OneNote and Learning Styles
– a perfect match

By Ole Lauridsen, LearningStylesLab,
Aarhus School of Business, University of Aarhus, Denmark

Microsoft®
Office

CONTENTS

Why Combine OneNote and Learning Styles?

People who know about Learning Styles and are familiar with their own Learning Styles strengths often hunt high and low for a learning tool that lets them exploit their Learning Styles potential effectively.

When using ICT, they tend to alternate between various programs, e.g. Word, PowerPoint, and Explorer, and they frequently face difficulties when trying to connect and combine their learning materials. The result is confusion and frustration: For them, OneNote is the solution.

On the other hand, people who use OneNote do not necessarily know how to use it efficiently; they grope their way through the various features and might make choices that do not support their learning processes. On the contrary. The result is confusion and frustration: For them, Learning Styles is the solution.

Thus OneNote and Learning Styles are a perfect match.

Learning Styles

Based on the theory developed by Drs. Rita Dunn and Ken Dunn, Learning Styles may be defined as the methods each person uses to:

- concentrate on new and difficult information;
- internalize this information;
- process this information into knowledge;
- retain this knowledge, and
- use this knowledge.

This understanding of Learning Styles comprises the most important steps of any learning process.

Building Excellence® Survey
BE 1996-BE2000 S. Rundle and R. Dunn • Designed by S. Rundle

Perceptual Elements   Environmental Elements   Emotional Elements
Psychological Elements   Physiological Elements   Sociological Elements

The Dunn and Dunn Model for Adult Learners: Building Excellence

The Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Theory is aligned with the learning systems of the brain, and it applies to all age groups. It has been thoroughly researched and has already proven its strength.

On the opposite page (page 6), the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model is presented in the Building Excellence version developed for adults (17+), the primary target group of OneNote.

Building Excellence operates with 24 elements that are fundamental to our learning. These elements are grouped in 6 categories: Psychological Elements (orange color code), Perceptual Elements (pink color code), Environmental Elements (yellow color code), Physiological Elements (purple color code), Emotional Elements (green color code), and Sociological Elements (blue color code).

Which Learning Styles Elements
Does OneNote Support?

We cannot go into detail with the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles Model here. Instead we will focus on the elements that are especially important when we use OneNote in our learning.

Learning is an individual process, which means that we all construct knowledge in our very own individual ways. Crucial factors are experience, previous knowledge, motivation, and maturity, to mention but a few. But most important is our awareness of our individual Learning Styles strengths.

And this is where the Dunn and Dunn theory is very helpful: Unlike other theories, it focuses on individual strengths only; it does not recommend that the learners work with their weaknesses in order for them to broaden their learning potentials. On the contrary, like Tiger Woods, all learners should concentrate on their strengths. Everything else brings about frustration and impedes the learning process.

You can have you Learning Styles profile determined and thus learn about your own Learning Styles strengths by taking the BE test at **www.learningstyles.net.**[1]

From the perspective of individual strengths, OneNote is a treasure chest offering learners a platform and numerous tools that support their individual strengths.

The elements directly addressed in OneNote are:

- **psychological elements**: analytic versus global;
- **all perceptual elements**;
- **emotional elements**: task persistence (multi tasking versus single tasking), structure;
- **sociological elements**: alone, pair, peer group, team, expert, variation.

Most of the remaining elements of the model are also integrated in the program, but in a less direct manner. The interaction of OneNote and the above elements will therefore be the main focus in the following; the interaction between OneNote and the remaining elements will be briefly touched upon at the end of this booklet.

[1] Here links to Learning Styles tests for younger age groups may be found, too.

Analytic Versus Global Information Processing

Some people learn best when they have new and difficult information presented to them step by step in a logical sequence; they are called analytics.

