

# *Introduction*

## **WHAT GOOD IS THEORY?**

Many people regard theories as being as useful as umbrellas in the desert. However, with a bit of creative thinking, an umbrella, taken to the desert, can become not only a valuable source of shade, whether one is resting or moving about, but also protection from the wind, a way of catching condensation, a blanket-tent against the night cold, a digging or walking stick, a splint, a flag to signal for help, a spear or club, and so on. However, just as some umbrellas are little more than decorative parasols while others, like the golf umbrella, are more encompassing, robust and useful, theories, particularly those about intelligence, vary in their usefulness from being merely testing toys for psychologists or word-fodder for academics to those which provide insights into human capability and preferences for learning. Consequently, the purpose of these 35 activities is to demonstrate the usefulness of Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences as a useful tool when situations at the workplace become heated, or when the climate for training and development seems too arid.

## **NINE PARTS**

As a matter of convenience, the activities have been divided into different Parts, each addressing different areas for application of the theory. However, those using the materials will quickly realize that these divisions are largely arbitrary, as most of the activities are capable of being used across several categories.

### **Part I**

Three icebreakers are presented, which not only aim at the traditional outcome of helping people to break down some of the barriers to good communication, but also provide an indication of how the different intelligences of others can help or hinder us in getting to know them.

### **Part II**

The five activities offered here provide participants with the opportunity to learn about their own preferred intelligences, how they differ from others in the abilities they use, how Gardner's theory explains these preferences and differences, and how these preferences impact on our career choices and practices.

### **Part III**

Using the basic understanding established in Part I, the five activities offered here demonstrate how multiple intelligences can be used to improve listening, speaking and writing in both face-to-face settings and at a distance.

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### **Part IV**

This Part focuses on how multiple intelligences can help trainers recognize their own preferences, identify the preferences of those they teach, practise the use of more intelligences as tools for training, overcome specific problems such as technophobia and, finally, examine their performance on video.

### **Part V**

While almost all the activities present opportunities for group work, Part V focuses on making participants more aware of the value of teamwork and provides skills for improved teamwork using multiple intelligences. Some of the more usual applications of this Part include the use of multiple intelligences to identify the ways in which we irritate others or they irritate us, how to identify abilities in teams and promote knowledge-sharing, how to encourage trust and how to deal with the need to make an appropriate and acceptable apology to a colleague or client.

### **Part VI**

'Diversity', and how to use it to advantage, is far too broad a topic to be fully addressed by any single section. Consequently, Part VI focuses on only one aspect of diversity – how to use the theory of multiple intelligences to identify and meet the requirements of people with special needs related to their physical disabilities, cultural background, gender or other distinguishing characteristics. Further, the activities demonstrate the potential value of more skilful identification and adaptation to these differences.

### **Part VII**

These activities demonstrate how multiple intelligences can be used to approach problem-solving in new ways. For example, using multiple intelligences not only expands and gives new usefulness to the processes of brainstorming, questioning and projection, but also supports the issues of how to motivate yourself and others to be more innovative.

### **Part VIII**

As a follow-on from the activities already presented, Part VIII offers materials, referring back to the nine intelligences, which can be used to evaluate their programmes.

### **Part IX**

This Part provides a list of books, articles, websites and videos for each of the Parts or topics covered.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES**

In each of the activities the facilitator is provided with the following information.

### **Applications**

These briefly describe the most common or appropriate application of the activity. However, they are meant to be suggestive rather than prescriptive, and many facilitators will find that certain applications can be useful for achieving a variety of outcomes.

### Group size and timing

Group size and timing, as with applications, are a matter for the facilitator's judgement. For example, smaller, more experienced groups will require less time while larger groups – especially those with language problems or other needs – will require more time.

### Resources

All the material required is itemized for the facilitator.



### Facilitator's guide

This section provides suggestions for introducing the activity, steps for providing materials and directions, hints for guiding participation and a set of questions to support people's sharing of their experiences, highlighting outcomes, summarizing and projecting into future workplace practices.

### Suggestions for extending the training

At the end of each activity guide there is a very short, selected list of annotated materials (books, articles, videos and so on). This list is placed with the activity in recognition of the fact that busy people seldom, if ever, have the time to plough through a long list of references at the back of the book in hope that they will be able to find an appropriate item. They want a selected list of relevant material presented close to the materials they are working on. On the other hand, the extended list in Part IX allows users to browse and gain an overview of the resources suggested.

### Materials

Two types of material are provided for the activities. The first of these are materials for participants to use and are identified with an icon  for easy recognition. Further, this use of an icon rather than a label avoids the negative associations sometimes attached to words like 'task sheets', or 'worksheets', as well as confusing them with terms such as, 'activity sheets'. The second type of material is the OHP master for the facilitator and this too is identified with an icon  to avoid confusing it with the task/worksheets.

## WHAT MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES ACTIVITIES CAN DO

The overarching purpose of these multiple intelligences activities is to provide participants with opportunities to develop and apply new ways of thinking about themselves, those with whom they work, and those they work for, whether employers, clients, customers or community. These new ways of thinking not only support the development of a greater respect for oneself and others but also provide new ways of looking at familiar issues such as teamwork, diversity or communication. It is only when old problems are looked at in new ways that new alternatives can be generated, applied and evaluated.

Thus, while the starting point for these activities is the 'theory' of multiple intelligences, each activity then moves on to tackle the challenge of how to make use of that understanding in solving important and persistent workplace problems.

## WHAT MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES THEORY WON'T DO?

The limitations of the theory of multiple intelligences is exemplified by the story of the grandfather who gave his young granddaughter a large umbrella for a birthday present. The expression on the child's face registered something between bewilderment and dismay.

'I know it's not what you were expecting,' said her grandfather. 'However, I'll make a deal with you. If you don't find it useful over the next couple of weeks, we'll take it back and get you something more to your liking.'

The child, cheered by the news that the gift might only be temporary, agreed to give it a try. In the following weeks she found that her gift was useful not only as protection against sudden showers, but that it also could be used as a shady tent, a doll's bed or carry cot, a parachute on imaginary paratrooping expeditions, an emergency carry case for picnic supplies, a pogo stick, a baton with which to practise twirling, a tool for reaching things put up out of her reach, and, best of all, promised protection against stray dogs and older brothers.

However, despite these creative solutions, the child still had visions of trading the umbrella for something more grandiose. So, after a respectful trial of the umbrella, the child approached her grandfather.

'Grandad, it's that umbrella you bought me. It's really very good for keeping the rain off, as an emergency lunch box and lots of things, but . . .' she paused, thinking of what might be a convincing bit of proof that the trade was justified, '... but, when it rains my feet still get very, very wet.'

Grandfather laughed. 'I said if you didn't find it useful we'd make the trade. I didn't say that it would be useful for everything. So, I guess next year I'll have to get you a pair of boots to go with the umbrella!'

The theory of multiple intelligences is a gift, much like the gift of the grandfather to his granddaughter. While it can be extremely versatile in tackling many problems, it cannot provide total protection against the problems encountered in the complex workplace environment. We still need to seek out, and sometimes wait for, those 'boots' that will augment the benefits we can derive from the theory of multiple intelligences.

## Key to icons used in this manual



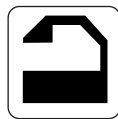
Handout sheet



Worksheet



Task sheet



OHP transparency master



Trainer's guide