



Sikhula KunYe - PEP Africa's Journey of Growing Together in Leadership

Success Story

PEP | Africa

CreateConsulting

FACILITATION • LEARNING SOLUTIONS • COACHING



Introduction

PEP Africa's inspiring journey has been shaped by a profound purpose: touching lives through serving the people of Africa. As a prominent customer-focused retailer specialising in Clothing, Footwear and Homeware (CFH), PEP Africa has expanded to over 200 stores in four countries, including Angola, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, firmly establishing itself as the market leader in these regions. This journey is driven by a deep commitment to their customers, who are remarkable people who make smart choices every day on a limited budget for their families to grow and shine.



Our Vision

To be the best discounted retailer in Africa



Our Cause

Making it possible for our remarkable customers and their families to live with dignity and pride



Our Mission

Best place to WORK, best place to SHOP and the best place to INVEST



Our Values

Honesty, Passion & Resourcefulness



Our Mandate

Sustainable Growth

Bouwer Strydom, PEP Africa's inspiring CEO believes that the organisation has the ability and capability to change the face of retail in the countries they trade in. Bouwer's personal journey is closely intertwined with PEP Africa's story. He shares:



"I embarked on a year of coaching with Melanie Kiley of CreateConsulting. It was an amazing journey and a highlight in my life. At the time, I was facing challenges and my sessions with Mel ignited new ways of thinking and doing."

Bouwer's career trajectory clearly reflects his growth. From contemplating other options in 2019 to being appointed the acting CEO in 2021 and assuming the position permanently just a year later. Reflecting on his journey, Bouwer emphasised, *"I had such positive feedback from people across the business who had witnessed the positive changes in me."*

Laying the foundation with Whole Brain® Thinking

Bouwer highlighted the profound impact of Whole Brain® Thinking on this transformation, a science-based methodology introduced to him by Melanie.

“Learning to think in all four brain quadrants significantly changed my thinking, how I showed up, my leadership style and my relationships. The results were amazing - I became a better human being.”

Recognising the impact of his coaching, one of Bouwer’s first actions as CEO was to introduce **CreateConsulting** and Whole Brain® Thinking to the rest of the Executive team. This journey began in 2021, with the team completing their HBDI® (Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument) Assessments and receiving an introduction to the Whole Brain® Model.