Others (most people) learn best when they have new and difficult information presented in large chunks on the basis of which they can then investigate the details themselves; they are called globals.
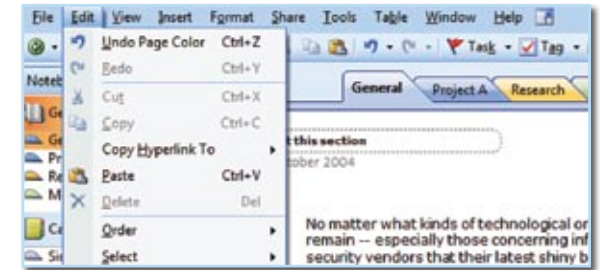
Finally, there is a group of people, called the integrated, who do not prefer one way rather than the other; they can approach new and difficult information both analytically and globally.

For instance, when going from one place to another, analytics prefer to have a detailed route description, whereas globals prefer a map. The integrated learners do not care whether they have a route description or a map.

ANALYTICS AND ONENOTE
The OneNote interface – like the other Office interfaces – meets the needs of the analytic learners. Since analytics are often less visual picture oriented (cf. p.17), they tend to prefer text to icons; thus they should consider removing the icon bar(s) and stick to the drop down menus:
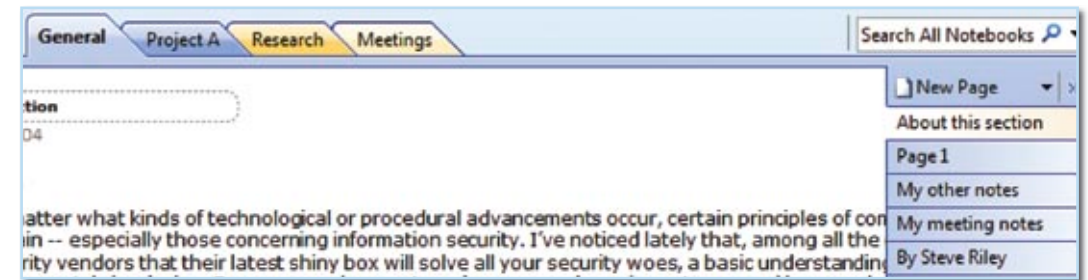
On the whole, a leading principle for analytics is KISS: Keep It Simple, Stupid. Thus analytics should avoid all types of layout extras that tend to distract them; very often this applies to colors as well. Thus they should consider working only with black text on a white background as shown on the next page.

Both the notebook feature and the basic tab organization of OneNote make it possible for the analytics to organize their learning materials in great detail, exactly as they need it.

Separate notebooks can be set up for e.g. separate projects, subjects, issues, or topics; and projects, subjects, issues, or topics can be broken down into small units through the tab facility: The main categories are organized in sections on the horizontal tabs line at the top, and each section can be divided into subsections. Furthermore, each subsection can be analytically structured by means of traditional tools such as numbers and/or bullets.
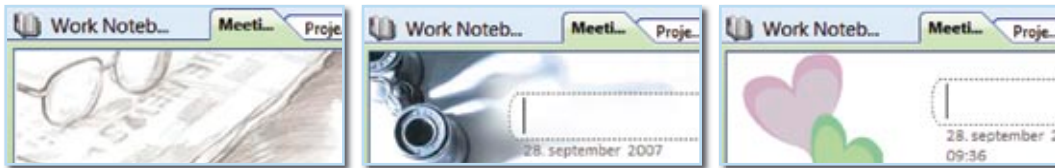

The analytics can easily develop the very structure they need and prefer in order to build up knowledge. The flexible OneNote search feature prevents the analytic learners from getting lost in tiny details, and the use of hyperlinks between notebooks, sections, and subsections obviously has the same effect.

GLOBALS AND ONENOTE

Globals tend to prefer icons to text as they are often strongly visual picture oriented (cp. p. 17). They should therefore consider using as many tool bars as possible even though it reduces the working screen to a certain degree.

