

# Leveraging Cognitive Diversity as a Talent Acquisition Strategy in the Era of AI



**PREPARED BY CHASE PARTNERS-LLC  
FINDING LEADERS IN LIFE SCIENCES**

## WHITE PAPER

This White Paper is adapted from a webinar organized by Chase Partners-LLC for life sciences Human Resource / Talent Acquisition teams which looked at the influence of cognitive diversity on talent retention and acquisition within the sector. This work is based on the studies of Dr. Michael Kirton, a pioneering UK Psychologist, and his theory of problem-solving Adaption-Innovation.

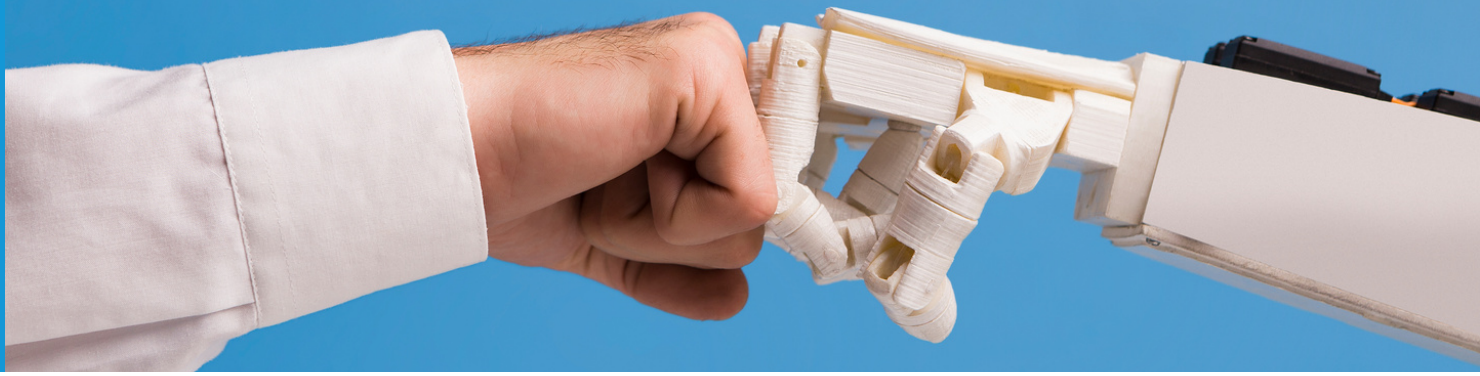
## KEY MESSAGES

Cognitive diversity refers to the variety of ways in which individuals perceive, think, reason, and solve problems; it is less visible than, for example, age, ethnicity, and gender diversity. Problem-solving style refers to an individual's preferred approach or way of thinking when faced with challenges or problems.

Coping and bridging expertise, which are vital soft skills for leaders allow individuals to communicate and collaborate effectively across disciplines and corporate cultures. This skill can be learned whereas your problem-solving style is fixed.

Life sciences companies should work to ensure that recruitment and retention processes support cognitive diversity within leadership. Within life sciences cognitive diversity and awareness thereof promotes a talent retention culture.

Chase Partners LLC has developed a talent acquisition and retention approach that helps align soft skills with the desired corporate culture set by the CEO.