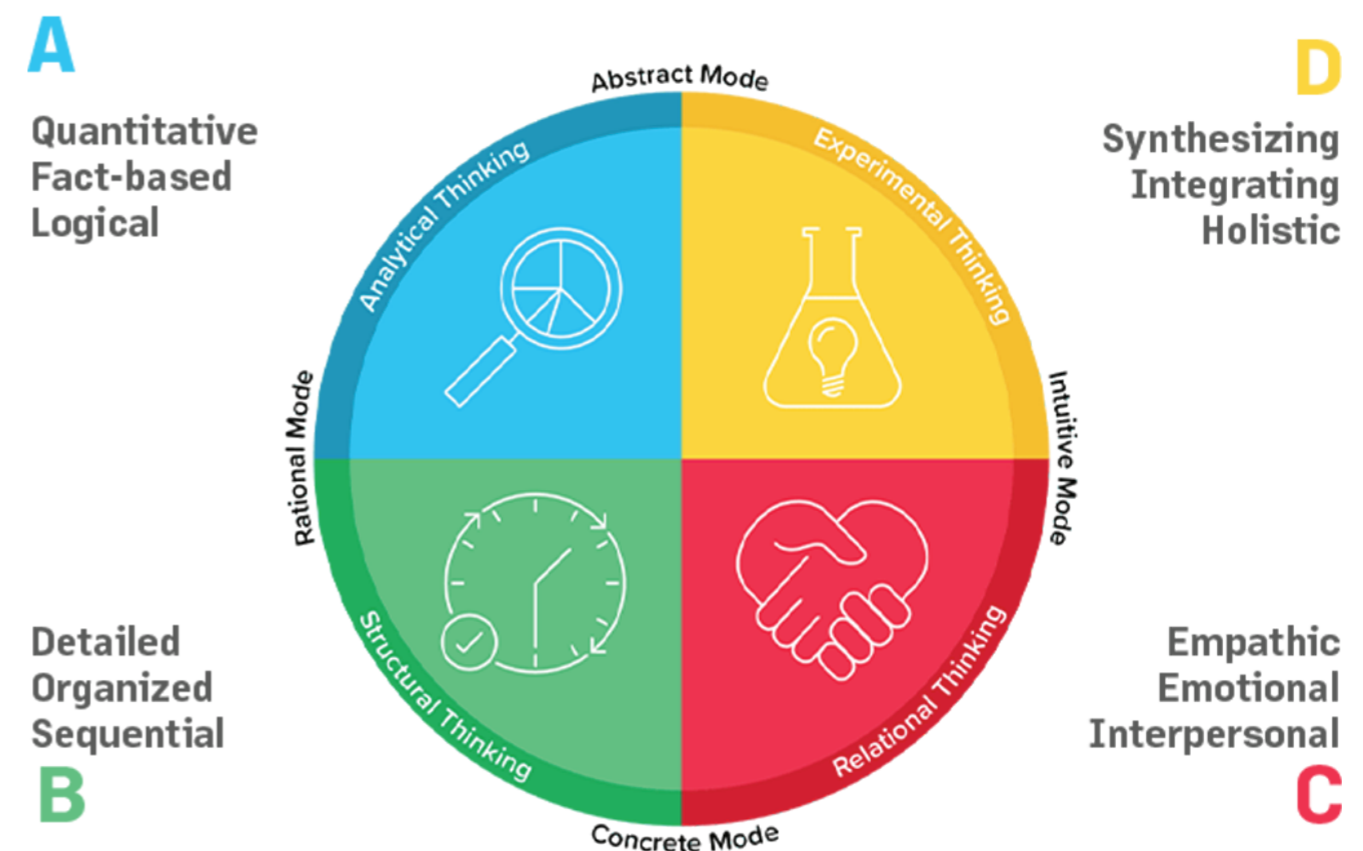
This laid the foundation for their transformative team leadership journey in 2022.

The awareness of one’s own thinking preferences and those of others, combined with the ability to act outside of one’s preferred thinking preferences is known as **Whole Brain® Thinking**

The **Whole Brain® Model** emerged as a validated metaphor for describing the 4-quadrants representing our thinking selves. Whole Brain® Thinking means being able to fully leverage one’s own thinking preferences, stretch to other quadrants when necessary, and adapt to and take advantage of the preferences of those around you to improve performance and results.

It allows for far greater understanding of our cognitive diversity, and as a result creates a platform and common language for better communication, problem solving, decision making and relationship building.

Whole Brain Thinking®



The critical challenges facing the PEP Africa team

PEP Africa has always had a great culture. The business, however, had been through a challenging period marked by:

- Four different CEOs in 10 years
- A downsizing
- Being placed in a holding pattern mode

While they were a well-loved part of the broader Pepkor team, they weren't growing, and in retail, 'if you are not opening new stores, you aren't going places'.

The frequent changes in leadership and the complexities of the retail market led to low morale and instability in the Executive team. External pressures, such as high input costs, low market prices, inflation, the COVID-19 pandemic and economic challenges, further added to the difficulties faced by the team.

The lack of growth in new store openings also contributed to the declining morale and hindered business expansion. It became crucial for the leadership team to build resilience, maturity and cohesion to navigate these challenges effectively.

They needed to support themselves, each other, and their teams through uncertainties and foster an environment of Sikhula KunYe (growth and progress).








Sikhula KunYe means "We are Growing Together."
Sikhula KunYe creates an environment of teamwork in order for us to achieve business and personal growth.

Setting a path for growth

Bouwer was determined to support and empower the Executive team. During discussions with Melanie, he expressed his desire to equip the team with the necessary tools, skills and competencies to handle change, build a cohesive team and pave the way for future growth.

