

Remote working:

how understanding
your preferences can help you
stay connected

xzellent
voor beter mensenwerk

 **Discovery** Insights[®]



First step: understanding yourself

For many of us, the coronavirus has turned our (working) lives upside down. Suddenly we find ourselves confined to our homes with our loved ones and/or housemates, while direct contact with colleagues, family and friends has become all but impossible. No one knows precisely how long this will last or what lies ahead. One thing we do know: we need to make the best of this situation, together, by helping each other where we can. And we can help most effectively when we understand our own behavioural preferences, as well as those of the people around us.

Insights links these preferences to colour energies. These colour energies make it easy to understand why you react and behave the way you do. And why others react and behave differently. In the first 2 chapters of this e-book we show you how this works and explain how it can help you improve your relationships and interactions. If this is already familiar territory, feel free to skip ahead to chapter 3, or simply use the first chapters as a refresher.

In chapter 3 we look at how the colour energies can help you cope with the crisis. What are their strengths, and what are their challenges? Understanding how you tend to handle this situation will help you discover what you need in order to make the most of the new reality.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 are quite practical. They provide colourful tips and tricks on how to 'just carry on working' and how to work effectively (together) remotely. And last but not least, some communication do's and don'ts - now more important than ever!

Chapter 7 looks at colourful stress. In the current situation, we all experience stress to some extent. However, our stress triggers, remedies and behaviour can be very different. Yet again, as different as we may be, the same principle applies: it all starts with understanding yourself and others.

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#1 Understanding yourself and others

We all have different needs!

We all respond differently to crisis and we all need different things to keep performing well in these new circumstances. This has to do with our psychological preferences. Insights links these preferences to 4 colour energies: Cool Blue, Fiery Red, Sunshine Yellow and Earth Green. These colour energies make it easy to understand why you react and behave the way you do. And why others might react and behave differently.



The Jungian preferences

The Insights Discovery learning system is built on Carl Gustav Jung's pioneering work on typology. Jung was a Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist who introduced the concept of psychological preferences: each person has a 'preferred way' of dealing with the world and the people around them. That doesn't mean that we don't have the capacity to use or develop a different approach. Just that we have a default, natural way of doing things.

Jung defines three combinations of preferences: Introversion & Extraversion, Thinking & Feeling and Sensation & Intuition. These preferences are fundamental to the way you communicate and build relationships with others.



Carl Gustav Jung

Introversion and Extraversion

Introversion and Extraversion describe how people react to outer and inner experiences. People who lean towards introversion are more focused on the inner world, while those with an extraverted preference are more focused on the outside world. However, we are never 100% introverted or extraverted - we all operate within a range on the continuum between the two. Research indicates that most people will have both introverted and extraverted reactions, depending on the situation. And while we cannot display both preferences at exactly the same time, it is possible to use one after the other. Or to alternate between introverted and extraverted reactions. This depends not only on the situation, but also on how we are feeling at that moment.

Introversion

- Quiet
- Observant
- Inwardly focused
- Depth focused
- Intimate
- Reserved
- Reflective
- Thoughtful
- Cautious

Extraversion

- Talkative
- Involved
- Outwardly focused
- Breadth focused
- Gregarious
- Flamboyant
- Action oriented
- Outspoken
- Bold

Thinking and Feeling

According to Jung, not only do people react differently to experiences, they also evaluate and make decisions in different ways. Jung named these decisions making functions Thinking and Feeling. People with a preference for the thinking function will make decisions based on WHAT they will impact, for example the task, the project, the budget. They look at objective and factual criteria. On the other hand, people with a preference for the feeling function, will make decisions based on WHO they will impact, for example the relationship or the team. They look at subjective, value based criteria. Just as for introversion and extraversion, we operate within a range on the continuum and can use both functions. However, we will have a default, natural way of reaching decisions.

Thinking

- Formal
- Impersonal
- Analytical
- Detached
- Objective
- Strong-minded
- Competitive
- Particular
- Task focused

Feeling

- Informal
- Personal
- Instinctive
- Involved
- Subjective
- Flexible
- Accommodating
- Ambivalent
- Relationship focused

From Jung to Insights - from preferences to colours

Cool Blue represents the combination of Introversion and Thinking.

