

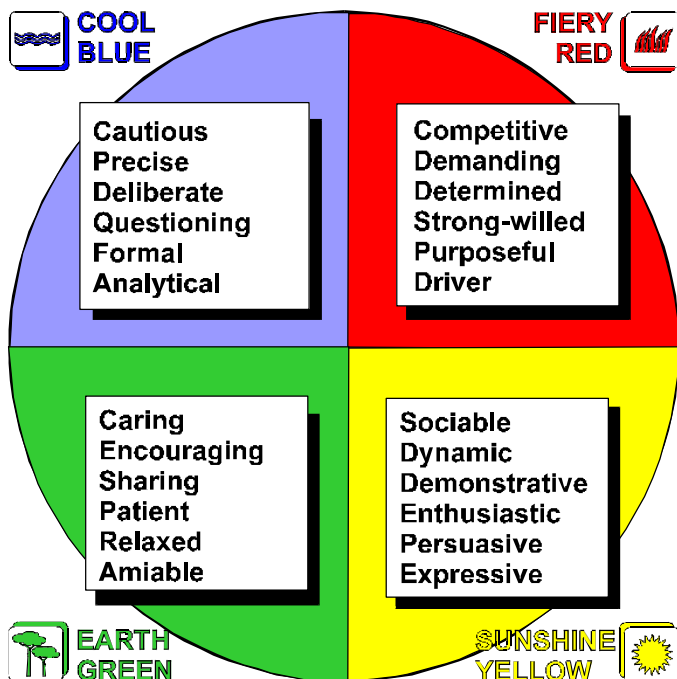
Leaving rivals in the shade

There's more to training than CPD - even for surveyors. Angela Jameson reports on how one surveying practice turned to colours to help its fee-earners pull in more business and communicate effectively with clients and each other.

Margaret Thatcher is Fiery Red; Nelson Mandela is almost certainly earth green. This is not advice on how to put your wardrobe together; the colour-coding refers to the type of person you are. And Paul Dunn-Sims, Lambert Smith Hampton's enthusiastic head of human resources, is very much a sunshine yellow.

It was probably his sunshine yellow qualities - sociability, dynamism, demonstrativeness, enthusiasm, persuasiveness and expressiveness - that first helped him convince the Lambert Smith Hampton board that its fee-earners could do with some managerial training, or, more precisely, personal effectiveness training.

'When I came to the company, all the training was focused on the technical skills surveyors need, rather than the management skills,' says Dunn-Sims. As a newcomer to surveying, he soon realised that effective relationships with clients were crucial to many big deals.



The real hue: how colour helps us to understand ourselves

'Talking to fee-earners, they hadn't really understood just how much personal chemistry played a part in their deals. There was room to improve our relationship with the clients,' he says.

The course Dun-Sims chose was one that is widely used by blue-chip companies such as British Airways, Canon and NatWest. Called Insights, it uses a colour-coding system to allow people to understand themselves better, and consequently to understand what makes other people tick. Using this information, the course teaches participants how to sell more effectively to difficult clients, and how to get results from team members with whom they had previously found it hard to communicate. Charles Grimes, a former surveyor and an Insights trainer, led the two-day course.

Juggling Concepts

Initially there was scepticism, especially when, within minutes of the course starting, those attending were asked to juggle. But nine months after the first workshop with the company's building surveyors, a new language is starting to permeate the firm. 'You can't ask him to do that, he's a blue,' they say; or: 'he must be red - he'll only see me for five minutes.'

Such talk is not as silly as it sounds. Based on the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, Insights teaches participants to consider the observable behaviour of their colleagues and clients, and to categorise them according to the colour chart. But first, participants learn that each person in their organisation has unique strengths, styles, needs and expectations - which can be exploited by the team. 'We wanted the management to have a common language to discuss interpersonal development, and they have picked it up very readily,' says Dunn-Sims.

Most of LSH's top fee-earners - including chief executive Bruce Brown and finance director Graham

Ede - have now completed the course. The next layer of management - associates - will undertake the two-day workshop in the spring.

Course leader Grimes explains how the course applies to individuals' daily workload: 'We think we can communicate because we all talk. But often we agree something in a meeting and go off with completely different ideas in our heads.' Participants learn to recognise others' behavioural styles and to adapt their own behaviour to meet others' needs.

For example, if a red/yellow person tries to sell an idea to a blue/green client by being extremely enthusiastic, it may put them off. 'It is difficult to move from one style to another without practice,' says Grimes.

Which brings us back to juggling. Grimes starts the course by asking people who can juggle, and getting each participant to try. But this ice-breaker has a serious message. At first, everyone says they can't juggle, but Grimes goes on to demonstrate that this is not the case.