The core objectives were to:

-  Build a high-performing and solution-thinking leadership team
-  Develop personal resilience to withstand ongoing challenges and model resilience within the broader PEP Africa business
-  Provide a robust framework with tools to support the leadership team in effectively managing change and overcoming obstacles
-  Foster team cohesion, contributing to a positive culture to support the organisation through periods of instability and change
-  Prepare the team for future changes and challenges, ensuring they have the resilience, adaptability and strategic foresight to navigate disruption

The Outcome

A stronger, more resilient and cohesive leadership team. One that would be prepared to lead the organisation towards sustainable growth and success, even in the face of ongoing change and uncertainty.

A bespoke Leadership Team Journey

Given the shifting business realities, Bouwer required a customised leadership journey for the Executive team. Before each session, Melanie and Bouwer collaborated closely to shape an effective process. Staying true to the Whole Brain® and Thinking Environment™ frameworks, we ensured the focus and tools aligned with the team's evolving needs.

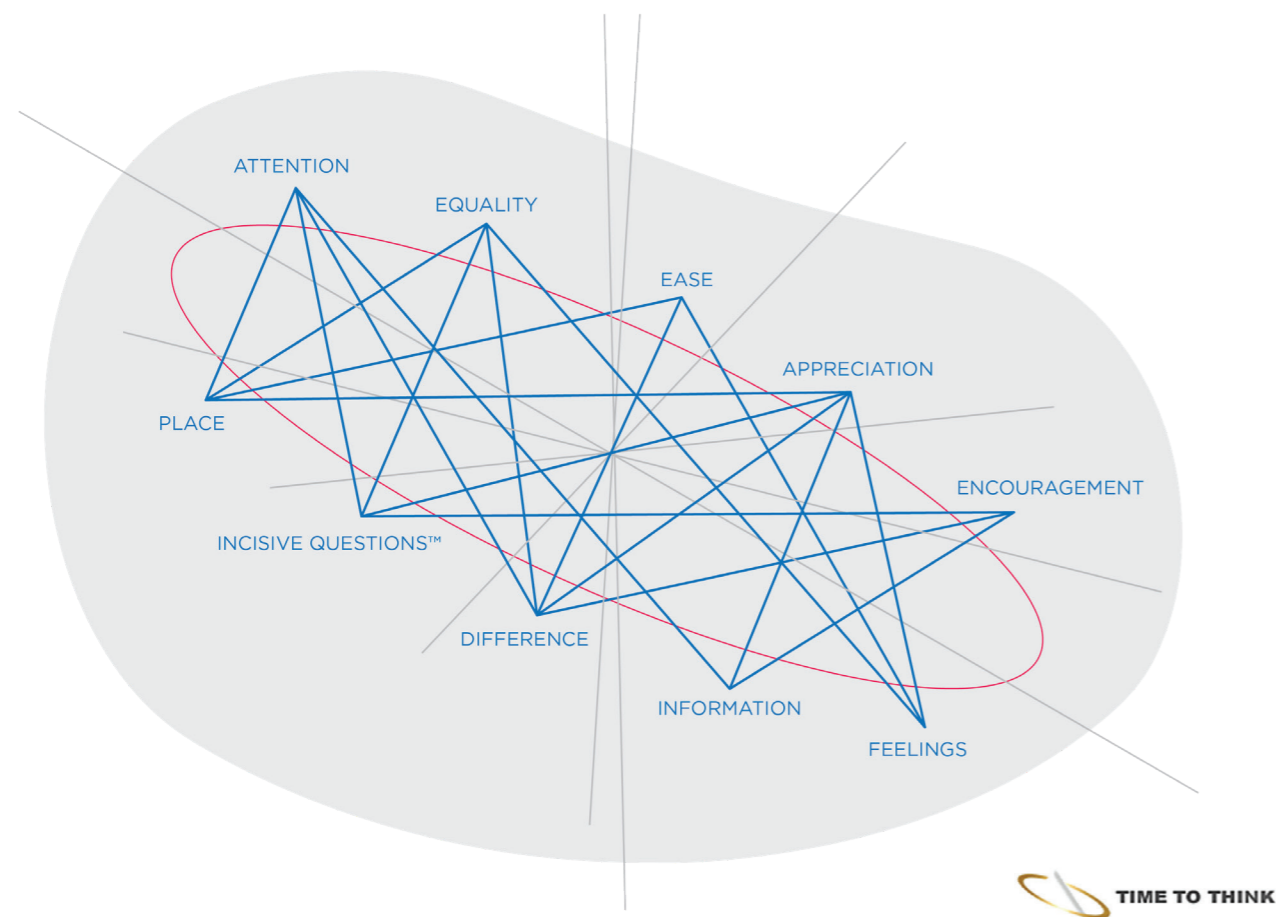
The six part journey spanned nine months and was further strengthened by the initiation of a Stretch Thinking Partnership programme.