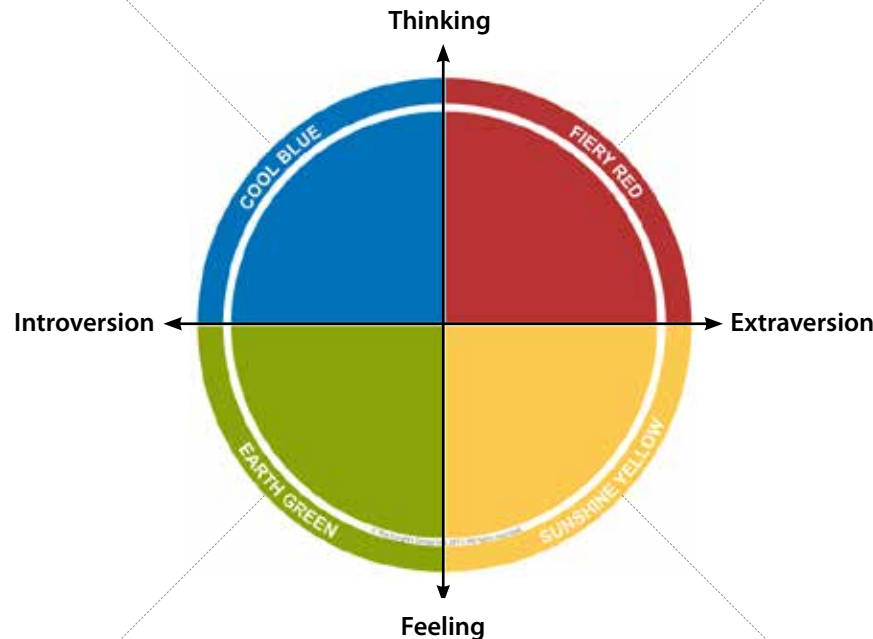
People with a preference for for Cool Blue energy:

- want to know and understand the world around them
- like information to be accurate and complete before proceeding
- think things through before committing to action
- maintain a detached and objective standpoint
- value independence and intellect

Fiery Red represents the combination Extraversion and Thinking.

People with a preference for Fiery Red energy:

- are active and move in a positive and firm direction
- have a strong determination that influences those they interact with
- approach others in a direct and straightforward manner
- are single-minded and determined in their focus on results
- seek an outcome that is specific and tangible



Earth Green represents the combination of Introversion and Feeling.

People with a preference for Earth Green energy:

- view the world through what they value and what is important to them
- seek harmony and depth in relationships
- defend what they value with quiet determination and persistence
- prefer democratic approaches that respect the individual
- ensure all individual perspectives are heard and considered in making decisions

Sunshine Yellow represents the combination Extraversion and Feeling.

People with a preference for Sunshine Yellow energy:

- radiate enthusiasm and encourage participation
- enjoy and seek the company of others
- have a desire to be involved
- like to be noticed and appreciated for their contributions
- approach others in a persuasive, engaging and inviting manner

The Insights colour energies are a combination of the 'attitudes' (Introversion and Extraversion) and the decisions making 'functions' (Thinking and Feeling).

Your unique colour energy mix

We all have all four colour energies within us - it is the combination of the four energies that creates the unique YOU. Compare this to a tower of coloured blocks: at the top is the colour you use or display the most. At the bottom is the colour you use the least. Depending on the situation, this order can change. People also use the colour energies with different intensities. Two people can prefer exactly the same colour order, but if one shows a 98% preference for Blue energy, and the other a 'mere' 85%, their perceived behaviour will be quite different.

The Insights colour energies on a bad day

Now that we can barely go outside and are together 24/7, you will probably notice it more: we all have moments when we get tired, irritated, tense, angry or anxious. In these 'bad day' moments, our behaviour will be very different: we will overextend our 'good day' qualities. This 'bad day' behaviour can also be described using the Insights colour energies.



#2 Adapting and connecting

How to respond effectively to what others like or need

Insights' secret to good relationships: adapt to connect with others. This means that in your behaviour, you take into account what the other person likes or needs. This stands diametrically opposed to what many of us have been brought up with: do unto others as you would be done by. Instead, our motto is: do unto others as THEY would be done by!





Adapting is to consciously change or adjust your 'natural' behaviour in order to better meet the needs of the person you're interacting with. Adapting is **not** radically changing your behaviour. It is **not** pretending to be something you're not, just to fit in. When you adapt, you 'tweak' your natural tendencies in order to connect more effectively.