The leading principle for globals is F&C: Fun and Color. To that end, OneNote offers a lot of possibilities to the global users: a variety of fonts and templates. The global learners should experiment with these fonts and templates in order to find the ones that support and motivate them (of course the global users can create their own templates if they so wish).
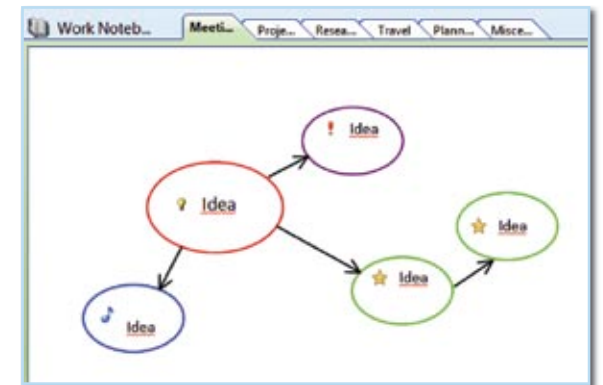
Most of the prefab One Note templates have pictures and decorations, and they therefore support the global learners' frequent need for visuals (more on visuals on p. 17).

Being global does not mean being disorganized. Globals also need the sections and subsections in OneNote (preferably in colors), but typically not as many subsections as the analytics.

Globals prefer a general overview before they move on to the details; thus they often like to work with mind mapping (sometimes combined with text boxes) rather than step by step tables.

Mind maps are easily made in OneNote by means of the drawing tools, and the possibility of increasing the pages beyond their normal sizes makes it easier to create a large mind map; this goes for the full screen feature, too. For some people, however, it turns out to be a problem to manage the drawing by tools; for them, a tablet pc will be a blessing (further on tablet pc's and OneNote, cp. p. 23).

Perceptional Elements and OneNote

The BE Learning Styles model comprises five perceptual elements:

- **The auditory**: learning by listening.
- **The visual**: learning by seeing text (reading) or by seeing real or mental pictures, graphs, charts, etc.
- **The tactual**: learning by using your hands and feet.
- **The kinesthetic**: learning by using your whole body and / or by involving yourself as a person (learning by doing).
- **The verbal**: learning by discussing aloud with self or others.

All these modalities are supported in OneNote.

THE AUDITORY ELEMENT AND ONENOTE

OneNote supports the auditory strength by allowing users to work with audio files. Whole lectures or speeches, recordings from meetings, thoughts, ideas, brainwaves, reminders, etc. can be stored for further processing, provided with relevant annotations in writing or pictures as needed. Beside this, the MS Narrator (or other similar text to speech programs) can be used for reading text from the screen.

Auditory learners are often non-tactile, and they therefore have difficulties taking notes. If that is the case, they can switch on the recorder during meetings, lectures, etc. and save the file in the right context afterwards.

THE VISUAL ELEMENT AND ONENOTE

It goes without saying that written text and all sorts of illustrations support the visual strength; as far as icons and annotations are concerned, there is a wide range of them in OneNote, and the creative user can of course design his own. Furthermore, pictures of all kinds can be inserted – from the user's own gallery or from Microsoft's online galleries.

Another important feature is video files; like pictures and audio files, they can easily be integrated in sections and subsections, and connecting program and camera causes no problems.

Of course all sorts of mind maps, flow charts and diagrams are of importance for visual learners; the design of such representations in OneNote or the import of them from other programs into OneNote is unproblematic.

THE TACTILE ELEMENT AND ONENOTE

The tactile learners benefit from the mere use of a computer and, thus, the mere use of OneNote. Drawing, making audio or video recordings, scrolling, following links, etc., etc. are important activities for tactile learners and strongly support their learning processes. A tablet pc with its possibilities of drawing and writing by hand is a strong tool for the tactile learner (on tablet pc's and OneNote, cf. p. 23).

THE KINESTHETIC ELEMENT AND ONENOTE

The kinesthetic learners can let OneNote automatically convert audio and video files into a format that is compatible with mp3 players and thus learn while on the move. If they have a tablet pc at their disposal, they can support their need to learn while moving to an even greater extent (on tablet pc's and OneNote, cf. p. 23).

If the kinesthetic learners want to involve themselves as individuals – the more developed way of being kinesthetic and typical of adults – they can set up the notebooks they use for e.g. homework as projects that they manage. Such a role play lets these learners be an integrated part of the learning process and take ownership of it.

THE VERBAL ELEMENT AND ONENOTE

Talking directly with others within OneNote is of course no option; but via Messenger the verbal learners can meet their need for verbalizing by interacting with peers. Often verbal learners like to talk with themselves, and they can support this preference by using the recording tool: Mentally, recording speech is more binding than saying words that just vanish into thin air; thus a recording has a larger learning impact.