## Cognitive Diversity is Vital for Talent Acquisition in a Rapidly Evolving Life Sciences Industry

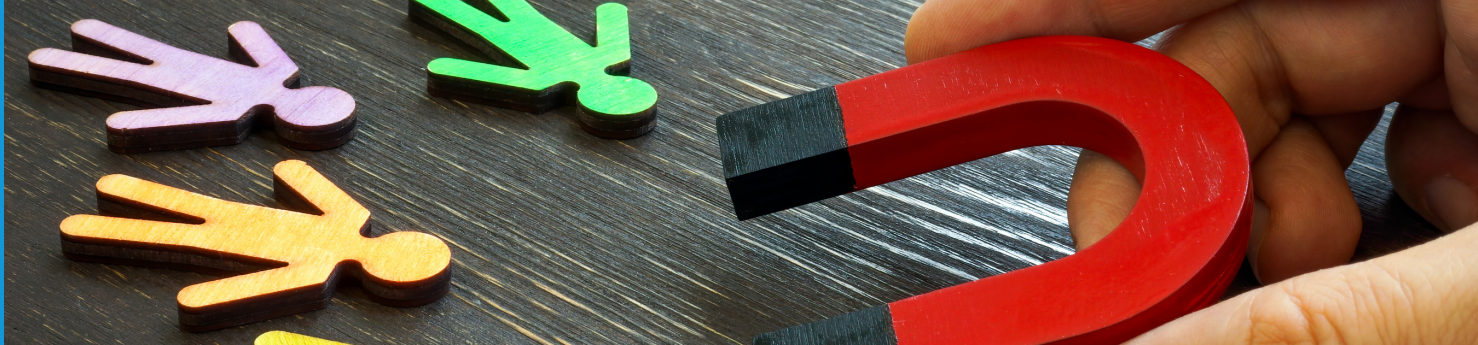
Navigating the complexities of talent acquisition within the life sciences industry is a familiar challenge for many, whether you're conducting an executive search or working with a dedicated talent acquisition team. Key obstacles often include a limited pool of specialized professionals, such as discovery scientists, medical officers, regulatory and quality experts, clinical development leaders, and business development executives. These roles are in high demand, and when we reach out to potential candidates, we often find that they are entertaining multiple offers.



The landscape is further complicated by tech giants like Google, Apple, and Amazon delving into the life sciences. For instance, Apple's health-centric features on its watch or Amazon Web Services cloud offerings tailored for the industry have become notable players. These tech behemoths often table competitive offers to life science professionals, raising the stakes for traditional pharmaceutical and biotech companies in the talent war.

This underscores the value of cognitive diversity in teams. A broad spectrum of perspectives leads to innovative AI solutions. Diverse teams can minimize biases in AI algorithms, curate richer training data, and ensure a user-centric design. They're also better equipped for problem-solving, often outperforming homogenous teams when faced with the intricacies of AI challenges. Furthermore, the resilience and adaptability inherent in cognitively diverse teams are invaluable in the ever-evolving realm of AI.

In response to these challenges and the changing landscape, life science companies must recalibrate their talent acquisition strategies. Beyond fostering a positive company culture and offering competitive benefits, understanding the creative climate within a company becomes paramount. Considering the problem-solving styles that would best complement an organization's culture can pave the way for success, especially in AI-centric roles. The purpose of this White Paper is to delve deeper into how cognitive diversity plays a crucial role in this landscape.



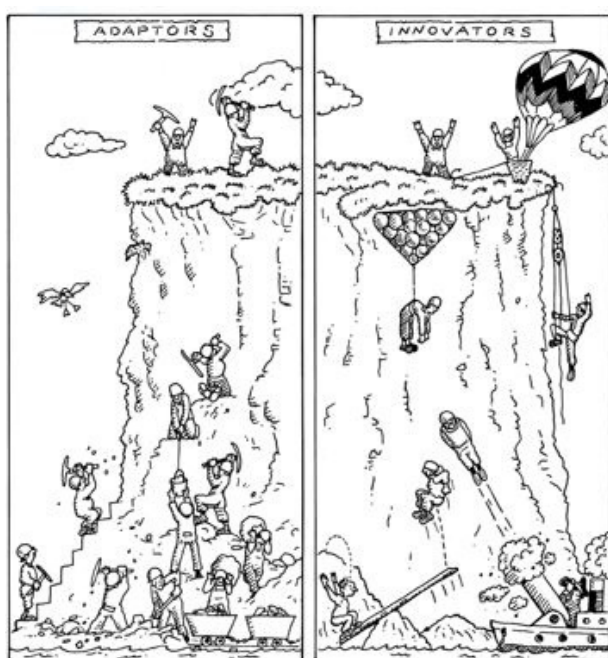
## Harnessing Cognitive Diversity: Agents of Change in an Ever-Evolving Landscape

When you hear the word "innovation," your mind might immediately jump to groundbreaking technologies, revolutionary products, or novel concepts. However, this doesn't quite capture the whole story. Innovation is deeply intertwined with adaptation, and both are crucial components of cognitive diversity. At its heart, the difference lies in structured versus unstructured thinking, and understanding this distinction is paramount for problem-solving, and both are crucial components of cognitive diversity.