1 Reflection - Transformative Leadership

The first session marked a crucial starting point, where the team were introduced to the **Thinking Environment™** and the significance of reflection as a powerful leadership tool.

The focus was on creating a Thinking Environment™ within the team, a concept based on Nancy Kline's Time to Think, which identifies ten behaviours that foster our best independent thinking.



The team had the opportunity to connect with themselves and each other, realising that the quality of their thinking profoundly influences the quality of everything they do.

Throughout the process, the team delved into their thinking preferences, understanding the strengths, dominance and shadows within their thinking patterns. They also explored how their mindsets impacted their leadership of the PEP Dynamos and discovered ways to enhance their competencies.

The session was an emotional and transformative experience, with vulnerability and open sharing shaping a positive culture of learning and growth. Bouwer's role modeling of vulnerability set the tone for the team's willingness to share and learn together.

To sustain the learnings and momentum within their busy environment, we provided pre-readings and post-session resources as prompts in their inboxes.

The Stretch Partnership process was also introduced, pairing thinkers with diverse cognitive perspectives to tackle various topics collaboratively and encourage continuous growth.

Here's what Finance Executive, Ivan Roux, had to say:



"What I found most effective was diving deeper into understanding ourselves and our thinking preferences. After today, I am going to make more time for reflection and actively think about my thinking preferences and where I should build competence."

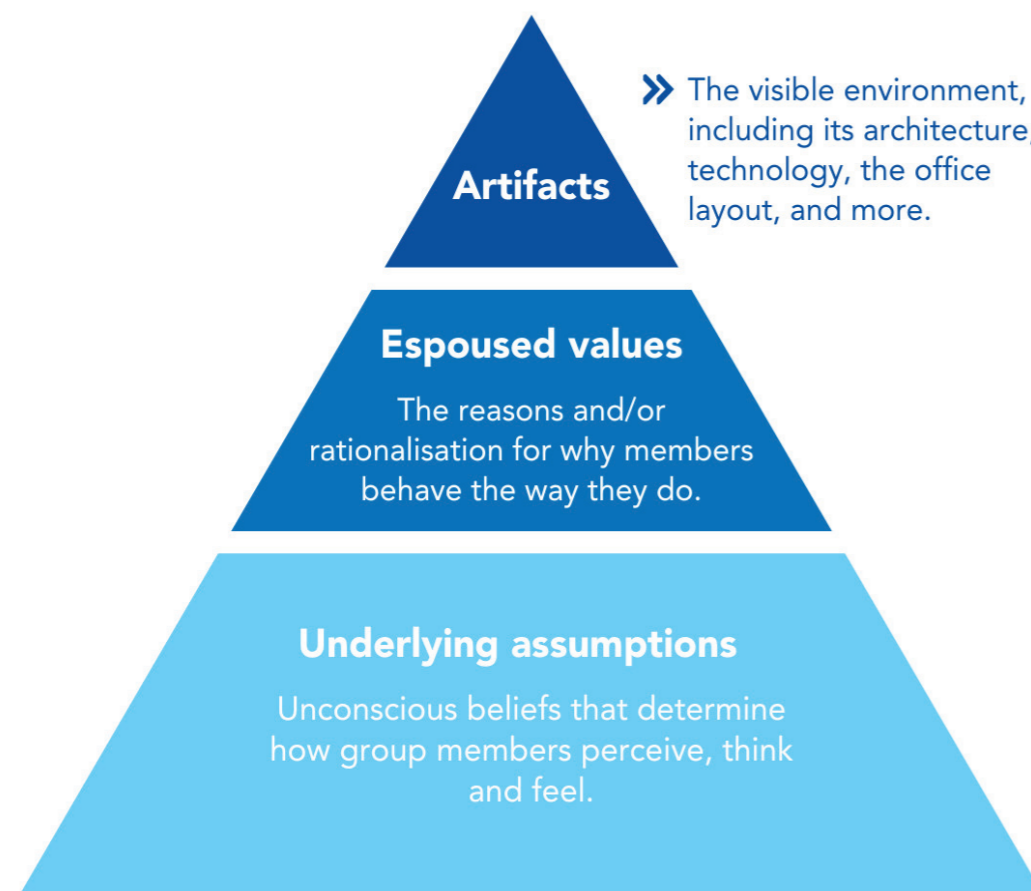
**A note on terminology: PEP employees are known as Dynamos because they are generators of energy who see the company as their own and add value.*