Emotional Elements and OneNote

The emotional elements in the BE Learning Styles model are stress factors. Stress is an emotion in line with happiness, depression, love, etc. And if a person is stressed, he cannot learn properly. Whereas these very personal emotions cannot be influenced in a learning context, stress can.[2] Of the 4 elements in the emotional strand, task persistence and structure can be addressed in OneNote.

TASK PERSISTENCE AND ONENOTE

Task persistence refers to the fact that some learners – the single-taskers – prefer completing one task before beginning another, whereas others – the multi-taskers – prefer working on several tasks at the same time. For multi-taskers OneNote is a gold mine. The smooth interaction with other Office applications makes it easy to switch between tasks, and the program as such with its notebooks, sections, subsections, and various other features gives the multi-taskers the same opportunity to meet their needs.

ANALYTICS AND ONENOTE

Some learners prefer to be provided with a structure of the learning material; others want to create their own structure – order and/or connection of pieces of information, linking to other subjects and/or topics, etc. OneNote makes it possible for the individual learner to work on a structure given by a teacher, a manager or other person in charge. Of course, this could be done in Word or other Office applications as well, but the flexibility of OneNote surpasses the possibilities given in other programs – simply because the users can collect all their learning materials within one application.

[2] There is of course much more to this topic, but further discussion would be outside the scope of this booklet.

Sociological Elements and OneNote

OneNote supports the learner's preference whether he wants to work alone, in a pair, in a peer group, or a team, whether or not he wants a person of authority close by while working and, finally, whether or not he prefers variation between these options.

The loner who wants to work on his own, can obviously just do so, and through the share function people who want to cooperate with others or under the guidance of an expert, may easily have their needs met.

The direct interaction with Outlook and the blog-feature serve the same purpose; and of course online communication via Messenger is an option as well.

Other Learning Styles Elements and OneNote

As mentioned at the beginning, other Learning Styles elements are addressed through the use of OneNote, but in a less direct manner. Here follows a few examples:

For the learners who prefer a less formal seating (an environmental element), it is an advantage that the program comprises so many features and can hold all necessary materials. These learners do not need to switch between various files and applications and can work with only a few open windows (a fact that Windows Vista makes easier than before). It is therefore possible for them to work efficiently with their laptops on a sofa, in a bed or even on the floor – which quite a few learners actually prefer.

Since all learning materials or meeting documents may be stored in OneNote, learners have the opportunity to process the materials at the time of the day that suits them best; for asynchronous teaching or meetings this is most advantageous.

Tablet PCs, OneNote and Learning Styles

With a tablet pc, the learners can exploit their tactile and kinesthetic strengths to a greater extent than with traditional equipment.

For many tactile-kinesthetic learners, writing and drawing by hand is much better than using the built-in features; and though it is actually possible to write and draw with the mouse on a conventional computer, this does not necessarily lead to satisfactory results. With a tablet pc, the creation of mind maps and flow charts is easier, and this goes for amendments to such drawings as well.

Quite a few people have difficulties using the keyboard when taking notes, and often the clicking of the keyboard disturbs other people present. This prevents people from using their laptops efficiently, and they must constantly juggle with scraps of paper, file boxes, binders, and the pc; this inevitably slows down or literally disturbs the learning process. On a tablet pc, however, scribbling notes during lessons and meetings is just like writing on paper, and the notes are immediately integrated in OneNote and saved in the relevant folders.

Furthermore, kinethetic people's need for movement or their overall kinesthetic way of learning is supported by the use of a tablet pc. The learners are not tied to a desk, but can walk around as they please – holding a tablet does not differ from holding a book or a notepad.

Be a matchmaker!

Hopefully this booklet has whetted your appetite for using OneNote – or for using OneNote in a new way that fits your Learning Styles profile.

Hopefully you have got an idea of the large learning potential that is embedded in OneNote when this program is used in accordance with the Dunn and Dunn Learning Styles concept.

Hopefully you realize that OneNote and Learning Styles are a perfect match.

Therefore, be a matchmaker!