### The Dual Dimensions of Problem-Solving: Adaption & Innovation

Both adaptation and innovation are essential forms of cognitive or thinking style, distinct but complementary. Let's think of them as twin siblings, each having its role:

- Adaption: The art of structured thinking. It is the gradual evolution of ideas, fine-tuning, and perfecting over time. This is the realm of enhancing existing concepts and systems.
- Innovation: The realm of unstructured thinking. It involves revolutionary leaps, breaking away from convention, and creating something entirely new.



Yet, the beauty lies in recognizing that everyone is an agent of change, in one way or another. As humans, we're all naturally predisposed toward problem-solving. When we solve a problem, we instigate change.

But the magnitude, speed, complexity, and style of this change can differ widely, and this is where understanding adaptation and innovation becomes pivotal. The question to ask is, which style of thinking is needed to best solve the problem?



## Grasping the Subtleties of Change

Every change we create can be categorized based on size (small, medium, or large), speed (slow or fast), and complexity (simple or intricate). But a particularly intriguing aspect to consider is its style – whether it's evolutionary (incremental improvements) or revolutionary (a complete overhaul). It's crucial to understand that one's problem-solving preference, be it adaptive or innovative, is an intrinsic part of cognitive diversity. This aspect stands shoulder-to-shoulder with other diversity dimensions, such as race, gender, culture, or experience.

We can assess your intelligence, or the positional rank you've acquired, providing an indication of your level in managing change. We can examine the speed of change, in which you might have a preference given a particular situation, fast or slow. We can consider the complexity or your capacity to manage change and solve problems based on your experience. And we can measure the style of change you prefer, that is being more adaptive or more innovative. Individuals being more adaptive have more structured thinking and prefer more evolutionary change, and individuals being more innovative have more unstructured thinking and prefer more revolutionary change. Your preferred problem-solving style is measured by the KAI (Kirton's Adaption-Innovation Inventory).

### The change continuum

Structure  
Rules  
Control  
Does things better

Unstructured  
Unregimented  
Flexible  
Does things differently

Going to the basic character traits of the more adaptive & more innovative, a more adaptive person is someone who solves problems by making things better.

A more innovative person is someone who solves problems by doing things differently. And we're using the word "more" because we are using a continuum.

We are always more adaptive or more innovative than the person next to us, assuming we don't have the same problem-solving style. We can always choose to behave more adaptively or more innovatively than our preference, and this is termed coping behavior. Given the nature of the problem, or who we are with, we may be required to exert coping behavior. The greater the degree one copes along the adaption-innovation continuum, the amount of time and effort spent coping requires more motivation. Without motivation, we revert to our preferred problem-solving style.



## Step by Step or Revolutionary Change Decoding Adaptive vs. Innovative Minds through Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos

When examining real-world examples of adaptive and innovative problem-solving styles, Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk offer an interesting study. One could argue that Bezos leans towards the adaptive side with Amazon's continual improvements to enhance customer experience, and Musk showcases innovative tendencies with his ventures like Tesla and Twitter, it's important to recognize the unique combination of both styles in their endeavours.

This duality is evident in Musk's approach to entrepreneurship. While he's known for his ground-breaking ventures, he's also tweaked existing systems. On the other hand, Bezos's Amazon continuously pursues innovative ideas within an adaptive framework. Both Musk and Bezos operate at high intellectual level and recognize the ability to harness the respective innovative and adaptive individuals in their team.

History shows other examples. Estée Lauder who broke the mold in the cosmetics world by introducing the concept of sampling in New York 5th Avenue stores showed strong signs of an unstructured problem-solving style while Marie Curie showed a significant structured problem-solving approach in her work on radioactivity.

### Estée Lauder



" She was unable to convince Madison Avenue that her small advertising budget was a worthwhile account. She therefore relied upon the innovative notion of sampling" . "She stalked the bosses of New York City department stores until she got some counter space at Saks Fifth Avenue in 1948." Time magazine

### Marie Curie



A systematic and incremental research approach on radioactivity led to important breakthroughs. Marie was fascinated by the discovery of X-rays by Wilhelm Röntgen in 1895, and the discovery of radioactivity by Henri Becquerel in 1896. This inspired her research into the radioactive properties of uranium ore, leading to the discovery of polonium and radium.



