



Kolb's Learning Styles & Kolbe's Action Styles: Two Frameworks for Understanding Learning & Action

"Give me one point of which I can be certain and I will draw you a map of the universe.. - Permenides

By Ed Democracy

David Kolb is a Professor of Organizational Development at Case Western Reserve University. Kathy Kolbe is an entrepreneur, educator, and best-selling author who has spent over 30 years "validating instincts." The first four letters of their last names both begin with "k-o-l-b." What does this mean? I do not know! But I do know that I have found both of their frameworks very useful for understanding myself and others in the organizations with which I work.

I first learned about Kathy Kolbe when my wife was reading an article in *O Magazine* by Martha Beck called, "How to Be Wildly Successful." My wife exclaimed, "Oh, my God! It's us! I am a 'quick-start' and you're a 'follow-through'!" Then she showed me the article. Later, I was looking up the article online and searched for "kolbe" and David Kolb also came up.

Kathy Kolbe's "action styles" include: 1) quick start, 2) fact finder, 3) implementor, and 4) follow through. Kolbe has a very well-developed conceptual system. In 1997, she transformed her business from organizational change for businesses to include personal services for individuals, children, and families as well. For more information on Kolbe's theories & services you can go to www.kolbe.com - her services are not free or cheap, though.

David Kolb has a ton of FREE info at www.businessballs.com and on www.learningfromexperience.com on his experiential learning theory (ELT), and learning styles inventory (LSI), and his 1984 book: *Experiential Learning: Experience As The Source Of Learning and Development*.

Here is a brief excerpt from a Businessballs.com article to introduce you to:

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (learning styles) Model

Kolb's learning theory sets out four distinct learning styles (or preferences), which are based on a four-stage learning cycle. (Which might also be interpreted as a "training cycle.") In this respect Kolb's model is particularly elegant, since it offers both a way to understand individual

people's different learning styles, and also an explanation of a cycle of experiential learning that applies to us all.

Kolb includes this "cycle of learning" as a central principle his experiential learning theory, typically expressed as a four-stage cycle of learning, in which "immediate or concrete experiences" provide a basis for "observations and reflections." These observations and reflections are assimilated and distilled into "abstract concepts," producing new implications for action which can be "actively tested"; in turn, creating new experiences.

Kolb says that ideally (and by inference not always) this process represents a learning cycle or spiral where the learner "touches all the bases"; i.e., a cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. Immediate or concrete experiences lead to observations and reflections. These reflections are then assimilated (absorbed and translated) into abstract

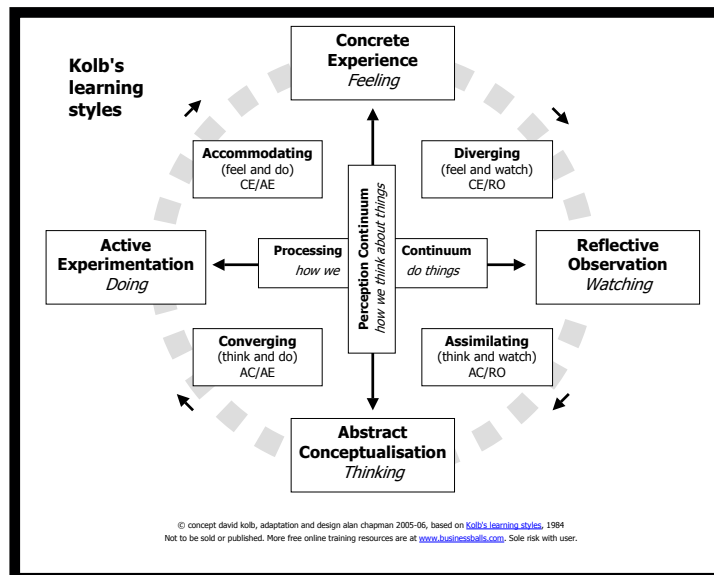
concepts with implications for action, which the person can actively test and experiment with, which in turn enable the creation of new experiences.

Kolb's model therefore works on two levels: *a four-stage cycle*
Concrete Experience - (CE)
Reflective Observation - (RO)
Abstract Conceptualization - (AC)
Active Experimentation - (AE);

and *a four-type definition of learning styles* (each representing the combination of two preferred styles, rather like a two-by-two matrix of the four-stage cycle styles, as illustrated below) for which Kolb used the terms:

- Diverging - (CE/RO)
- Assimilating - (AC/RO)
- Converging - (AC/AE)
- Accommodating - (CE/AE)

For more information on the theories referenced in this column please check the "helpful links" below, or check this author's website at www.can-so.org/chartingdemocracy.



Helpful Links:

David Kolb's learning styles model and experiential learning theory (ELT)
www.businessballs.com/kolblearningstyles.htm

DIAGRAM - David Kolb's learning styles model and experiential learning theory (ELT) - DIAGRAM
www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/kolblearningstylesdiagram.pdf

Experiential Based Learning Systems (EBLS)
www.learningfromexperience.com

Kathy Kolbe
www.kolbe.com

HOW TO BE WILDLY SUCCESSFUL
By Martha Beck
O Magazine - January 2006
www.oprah.com/spiritself/omag/ss_omag_200601_mbeck.jhtml

FMI:
www.can-so.org/chartingdemocracy

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