2 Leadership is a LOVE story

The focus of this session was on what makes teams healthy vs. unhealthy. The team spent time reflecting on their roles as leaders and unpacked the topics of organisational culture, trust, fear and the power of vulnerability.

Organisational Culture Model

By Edgar Schein



"Leaders get what they deserve."

"It might sound slightly bizarre, but one of the key beliefs for effective leadership is to be madly in love with all the people you are leading."

Ken Blanchard

The realisation that leadership is fundamentally a love story resonated deeply with the team. Effective leadership, they understood, stems from being in love with the vision, purpose and community they lead. Not in a sappy sense, but in the spirit of commitment, care and support.

Just like in any relationship, they realised the importance of working on their leadership to reignite the passion and commitment. The goal was to remind everyone of why they said "yes" to leading at PEP Africa – the purpose and difference the organisation makes in the lives of their customers.

Divisional Operations Manager, Jaun le Roux, found the Edgar Schein model and Love Story analogy particularly effective:



"It inspired me to fall in love with the business. After today, I will include the Edgar Schein Culture Model in my leadership training with the country teams and build and communicate a clear strategy for Operations."

The experience sparked a journey of rediscovering their love for leadership, helping them forge stronger and more purposeful connections to lead their teams effectively in a tough environment.

3 Building Leadership Impact

Session three centered on personal brand and reflected on the recently held PEP Africa Leadership (PALs) Conference. The conference provided an excellent opportunity for the PALs to deepen their understanding of Whole Brain® Thinking and its impact on their collective thinking.



Bouwer was delighted with the Conference outcomes:



"Thanks, Create Team, for your contribution to making our two days a huge success. All the PALs are super excited about their personal and team journeys. You are making a difference in a lot of people's lives... That's really special!"

The art of influence was also introduced, highlighting the idea that influence involves inspiring and engaging others to want what you want. This brought focus to how they present themselves as leaders and how their communication style influences different thinkers within their teams.

Whole Brain® Thinking played a significant role in recognising different thinkers communication styles and how to effectively engage multiple intelligences within their teams. Throughout the session, emphasis was placed on the power of listening as a tool for influence, inspiration and engagement.

To reinforce these concepts, we shared a Whole Brain® Hack on communication and presenting, concluding with the notion that attentive and empathetic listening is essential for leading PEP Africa into the future.

4 Questions for Whole Brain® Communication (presenting)

A Analytical: Clarity

1. Do you have concise facts?
2. Are you providing quantitative data?
3. Are you showing clear analysis?
4. Is it to the point?

D Experimental: Imagery

1. Does it look at the big picture?
2. Is it colourful, imaginative & visual?
3. Does it provide context?
4. Is it conceptually sound or clear?

B Structured: Action

1. Does your request ask for well-planned implementation?
2. Are you providing the necessary details?
3. Is it in sequential order?
4. Is your message organised and neat?

C Relational: Emotional appeal

1. Is your message reaching the heart?
2. Is it relating personal experiences?
3. Is it connecting and building relationships?
4. Is it using experiences and examples that related to the audience?

4 Daring Leadership & Healthy Conversations

This topic was crucial for PEP Africa, considering their challenging reality. The team unpacked **Brene Brown's concept of "Daring Leadership"** and the importance of "leaning into the churn and being able as a team to rumble with the challenges, demands, changes, and pressure and still produce good work."

