



The **Thinking** **Journal**[™]

**A STRENGTH ASSESSMENT & LEARNING GUIDE
TO *OPTIMIZE YOUR THINKING***[®]

by Jennifer Whitt, PMP

The Thinking Journal

**A Strength Assessment & Learning Guide
to Optimize Your Thinking®**

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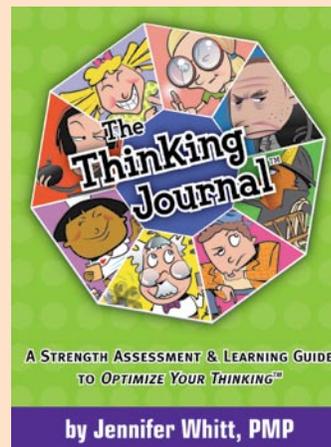
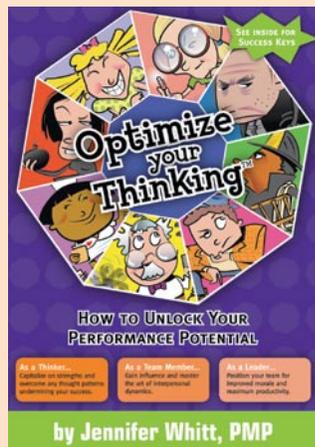
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IMPORTANT

How To Use the *Thinking Journal*TM

The *Thinking Journal* is designed to serve as a learning guide to the *Optimize Your Thinking*[®] book.

To use this journal as intended, you will need to first read each chapter in the *Optimize Your Thinking* book. After reviewing the chapter, you can practice the new thinking techniques using the chapter activities available here in the *Thinking Journal*.



First, read a chapter in the *Optimize Your Thinking* book. Then complete the chapter activities available here in the *Thinking Journal*.

Not only will the *Thinking Journal* reinforce your knowledge of the *8 Ways of Thinking*[®], but you will also have the opportunity to personally apply what you've learned with Guided Journal Entries, Scenario-based Exercises, Self-scoring Thinking Quizzes, and Reflective Questionnaires. The highlight of each chapter is the Strength Assessment, which allows you to objectively evaluate your propensity for a specific way of thinking. In the end, this journal will become a tool you can reference as you realize your performance potential.

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INTRODUCTION



First, read the Introduction in the *Optimize Your Thinking* book. Then complete the chapter activities available here.



“Every employer seeks a different mix of skills and experience from a prospective employee. But one thing they look for consistently: Soft skills.”

– Peter Vogt, Career Advisor

What makes a good thinker, team member, or leader? Experts agree that high performance requires adaptability, a keen understanding of others, and knowledge of your own strengths and weaknesses. But few people take the time or even know how to cultivate these personal performance traits called *soft skills*. We’re pre-wired with certain ways of thinking, and often, we operate under the assumption that others think and process the world just like us.

As the *8 Ways of Thinking*[®] prove, this is not the case. While most people rely on just a few ways of thinking, there are multiple styles you can use to tackle life’s problems as a thinker. And when you’re able to recognize these styles in those around you, you can adjust your communication techniques to become a more effective team member and leader.

You’ve been introduced to the *8 Ways of Thinking* in the *Optimize Your Thinking*[®] book. Now with this *Thinking Journal*[™], you’ll learn to strategically apply each way of thinking to:

-  **Achieve.** First, you’ll look inward to determine which of the *8 Ways of Thinking* you rely on most — and to conquer the debilitating thought patterns that hold you back. Then you’ll practice choosing your way of thinking according to the person or situation you’re dealing with in order to solve problems more effectively.
-  **Influence.** This new understanding will help you recognize the *8 Ways of Thinking* in those around you to enhance relations and foster connections. Leveraging your insight, you can master the complex arts of communication and persuasion.
-  **Lead.** By the end of this program, you’ll become an “optimized” leader. You can position your team according to their ways of thinking to build morale and increase productivity. You can also nourish the professional growth of your team by shedding light on each individual’s personal strengths.

The boundaries of your thinking are self-imposed. By learning to adapt your focus and perspective to the circumstances, you can open your mind — and new doors of opportunity! It’s a journey of personal discovery and improvement that everyone can benefit from whether you’re at the height of success or on your way there.

In the following chart, try to pinpoint the various roles you perform. Remember, you might have as many as 20 roles, but each of these roles can fall into the three categories of thinker, team member, and leader.

For each role you identify, rate your level of performance – with 1 equaling the lowest score and 5 the highest. As you give yourself this rating, consider the rating those closest to you might give. We are not always the best judges of our abilities. The first row is provided as an example.

Note: Try to think of as many roles as you can!

