. So very interesting. Our brain is so intelligent, it just, it's mind boggling, no pun intended, that we're programmed the way we are. it's just so fascinating.

Kerri: I agree.

Barbara: So thanks very much, Kerry, for joining me today on this fantastic conversation again.

Kerri: Thank you for having me, it was fun.

Barbara: Yeah, yeah, it was thanks. Take care.

Kerri: Okay, take care. Bye bye.

Barbara: In closing, I'd like to thank you so much for listening today. I hope this information was helpful, and I look forward to providing more. I'm Barbara Best CEO of Virtual Works, Inc.

There's a couple of action steps you can do:

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