Why adapting works

Why is it effective? When adapting, you show the other person that you appreciate and respect their needs, valuing them for who they are. This will make them feel more comfortable around you, more likely to respond in a positive way. When you adapt your behaviour and communication style and truly hear what the other person has to say, they will in turn be more willing to listen to you. This will make it easier to come to an agreement and allow both of you to improve your relationship and develop a deeper connection.

How to adapt to connect

Step 1:

Understanding self -
explore your own
colour energy preferences.

Step 2:


Understand others -
appreciate and value
individual differences,
instead of judging them.

Step 3:

Dial down your dominant
colour energies in order to
better cater to the other
person's preferences.

Recognising colour energies - step by step

The more you learn how to recognise colourful behaviour, the better you will be able to adapt. And the better you adapt, the more effective your connections and interactions will be. But how do you recognise the colour energies? We do not have access to what goes on in someone's head. We can, however, observe their behaviour. Their body language, verbal style and interactions. And even their stress related behaviour offers valuable clues.




1 Look for clusters of clues

When trying to recognise someone's colour preferences, we should look for clusters of clues. Observing just one clue is not enough. For example, if someone is constantly touching their nose, you might think they're nervous. However, they might just have an itchy nose! If in addition to touching their nose, they seem a bit awkward and not very articulate, your initial assessment will be more solid. That person could actually be nervous.




2 Start with Introversion and Extraversion

It is not always easy to assess a person's dominant preference. That is why looking at the least preferred colour energy might also help. 'This person definitely doesn't lead with Red energy!' Introversion and Extraversion probably offer the easiest and most obvious clues. Do they appear calm, 'think to speak' and choose their words carefully? Chances are they lean towards introversion. Or do they appear direct, talkative and 'speak to think'? Then they will probably have an extraverted preference.



3 Continue with Thinking and Feeling

What criteria does someone apply when making a decision? Someone with a Thinking preference will use logical, objective, factual criteria ('I like this house because of its good location and price/quality'). Someone with a Feeling preference is more likely to use subjective, emotive, normative criteria (This is a cosy place - I can really see myself feeling at home here!).



4 Plot them on the four quadrant wheel

Once you have identified clues indicating their preference for Introversion, Extraversion, Thinking and Feeling, you can 'plot' them on the four quadrant wheel: Introversion on the left, Extraversion on the right, Thinking at the top, Feeling at the bottom of the wheel. Combining both preferences will give you an indication of their dominant colour energy: Cool Blue (IT), Earth Green (IF), Sunshine Yellow (EF) or Fiery Red (ET).

5 Identify their second and lowest colour preference

As we all have and use all four colours, our behaviour is also shaped by the other colour energies. So make sure to look for clues indicating other inclined colour energies, especially their second preference. Even the lowest colour energy is of interest: it offers valuable information on what **not** to do when adapting to this person!

#3 Dealing with the crisis

The strengths and challenges of the Insights colour energies

We all respond differently to change. This crisis has made that abundantly clear. Where some people are feeling anxious, stressed or down, others go into overdrive or pretend nothing has changed at all. The impact of being forced to work from home (for many of us) also is different for different people. Understanding how you cope with the new reality will help you discover what you need in order to handle this situation in the best possible way.



Strengths and challenges per colour energy



Cool Blue

Strengths

Out of all the personality types, people leading with Blue energy will probably struggle the least with remote working. They tend to enjoy their own company and deliver their best results when working undisturbed. Some may even relish this break from too many meetings and the endless chatter of their colleagues.

During a crisis, you can really rely on these people: they understand better than anyone just how complicated certain changes are and what it takes to implement them. They will not only focus on what needs to change, but also on how it should be done. More often than not, it will be those leading with Blue energy who will set up and fully commit to a detailed action plan, making sure things in the new reality will run smoothly in no time.

Challenges

Curious about the corona worst-case scenario? Blue energy will explain it to you in great detail! People leading with Blue tend to see the half empty glass - problems rather than challenges. They need all their questions answered, preferably based on solid evidence. With the constant corona updates and information overload, that craving for answers may cause them to spend an excessive amount of time on checking the media and collecting information. As they need to fully understand the world around them, they might take some (even a lot of) time to adjust to a new situation and implement necessary changes. Cool Blue energy values excellence over speed, whereas this crisis requires quick thinking and prompt action.