Vulnerability-based leadership took centre stage, allowing the team to give themselves permission to be vulnerable in the face of ongoing difficulties, such as turnover, budget cuts, and supply chain issues. The comparison between "armored leadership" and "daring leadership" shed light on the value of leaning into vulnerability, curiosity, and a willingness to learn.

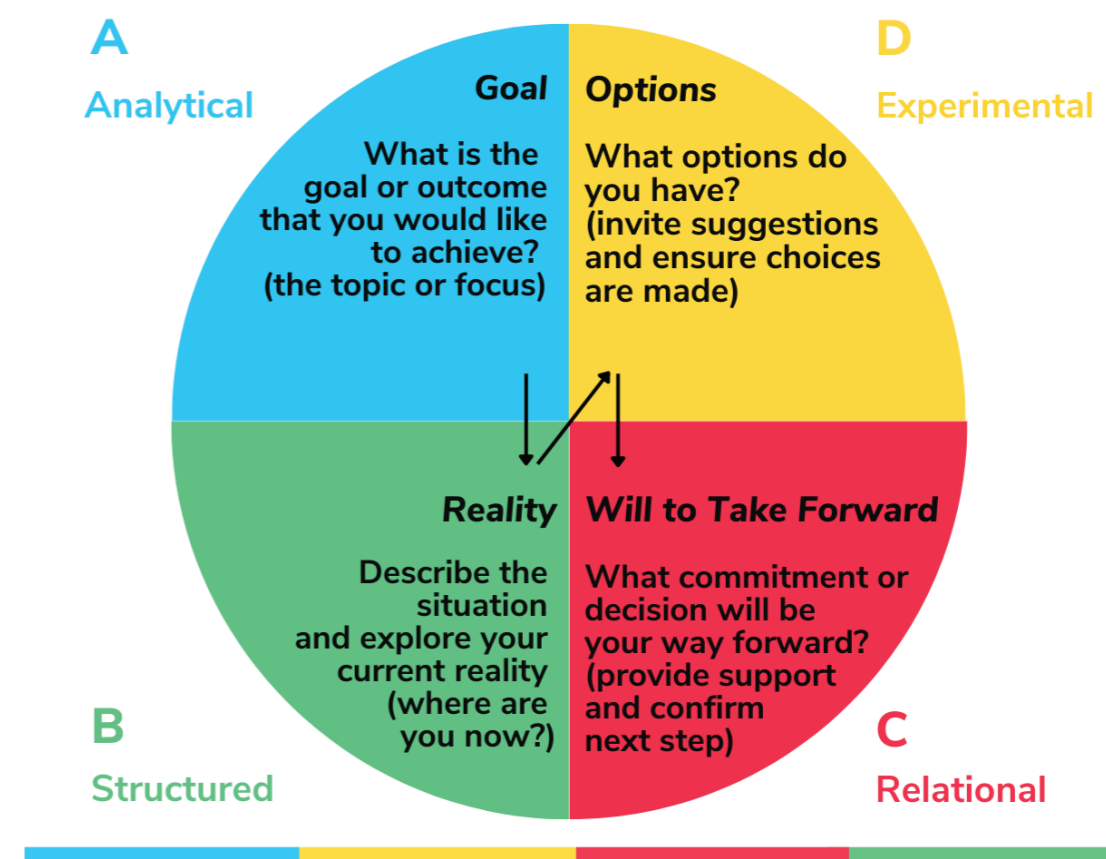
The session concluded with the Whole Brain® GROW Coaching Model, where participants engaged in peer coaching and practised key coaching techniques.

Human Resources Executive, Saleemah Salie, shared:



"This session was excellent with very powerful content. I found sharing in the circle and practicing the tools with a partner valuable. This really brought the content to life and I will implement the GROW model with my team."

The Whole Brain® Coaching GROW Model is a simple and effective framework for problem solving, decision-making, goal setting and performance improvement. This tool helped to shift the perspective of always having the answers as leaders and instead allowed them to be thinking partners.



Amidst the high pressure and fatigue they were experiencing, this session served as a reminder of the wealth of wisdom and knowledge within PEP Africa. By creating a thinking environment and asking the right questions, leaders could tap into the collective intelligence of their teams to solve complex business problems.