'It shows that if you want to be successful, you have to be prepared to fail first,' says Grimes. And by the end of two days most people are passable jugglers, thanks to encouragement from their peers. 'It's all about team support,' explains Grimes.

In geese we trust

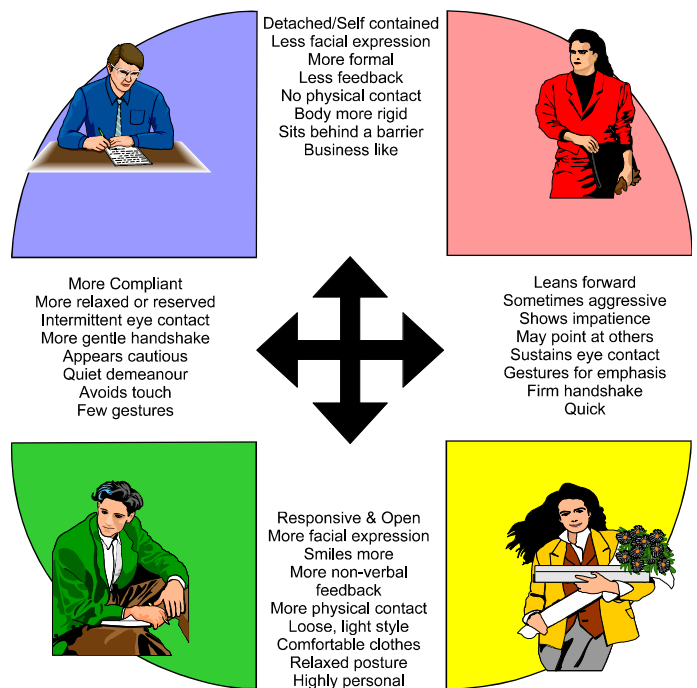
'And geese,' adds Dunn-Sims, demonstrating another of the motifs the LSH staff have adopted. Apparently geese fly in formation because they can get 70% further that way than on their own. LSH's surveyors are now working out how to follow their example. 'A surveying firm compromises hundreds of individuals with no sense of team at all,' says Grimes. 'All these people could be very successful if they went off to work on their own.' By teaching them how to work together, he hopes to harness those skills for the benefit of the company.

All fee-earners are required to bring in a certain amount of new business each year, and the course contributes to the skills they need. And it is appreciated in the field. Paul Morris, agency director at LSH's Leeds office, was sceptical at first, but now he says the course was 'fantastic.' He's a sunshine yellow. Morris also puts the theory into practice every day. 'You do it subconsciously; maybe something will come up and you'll refer to it. And now, before I go to see clients I try to find out about their personality before I go in,' he says.

So where does the course fit into the company's training needs as a whole?

Dunn-Sims plans to run half-day workshops with individuals working on the more difficult aspects of dealing with colleagues and clients, while the firm's performance reviews will also pick up on areas where individuals need more work. 'Where we see a collective need we will run a group-wide programme,' says Dunn-Sims.

When the 120 associates in the firm have been through the course, the board will take a decision on whether it is worth rolling out the programme to less senior fee-earners. At £80,000 a year to train 120 directors, the course isn't cheap. But Dunn-Sims and Grimes are convinced that just a 5% uplift in the fee-earning of each participant is an achievable return on investment. Grimes says: 'Many companies just see the cost, which is significant, but the potential rewards are enormous.'



All the right moves: colour-coding our body language and personality

Insights for small firms

Small, specialist practices have different challenges. Team members multi-task, handling all types of situations and clients. Highly developed interpersonal skills are essential and have a huge impact on company success.

Typical Company Profile

- Founded mid/late 1990s.
- Lean and flexible
- Specialist knowledge and client base
- Fewer than 10 fee-earners, many of whom left larger corporates

The individual players

Possess high levels of professional expertise, know-how, contacts and:

- Have a clear, shared vision
- Want to be their own boss
- Want to control their own destiny
- Are creative problem solvers
- Have flair and leadership ability
- Thrive on uncertainty and change

What is the current challenge?

You may need more developed:

- Analysis
- Planning
- Organisation
- Determination
- Listening skills
- Teamworking

Discovering the answers to the following questions can have a profound impact on your company and the individuals in it.

Your colleagues

- What are their strengths and weaknesses?
- Who is best suited to each task?
- What do they bring to the team?
- What are their preferred methods of communication?
- Are there misunderstandings? Can they be avoided?
- How can individual and group communication skills be developed?
- Is technical expertise important? Yes, but other attributes will make or break the enterprise.

Your clients

- Should you treat them as they want to be treated, or as you want to treat them (there is a difference)?
- How do you know what they want and recognise their style?
- How do you adapt your behaviour?

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