Strengths and challenges per colour energy



Earth Green

Strengths

Working from home, social distancing: concepts that will evoke mixed feelings in people leading with Green energy. On the one hand, they are quite happy to work alone and will enjoy spending more time at home. On the other hand, they will find it difficult to be apart from the people they care about and will miss personal contact with their co-workers. That is why in this crisis, those with dominant Earth Green will often use a personal phone call or post card to reach out to individual colleagues.

Within an organisation or team environment, especially those with a strong Green preference will keep a close eye on how new regulations and measures will affect the employees. They will monitor the impact of each decision on those involved. Striving for consensus, they will look for an approach to change that works for every individual. Offering solid support to all team members, they encourage people to work together and make sure every voice is heard.

Challenges

People leading with Green energy often prefer a status quo. They don't like taking risks and are not comfortable with the uncertainty this crisis brings for themselves as well as others. Ideally, they would like any transition to be a slow, step by step, well-considered process. However, a steady slow-paced change process where every person's need is taken into account, is not something most organisation can afford right now.

It is not uncommon for people with dominant Green energy to stubbornly dig in their heels now, complaining to colleagues about other co-workers and/or managers behind their backs. Escalating stress levels can leave dominant Green energy completely paralysed (i.e. bingewatching couch potato).



Strengths and challenges per colour energy



Sunshine Yellow

Strengths

People with a strong preference for Sunshine Yellow energy are optimistic by nature. When it comes to how the organisation will make it through the crisis, they mainly see possibilities and opportunities. They 'jump right in' and get totally involved. They come up with all kinds of creative ideas and enthusiastically urge their colleagues to 'jump in with them'. Whereas some colleagues might resist or express concerns, people leading with Yellow will remain optimistic and positive.

Another strength is their flexibility. Yellow energy easily adapts to a new situation or environment and will be first to say: 'Let's make the most of it!'

Those leading with Yellow will come up with the most original ideas to stay in touch and organise fun events with colleagues, family and friends.

Challenges

However, people with a strong Yellow preference can be overly enthusiastic and optimistic. This often results in biting off more than they can chew. They come up with so many ideas, options and alternatives, that it is simply impossible to look into all of them, let alone implement them. Follow up and follow through is not their thing anyway. After all, there is always a new idea on the horizon!

Social distancing will be hard for them: no one enjoys a party as much as someone with a strong Yellow preference! It could make them feel disconnected and isolated. Working from home is not easy for them, as distractions lurk everywhere. This is indeed very challenging for Yellow energy. 'I will first read the headlines / play a game with my kids / clean the kitchen... and then I will definitely focus on work!'





Fiery Red

Strengths

During this crisis, it is easy to spot those leading with Fiery Red energy: they will be the ones ticking off a few items on their to do list even before 9AM, while others are still battling to wake up with a caffeine injection. They just want to take decisive action, to get things done.

Enjoying challenging goals, they are quick to commit and focus on results.

Measures or changes with a clear, positive and quick impact will guarantee their full commitment.

That is why it will probably be one of your solution oriented colleagues leading with Red energy that will volunteer to boldly try new things, for example delivering a virtual training session. Nervous or not, it is the kind of challenge they enjoy. If it is the right solution for the problem, then let's do it: take a deep breath and dive right in!

Challenges

However, their drive for fast results may sometimes make them impatiently push things through. Their expectations in terms of timing and deliverables can be unrealistic. They are not that bothered about other people's feelings or the personal impact the crisis may have. People leading with Red energy are not interested in endless conversations about what may or may not happen. They just want things to happen! Their assumption that their colleagues are as quick and sharp as they are, might cause them to step on a few toes along the way.

Initially, working from home will probably be okay, as people with a strong Red preference are independent and like to do their own thing. However, with their extraverted preference, they will soon have enough of their solitary confinement. Especially when they find out their team members' efficiency levels are way behind their own.

#4 How to 'just carry on' working during the crisis

Tips regarding the 4 Insights colour energies

Working remotely has become more common in recent years. But there is a big difference between working from home for a day because you choose to, and constantly working from home because you have to. How do you stay productive without the structure and routines of your normal workplace? How can you continue to enjoy what you do? And how do you take advantage of the opportunities these circumstances also have to offer?