## Relationship to Talent Acquisition and Retention - the Chase Partners Approach

In any team-based problem-solving scenario, there are always two core challenges, Problem A: The primary task or challenge at hand and Problem B: The complexities of interpersonal dynamics and working together. Recognizing which challenge you're facing is essential. Good leadership is about helping the team focus on problem A and resolving problem B. Misidentifying the problem can lead to misdirected efforts. The landscape of problem-solving is a spectrum, with strong adaptation at one end and strong innovation at the other. But as a leader, the goal isn't to champion one over the other. Instead, it's about understanding, respecting, and leveraging both. The style can be complementary or if opposed they can clash, and this is what can cause retention and motivational challenges.

**Especially if there is a big gap between two individuals as they see problems differently. People leave jobs because they don't feel valued, miss a sense of belonging, or don't feel their contributions are being considered.** Certain jobs require certain specific types of styles for the position and compatibility with the company's innovation culture. It is vital to get the right mix of soft skills across your leadership team, and Chase Partners strongly believes that identifying the optimum leader requires understanding your team's problem-solving style and aligning it with that of your corporate strategy.

Our approach is simple and pragmatic. We use qualitative tools to match and align the soft skills needed by leaders for a specific position and overlay a leader's problem-solving style onto the Wardley diagram, a popular value chain strategic planning tool. Wardley Mapping helps people gain strategic orientation and creates clear insights about what needs to be done to deliver desired value, identify unknowns, and prioritize. Our recruitment approach is split into three phases.



Step 1: Identify the problem-solving style required (adaptive or innovative)



Step 2: Overlay onto Wardley Map to check alignment (shows hard skills - proficiency for the job)



Step 3: Use Active listening and appropriate questioning to assess and align the candidate's soft skills with the C-Suite Innovation Climate.

# GENERATION Z

## The Nuances of Cognitive Diversity in Talent Management

When diving into the realm of managing cognitive diversity, one can liken it to navigating the intricacies of intergenerational relationships in the workplace. As we venture into the world of Baby Boomers, Gen Xers, Millennials, and the looming presence of Gen Z, it's clear that each generation brings its unique flavour and set of expectations to the table.

For instance, the stories we often hear from HR departments and recruiters tell of Gen X individuals yearning for autonomy and problem-solving encounters. Millennials, painted in broad strokes, seem to gravitate towards work that holds deeper meaning, desires for training, flexibility, and a listening, understanding ear from their employer. Meanwhile, the whispers about Gen Z hint at a desire for employers well-versed in cultural nuances and those who can offer mentorship.

Our 2019 survey of approximately 1000 employees in community behavioural health organizations offered a window into how employees perceive leadership and workplace culture. **One intriguing metric stood out - would an employee recommend their workplace to a friend?** This seemingly simple question gave a deeper insight into retention and its ripple effects on recruitment. When the data was sifted and sorted, it narrated a compelling tale: a whopping 85% of those singing praises of their organization felt that they had a voice and that their opinions echoed in the corridors of leadership.

On the flip side, a mere 40% of the non-enthusiasts felt their voices carried any weight. Further delving into the realm of trust in leadership paints a vivid picture. Imagine a workplace where 90% of its inhabitants trust the helm of the ship. There, you'd find that the same **90% would gladly vouch for their organization to outsiders.**

Narratives shared by employees often touched upon themes such as "leadership cares about us" or "our leaders lead by example." These stories resound especially with the Millennial crowd and the upcoming Gen Z.







## The World of Start Ups

Now, let's journey into the world of startups. Both the more adaptive and the more innovative are able to start a company from scratch, each in their own style. As the organization grows from their ambitious beginnings, they come face-to-face with the need for something. For the innovative, it is a need for more structure and systems in place. For the adaptive, it is a need to break away from the structures that have served well up to this point.

But not all tales are of triumph. Stress, an all too familiar antagonist in our stories, plays its part, often dulling the shine of cognitive abilities. An employee bogged down by pressure may not be the best problem solver, and the narrative often highlights the ripple effect of stress on the overall culture, emphasizing how leadership's role is crucial in maintaining a harmonious narrative. In organizations where cognitive diversity thrives, the atmosphere is electric.