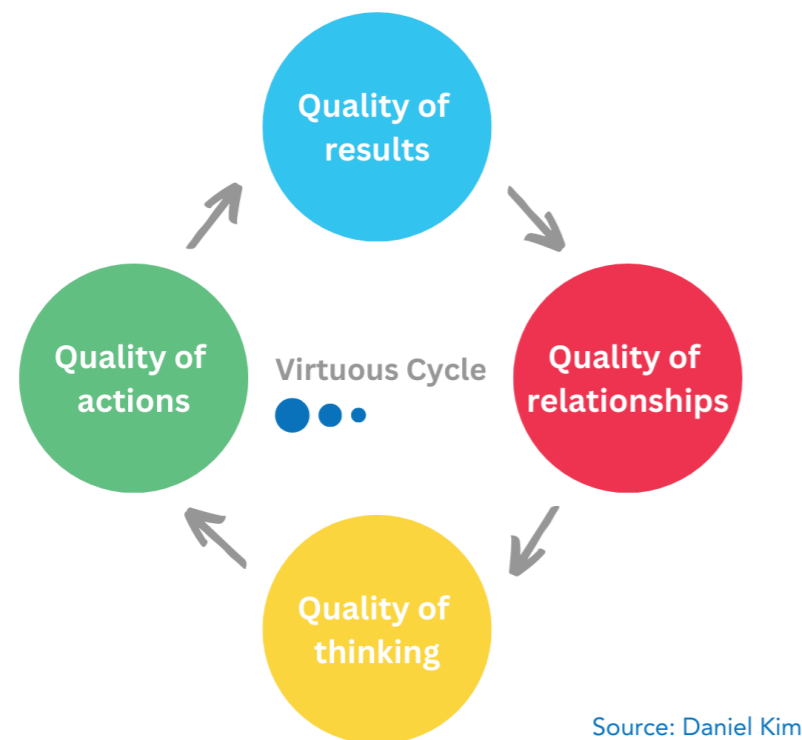
5 Leading with Emotional Intelligence

At the core of effective leadership lies leading self. In this session, the team delved into the significance of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) in fostering high-performing teams, conflict resolution and optimal leadership.

Daniel Goleman's five elements of EQ; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social communication formed the basis for discussion. Given the pressurised environment, EQ was particularly relevant in terms of its impact on thinking and actions.

Daniel Kim's Cycle of Success beautifully illustrates how the quality of relationships among team members directly affects thinking and actions. As relationships improve (team spirit, respect and trust), the quality of thinking enhances, leading to better actions and improved results. This creates a cycle of success where everyone benefits.

The Core Theory of Success



The session was highly practical, with the team brainstorming ways to build EQ and self-regulate in a fast-paced and disruptive retail sector.



"The team highly rated our Clean Talk methodology - an exceptionally valuable tool for neutralising potentially volatile or difficult conversations and are very keen to share this with their teams," said Melanie.

The various tools from this session empowered leaders to show up as powerful navigators of change, maintaining their EQ even in challenging situations.



"I've learned a lot about EQ and its importance. Through rating my own level, I now know what to focus on. The Clean Talk tool also really stuck out for me. Not only do I now have a better understanding of the EQ in my team, I also have the techniques to talk about it more, creating awareness and understanding," noted Divisional Ops Manager, Jaun le Roux

"People with a high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode. They never 'arrive'... it is a lifelong discipline. They are acutely aware of their ignorance, their incompetence, and their growth areas. And they are deeply self-confident. Paradoxical? Only for those who do not see the 'journey is the reward.'"

Peter Senge

6 Understanding and Leading Whole Brain® Change

Team alignment plays a critical role in navigating uncertainty. By understanding, leveraging, and enabling different thinking preferences, leaders can drive their teams forward in turbulent times.

Understanding and leading Whole Brain® Change were essential skills for the Executive team, especially since they were embarking on a Growth Strategy, to ensure everyone moved forward together.

This was a thought-provoking session that generated insightful conversations and provided practical skills to address the team's current challenges and journey.

From embracing Antifragility to effectively managing change using the Whole Brain® Model, the principles and tools offered ways to inspire commitment during change.