Tips for the
4 Insights Discovery
colour energies

Tips for Cool Blue

- Now that there are no colleagues around to warn you that it's time to call it a day, chances are you're working too many hours and overextending yourself. Stick to your regular working hours as much as possible and don't forget to take that lunch-break walk!
- Block some 'corona-free' hours in your schedule: a few moments without any news, without crisis.
- Seek out cognitive distractions in, for example, 2000+ piece jigsaw puzzles, sudokus or online courses.
- Design your own exit strategy and make detailed postcrisis plans: how will you organise your professional life?

Tips for Earth Green

- The greatest challenge you may face now is to stay connected with your favourite colleagues. Make use of the many available technological options for sharing and communicating with friends.
- The crisis may have taken away your old routines, but it also gives you the opportunity to create new ones. Make a list of things you've been wanting to change for a long time: now is the time to make it happen!
- Admit it: you just love spending time in your own bubble every now and then. You even need it. Now's your chance! Comfy couch, a good book, a warm blanket: go for it!
- Social distancing offers you the opportunity to become more independent from others and to learn to be okay with working alone.

Tips for Sunshine Yellow

- People using a lot of Yellow energy are easily distracted, even more so when working from home. So make sure you create a quiet place to work, switch off your phone and set up clear time schedules with your housemates for undisturbed work and break times. And stick to them!
- Virtual parties are fun too! Organise online coffee dates with friends and family, or virtual social events with colleagues.
- Use gained (commuting) time to complete unfinished projects, do some chores around the house or to take a fresh look at 'old' ideas.
- Think of creative ways to keep your head above water, retain clients, or generate new business. Share these ideas with others who may be less skilled in this area.

Tips for Fiery Red

- Set yourself a challenging goal, like running a marathon, and steadily work your way towards it. Jogging or brisk walking will also help you to relax and release tension.
- Stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues by organising online challenges.
- Try to connect and empathise with co-workers more often than you normally would. See if you can make this a nice new habit.
- Set up an ambitious but realistic postcrisis plan, with clear objectives, well-defined roles and a tight deadline.

#5 Remote working

Tips for colleagues and managers

Remote working: for some of us a way of life, even before corona. But for most of us, this is something new. And we may wonder if we're doing it right. Are we working hard enough? How do you handle co-workers who don't say anything during your virtual meetings, but complain afterwards (to others or just themselves) that they don't feel heard? How do you give the colour energies what they need to stay engaged and productive?



Tips for
colleagues and
managers

Remote working with Cool Blue

- People leading with Blue energy tend to work well on their own and deliver their best results when working undisturbed. So make use of email or WhatsApp when communicating with them, rather than (video) calls or online meetings.
- Planning a virtual team meeting? Make sure to send them well in advance a detailed agenda and clear definition of roles and responsibilities.
- Focus on the tasks and agreed procedures. Be 'present' during the meeting (don't multitask).

Remote working with Earth Green

- Check in regularly with your colleagues leading with Green energy. Allow them to ask questions and express their concerns. Offer support whenever possible.
- Personal contact is important to them, so also ask how things are at home and listen empathetically, like a friend would.
- People with a strong Green preference thrive in an environment where they can not only express their emotions, but also feel others appreciate those emotions ('I understand that this is very difficult / scary / frustrating / sad for you').

Remote working with Sunshine Yellow

- People leading with Yellow energy feel energised by social interaction. It's their life line! So how do you stay in touch with them? Easy: lots and lots of contact! They will probably prefer video calling, because it's more personal than emails or WhatsApp.
- Transparency is important to them, so allow them to speak freely. Expressing their thoughts and feelings will make them feel heard.
- Make sure team projects don't fragment into separate, individualistic tasks because of the crisis impact.

Remote working with Fiery Red

- In the current situation, people leading with Red energy may experience high levels of stress. So don't always take their words personally.
- Put them in charge of specific tasks or projects.
- They truly dislike long and wordy emails. Better to pick up the phone or schedule an online meeting if you need to discuss complex issues with them.

#6 Virtual communication

Communicate effectively with the 4 Insights colour energies

Before corona, we would spend our time working from home on tasks that require a lot of concentration. But now we have to do **everything** from home: virtual meetings, team projects, problem solving, decision making, even learning & development.

