

**When Times Are Tough, Invest in Yourself and Your People**  
by Cheryl Eckl, Senior Trainer, TotalPros, Inc.

**It is possible to do more with less  
To cut costs without destroying morale  
To plan for an uncertain future  
To continue to recruit and retain the best people**

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When the economy slows and we find ourselves in financial hot water, our natural response is to tighten our belts, lay off extra workers and take as many cost-cutting measures as possible. It's tempting to start counting paper clips because our cash flow problems demand immediate relief. Often, one of the first extra-budgetary items to be eliminated is training.

**But these challenging times are exactly when you, as a wise owner or manager, should do the counter-intuitive thing and invest in your people.**

Now, more than ever, the creative genius of your employees is your greatest competitive and financial advantage. Rather than falling prey to media hype about hero CEOs or conventional wisdom that makes you the Chief Problem Solver, I urge you to take steps now to tap your most powerful creative resources--your employees!

In my career I have found that even the best people have blind spots and gaps in their basic training. They don't understand the fundamentals of work. They don't know how to think strategically. They are not aware of their unique thinking and communication style. And they don't know how to move up the ladder of their own competencies into areas of work that really turn them on.

They know there should be more fulfillment in work, but they don't know how to get there. I do. And I train them.

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First of all, TotalPros premier one-day workshops (The Total Professional and The Professional Assistant) are built on a simple, but highly effective, four-quadrant model that shows clearly what it takes to be an exceptional performer in any job. These are the essential skills and attitudes that apply in any work situation. These are the tools that separate the good from the world-class. These are the qualities that are in high demand, especially when companies are asked to do more with less.

Workshop participants come away with a practical, strategic approach to their work. They also gain insight into transforming their own work processes with simple adjustments that can produce immediate and dramatic improvement in their performance.

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Second, TotalPros uses the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI™), a fantastic assessment tool that identifies how people are "wired" to think, work, learn and communicate. The 120 questions are administered online and the results compiled electronically.

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During the workshop participants receive their individualized packet with a four-color visual model of their unique thinking preferences. The HBDI™ reveals what people pay attention to and what they are likely to overlook. When we do team building with the HBDI™, team members can see from their team data where they are strong as a group and where they need to improve their competencies or get help.

Understanding thinking styles is amazingly powerful for individuals and teams. They immediately understand why they suffer from poor communication between departments and work groups. It's because they speak a different language! And when I explain that high-performance teams and organizations comprise a whole brain--and that each part of this brain and each thinking style is necessary for the group to reach its goals--they start solving their own communication problems on the spot!

Armed with this knowledge, individuals and teams become very proactive. They instinctively expand their sphere of influence and ask for more responsibility where they can make an immediate impact in their own work--especially in their ability to create great results for their customers. They also relieve you, the leader, of the burden and frustration of initiating top-down reengineering solutions that rarely work. (Figures show that 70% of them fail.)

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Third, TotalPros offers personal coaching as an initial self-development tool or as a follow-up to workshops and team building exercises. People need support when they are making dramatic change in how they work individually and in groups. Old habits are hard to break. So I encourage my clients to include coaching as part of an ongoing solution designed to ensure the long-term success. It's optional--but it really works.

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TotalPros workshops, combined with the HBDI™, offer one of the most powerful employee development tools available today. People are changed by their experience in a TotalPros event--even a lunchtime presentation. And that's my goal for all of my work--to provide your people with practical tools that make a lasting difference for you and your organization.

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