

LogoVisual Thinking (LVT)

LVT enables you to:

- Encourage exploration and create new structures of thought
- Rapidly gather diverse inputs
- Include all contributions without rejection
- Use dis-aggregation and re-aggregation to replace old structures of meaning
- Achieve well informed high-quality results with changed levels of perception
- Guide the process without influencing the content

CMC has been instrumental in the development of LVT, a kind of Visual Thinking that encourages structural re-arrangement. In LVT everyone's ideas become shared material from which new patterns of meaning are fashioned from 'old' ideas. Everyone learns, improves their thinking, develops understanding and builds relationships. They own their results without issues of transfer or communication. Groups are able to act effectively because integrating diverse knowledge and experience rapidly produces shared understanding.

LVT helps to change the level of thinking and greatly accelerates the generation of shared outcomes. It reduces inter-personal friction and improves process, appealing to all learning styles by using all intelligences - physical, spatial, visual, emotional, auditory and cognitive. It is immediately engaging and helps people grasp the wholeness of things. Even without previous experience people can readily think together – gathering information, solving problems, developing plans, deciding actions. Even those who have difficulty articulating ideas work easily with this methodology.

Our preferred medium is dry-wipe magnetic shapes on dry-wipe boards which allow everything to be changed as ideas evolve. Lightweight portable whiteboards encourage reframing using multiple displays. At the other extreme, room-sized Thinking-Walls can cope with large-scale displays or many processes in parallel. The medium allows for changes of mind, encouraging people to engage confidently in open-ended enquiry (where there are no 'right' answers). People independently write their ideas with no need to agree because differences of perspective provoke creative thinking. The tools and methods make it easy to re-construct dismantled elements of old structures (to break things up and re-build them).



Outputs can be captured as photographs or by using purpose-designed software to be translated into conventional plans and reports. Abstraction brings different ideas into proximity and provokes the emergence of new insights. Thinking in clusters and patterns (rather than lists or bullet points) helps people grasp the whole. As people explore relationships between ideas, their diverse experience and expertise interact to produce new structures of meaning.

These days it is easy to overlook the fact that computers compute but only minds can think! Unfortunately by using computers we lose the haptic quality of physically handling one another's thoughts. Computer software is valuable for personal work, for some group applications and for capturing the outputs from sessions that have used physical media. Using projectors, and sometimes video cameras, we can involve many people in interactive processes.

LVT is not so much an invention as a discovery of a highly effective way of collaborative thinking. Although distinct in both applications and method, it shares some features with CPS, KJ, ICA's ToP and Nominal Group Technique (among others) integrated into a coherent methodology. It has proved successful in schoolrooms, for individual work, with management teams at all levels and for community groups addressing widely varying challenges.

Algebra of the Mind

We all become familiar with categorisation, which sorts information according to similarity, primarily so we can retrieve it by following logical trees – as in a filing system. Clustering ideas is intuitive differentiation (even putting together conflicting ideas) aimed at breaking free from past logic to allow novelty to emerge. LVT is an epistemological process, facilitating the creation of new meaning. Instead of naming the clusters we write epitomes: a very important aspect of meaning-making, requiring that we “under-stand”. Epitomes “stand for” the detail contained in the cluster. (Under-stand = sub-stance). The move from clustering ideas to exploring how epitomes relate, is a change of logical level.

As Gregory Bateson wrote (in *Angels Fear* pg152), “*Structure is the algebra of that which is to be described; It is always one degree more abstract. Structure presumes a gathering and sorting of some of the infinite details, which can then be thrown away and summary statements offered in their place*”.

What he observed in the '80s seems strongly akin to LVT, in which details are gathered, organised and epitomised so that one can set aside the detail to work at a more abstract level. LVT is algebraic thinking. Ring composition goes further, using narrative to add a further level integration.

LVT Stimulates Higher-level Thinking

LVT has applications wherever people need to explore challenging issues and complex problems. Over the last forty years it has been used extensively to excellent effect: management teams addressing business planning, community groups thinking about future needs and students researching their theses. Instead of absorbing meaning structures from the past people are differentiating and integrating to make new meaning and achieve shared outcomes.

With LVT we make connections between fragments of wisdom and experience. By dis-assembling experience and pooling the parts with others, we gain freedom from our mental boundaries. From the gathered items we identify new groupings and consider afresh how they inter-relate to form new patterns of meaning.

Rigour of language in place of casualness, clustering in place of categorising, epitomising in place of labelling, integration in place of sorting, all differentiate LVT from other methods. Such thinking has the potential to change the world we live in by changing the way we perceive it. It pushes us to think at higher levels of abstraction. LVT brings people into relationship, makes learning fun, develops capability and enables people to successfully shape their futures.

Contact us for details of applications, facilitation or training