Most organisations are facing serious challenges due to this crisis, which makes good communication more crucial than ever. When communicating virtually, the same golden rule applies: adapting to the other person's preferences will significantly increase the effectiveness of your interaction.





Effective communication with Cool Blue energy

People leading with Blue energy tend to be formal, precise and deliberate. When overextended they can become indecisive and nitpicking.

Do:

- Be well prepared and thorough
- Put things in writing
- Let them consider all the details

Don't:

- Be overemotional or exaggerate
- Be careless or casual with important issues
- Keep changing things without good reason

Effective communication with Earth Green energy

People leading with Green energy tend to be caring and relationship focused. When overextended they can become plodding and stubborn.

Do:

- Be patient and supportive
- Slow down and work at their pace
- Ask their opinion and give them time to answer

Don't:

- Take advantage of their good nature
- Push them to make quick decisions
- Spring last minute surprises

Effective communication with Sunshine Yellow energy

People leading with Yellow energy tend to be optimistic, enthusiastic and demonstrative. When overextended they can become indiscreet and chaotic.

Do:

- Be friendly and sociable
- Be entertaining and stimulating
- Be open and flexible

Don't:

- Bore them with details
- Tie them down with routine
- Be too serious

Effective communication with Fiery Red energy

People leading with Red energy tend to be determined, competitive and direct. When overextended they can become overbearing and intolerant.

Do:

- Be direct and to the point
- Focus on results and objectives
- Be confident and assertive

Don't:

- Hesitate or be indecisive
- Focus on feelings
- Try to take over

#7 Decrease or eliminate 'colourful stress'

How to recognise and reduce stress triggers and behaviours

Whether we're worried about our health, or the health of our loved ones, fear for our jobs or are quietly going crazy from working at home... the corona crisis can be extremely stressful. Understanding the stress behaviour of ourselves and others, can really help us to reduce that stress. That is why it's useful to learn how to recognise stress triggers, signals and remedies.





Cool Blue



Earth Green



Sunshine Yellow



Fiery Red

I get stressed from:

insufficient preparation, lack of information or structure, poor quality work, time wasted, distractions or task rushed.

a lack of respect, unfair or impersonal treatment, violation of values, unexpected changes, conflicts.

restrictions on flexibility, slow pace, no interactions or fun, rigid structure, being excluded, rejected or forgotten.

lack of focus or indecisiveness, being out of control, incompetence, slow pace, lack of leadership, endless chitchat.

When I am stressed I:

become overly critical, aloof, withdrawn, resentful, fixated on details and nitpicking.

become silent, withdrawn or hurt, judgmental and resistant, stubborn, lethargic, overly cautious and self-righteous.

become overly responsive, opinionated and argumentative, critical and rebellious, loud and dramatic.

become pushy, impatient, irritable, demanding, overly concerned with short-term goals, blind to other people's feelings.

You can take away my stress by:

asking my feedback on how to proceed, giving me detailed information and support, going back to the beginning and analyse more carefully.

reaching out to restore trust, showing genuine understanding and sincerity, putting task aside and listen to what I've got to say

allowing me some wiggle room, changing focus, allowing me to save face and vent my emotions, distracting me with a lighthearted joke.

allowing for fast action, putting me in control, making decisions, letting me explain my point of view.

Interested in Insights Discovery?

Hopefully this e-book has shown you how Insights Discovery can help you stay productive and connected to others - even while grappling with social distancing. We need to make the best of it, together. However, 'together' doesn't come easily these days. It's hard work. Understanding yourself and others is no longer a nice-to-have. It's a must-have!

The Insights colour energies explain this in an attractive and accessible manner. But our model includes more than four colours. For example, it defines no less than 72 personality types, each being the sum of a specific order and intensity of all 4 colour energies. You'll discover exactly how this works and how it contributes to your personal effectiveness when you receive your personal Insights Discovery profile. Always debriefed by an accredited Insights

Discovery practitioner, the Insights Discovery profile is at the heart of our learning solutions for individuals, teams and organisations. Our practitioner community consists of experienced trainers, coaches, consultants and HR professionals covering a wide range of expertise. This means we can always introduce you to the most compatible professional for you and/or your organisation.

Would you like to know more?

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