Colleagues exude passion, authenticity, and a deep sense of community. However, in its absence, the story takes a darker turn, with undertones of fear, anxiety, and a sense of division. In such tales, there's often an "in-group," reminiscent of high-school cliques, making all pivotal decisions.



So, how does one craft a winning narrative for leadership and organizational success?

- Cognitive Diversity: Embrace diverse perspectives.
- Empowerment: Enable every team member to contribute.
- Alignment: Blend personal goals with organizational objectives.
- Learning Culture: Encourage learning from mistakes.
- Inclusivity: Value all voices, even unconventional ones.
- Leadership's Role: Leaders shape the narrative and culture.

Overall, this narrative engages and retains talent by fostering a culture of innovation, empowerment, and inclusivity, with leadership as a key driver.



## Conclusion: You Are Hired On Level And Fired On Style

In the evolving landscape of the life sciences industry, especially with the burgeoning role of AI, the necessity for diverse cognitive approaches has become strikingly evident. As we navigate the challenges of talent acquisition against the backdrop of tech giants and rapid technological advancements, there remains a steadfast constant: the power of cognitive diversity. This paper has underscored the multifaceted benefits that diverse teams bring to the table, from minimizing biases in AI algorithms to enhancing problem-solving capabilities.

At such a crucial juncture, Chase Partners LLC, as an executive search firm specializing in life sciences, emerges as an indispensable ally. By understanding the intrinsic value of cognitive diversity and its pivotal role in leading life sciences companies to success, Chase Partners LLC bridges the gap between organizations and the visionary leaders they seek. Their expertise is not just in identifying top-tier talent but in ensuring that these leaders are equipped to champion and nurture cognitive diversity within their teams.

By examining the dual dimensions of problem-solving, we gain a richer understanding of adaption and innovation. Every individual, irrespective of their specific cognitive preference, stands as a catalyst for change, either by refining existing systems or pioneering new paths. Real-world exemplifications, such as the contrasting styles of leaders like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, drive home the point that true change often lies at the intersection of adaption and innovative thinking. Yet, as much as we spotlight the technicalities and applications of cognitive diversity, the human element remains central. The nuances of intergenerational relationships and the importance of listening, and empathetic leadership further solidify the need to foster environments where diversity is not just acknowledged but celebrated.

**To find out more about our approach contact Jennifer Chase (North America) or Nick Hicks (UK / EU) at [jennifere@chasepartners-llc.com](mailto:jennifere@chasepartners-llc.com) or [nick@chasepartners-llc.com](mailto:nick@chasepartners-llc.com)**



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Chase Partners LLC is an owner-based firm based in Boston and Paris and specializes in bridging the trans-Atlantic talent gap of life sciences leaders. We place executives who work across the life cycle of all sectors of development to commercialization. Chase Partners LLC is a boutique and nimble executive search firm addressing the C-suite and senior management in life sciences. We place a strong focus on cognitive diversity and soft skills especially those vital for success in innovation-driven companies. Jennifer founded Chase Partners in 2019, to focus on recruiting leaders who are driven to change patient lives through creative development and innovation. Jennifer is based in Boston. Nick Hicks is Head of the Chase Partners, European operations based in their Paris office. He has been an advanced KAI practitioner since 2007. In 1997, Jennifer's previous company placed Nick with Sanofi based in Paris. They have worked together ever since.

Anne Collier is the CEO of Arudia. Arudia is a training and development firm dedicated to improving culture, collaboration, and communication. Arudia has been helping people for over two decades, providing bespoke services tailored to your needs as an individual and as an organization. We work hard to understand the challenges that you face so that we can deliver the results you require. At Arudia, we work with clients in a broad range of fields, including the legal profession, associations, behavioral health, healthcare, corporations, government, and non-profits. Anne is an advanced KAI practitioner.

Dr Curt Friedel is an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education, and Director and co-Founder of the Center for Cooperative Problem Solving, at Virginia Tech. He maintains a teaching and research appointment with focus on problem solving and critical thinking as variables of interest in leadership development, team dynamics, and leading organizational change. Dr. Friedel serves as program leader for the graduate certificate, Problem Solving for Leading Change, a twelve credit-hour certificate, at Virginia Tech, which integrates Adaption-Innovation Theory into the academic discourse of problem solving, the science of teams, and social change.