An opportunity valued by the team, as attested to by Planning Executive, Njabulo Mnguni:

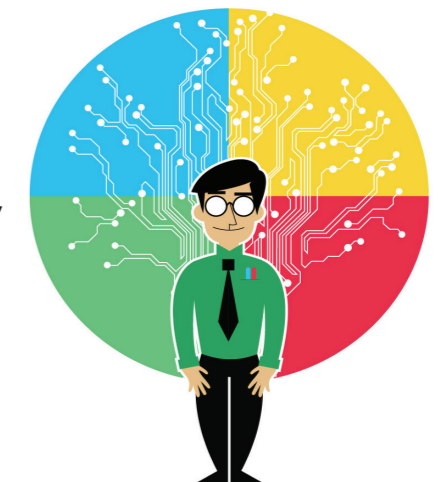


"The journey was linked to and answered questions and challenges that we were facing. Not only do I now make time to think, but I apply the HBDI® principles when planning change. I found the tools practical and implementable."

Thinking Agility:

definition: [n]

The ability to consciously and deliberately shift your thinking when the situation requires it.



Supporting and sustaining the journey

To support the roll-out of the HBDI® and Whole Brain® Thinking throughout the business, Anneke Kruger, Industrial Psychologist and HR Manager, was accredited as an internal HBDI® Certified Practitioner. **By the end of 2022, 116 PEP Africa Dynamos had completed their HBDI® assessments.**



"We can see a big difference in the people who have embraced Whole Brain® Thinking," said Bouwer. "It's visible in how they are thinking about the business, how they are leading and how they start dipping into areas that are more uncomfortable for them. We are also using WBT to help us prioritise the areas which are not our natural strengths."

The Executive Team's top 10 outcomes

- **Greater Self-awareness:** The team prioritised understanding themselves better, recognising their strengths and areas for development. They planned to allocate time for reflection and thinking, enabling them to be more intentional in their actions and decisions.
- **Enhanced Collaboration:** Embracing openness, vulnerability and appreciation improved team bonding and communication, fostering a positive and supportive environment.
- **Increased Trust & Alignment:** Creating a Thinking Environment™ within the team fostered a sense of safety and trust that lead to improved alignment.
- **Improved Communication:** By paying attention to their body language, communication style and non-verbal cues, they improved their communication effectiveness.
- **Heightened Emotional Intelligence (EQ):** A focus on EQ helped the team understand the importance of self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy motivation and social communication.
- **Focused Personal Branding:** The team prioritised how they 'show up' as leaders, placing a stronger emphasis on building their leadership presence.
- **Strengthened Leadership Skills:** Equipped with practical tools and models, the team honed their leadership skills.
- **Coaching Skills:** The GROW coaching model empowered the team to be thinking partners and harness their collective intelligence.
- **Leveraging Whole Brain® Thinking for Change Management:** Understanding and applying the Whole Brain® model proved invaluable in helping the team navigate change and strategic decision-making with greater effectiveness.
- **Embracing Antifragility and Bouncing Forward:** These concepts inspired the team to view challenges as opportunities for growth and development.



"Thank you, Mel, for your contribution to our Exco team. The journey (or shall I say adventure) was a highlight for me. I believe it has made and will continue to make a huge positive impact on the trust, relationships and functioning of our team."

Nico Taljaard, Supply Chain Executive

Conclusion

In closing, Boucher expressed his heartfelt gratitude for the significant impact of the leadership journey on the team:



"It was super special to have Melanie be part of building a new team and to allow us the time to ignite good thinking. CreateConsulting has made a huge difference in our lives, and it was so awesome to see how the team embraced the tools! Watch this space - soon we'll unveil a whole new strategy that will guide us for the next 3-5 years. Importantly, it is being developed with the input of every Dynamo gathered from the AfriCafé session facilitated by CreateConsulting. I'm convinced that the success of PEP Africa lies within this collaborative effort, and the payback in the next few years will be enormous."

[Click here](#) for more information on the interactive World Café designed for PEP Africa to help them involve every Dynamo in the creation of their strategy. The full story, highlighting the approach, process and outcomes, is on our blog.



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