Performance Rating Key: 1 = Weak 2 = Below Average 3 = Average 4 = Above Average 5 = Strong

THINKER What are your roles as a thinker?	Performance Rating <i>Rate your performance in each role</i>	TEAM MEMBER What are your roles as a team member?	Performance Rating <i>Rate your performance in each role</i>	LEADER What are your roles as a leader?	Performance Rating <i>Rate your performance in each role</i>
Responsible for family finances	2	Member of tennis team	5	Head of volunteer committee	3
Rating Subtotal:		Rating Subtotal:		Rating Subtotal:	
Total of all Performance Ratings:					

Answer Key

After you total your performance ratings in the chart on the previous page, divide that total by the number of roles you have identified. You'll need a calculator for this exercise.

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Total of Performance Ratings} \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \\ \text{divided by Your Number of Roles} \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \\ \hline = \text{YOUR ROLE RATIO} \quad \underline{\hspace{2cm}} \end{array}$$

Please note: Your Number of Roles is the total of ALL the roles you listed in the previous chart. In the example, there are just three roles listed. The total of this person's performance ratings is 10. Ten divided by three roles = 3.333. This is the Role Ratio for the example.

What does your Role Ratio mean?

If your Role Ratio is above 4.5, then you appear to believe you've reached your performance potential in most or all of your life roles. Congratulations! This is very rare. You can further challenge yourself by trying to acquire new roles in your life.

If your Role Ratio is between 3.5 - 4.5, then you seem very satisfied with your rate of success in the various roles. You do believe you have greater potential, however.

If your Role Ratio is between 2.5 - 3.49, then your overall score is "average." You probably believe yourself to be effective, but you know you're capable of much more.

If your Role Ratio is between 1.5 - 2.49, then you might struggle with feelings of inadequacy. A keen awareness of how you and other people think will help combat those feelings and increase your effectiveness.

If your Role Ratio is less than 1.5, then you believe you are on the bottom rung of the success ladder. The good news is that all you can do is move up! Most likely, you are being extremely hard on yourself. Self-criticism, when taken to an extreme, can truly limit you.



"Winners have the ability to step back from the canvas of their lives like an artist gaining perspective. They make their lives a work of art — an individual masterpiece."

– Denis Waitley, Productivity Consultant

With any new undertaking, it's important to set goals. The following questionnaires and quizzes are designed to reveal the initial goals you can achieve when you *Optimize Your Thinking*.

You're a Thinker

Life can be considered a series of problems and solutions. Your ability to recognize a problem is one of the key components to being a successful thinker.

1. Is there an area(s) in your job that poses unique difficulty for you as a thinker?

Example answer: I have trouble keeping up with my expenses and other detail-oriented tasks.

2. Identify what you consider to be your most powerful strength as a thinker:

Example answer: I know how to get things done and I'm not afraid to take control.

Your way of thinking can entail both strengths and weaknesses. For instance, you may be good at focusing on the best possible outcome, but this trait may cause you to overlook some risks.

3. Now that you've noted your chief strength, consider how your strength can become a weakness when carried too far.

Example answer: I take too much upon myself when others are capable of helping me.

4. Whether you know it or not, you encounter the *8 Ways of Thinking* in the people around you every day. Think of at least one person you know and admire. What is it about his or her thinking that you would like to acquire for yourself? You can do this for as many people as you admire.

Example answer: Brother. I admire his ability to come up with original ideas.

Person: _____

I admire his/her ability to: _____

Person: _____

I admire his/her ability to: _____

Person: _____

I admire his/her ability to: _____

Person: _____

I admire his/her ability to: _____

You're a Team Member

It's easy to assume that everyone sees the world as you do. This common mistake introduces countless avoidable problems in the workplace as well as at home. By first analyzing your own way of thinking — knowing yourself — you can begin to see the differences between yourself and others. It's these variances that make your style of thinking unique. However, the ability to work well with and influence your team members can often mean the difference between success and failure.

Can you honestly say you're a good team member? Read the following statements and indicate how true they are for you.

1. I avoid conflict in order to get along with others.

- 1** True
- 2** Usually True
- 3** Usually False
- 4** False

2. I worry too much about whether or not my teammates like me.

- 1** True
- 2** Usually True
- 3** Usually False
- 4** False

3. People consider me to be very easy to work with.
 - 1 False
 - 2 Usually False
 - 3 Usually True
 - 4 True
4. I like to work with others.
 - 1 False
 - 2 Usually False
 - 3 Usually True
 - 4 True
5. I give criticism delicately and with tact.
 - 1 False
 - 2 Usually False
 - 3 Usually True
 - 4 True
6. I try to help my colleagues with their work.
 - 1 False
 - 2 Usually False
 - 3 Usually True
 - 4 True
7. I let my personal life affect how I treat the people around me.
 - 1 True
 - 2 Usually True
 - 3 Usually False
 - 4 False
8. I look out for others' needs as much as I do my own.
 - 1 False
 - 2 Usually False
 - 3 Usually True
 - 4 True
9. I find that I unintentionally hurt others' feelings.
 - 1 True
 - 2 Usually True
 - 3 Usually False
 - 4 False
10. I am reliable and committed to my team's goals.
 - 1 False
 - 2 Usually False
 - 3 Usually True
 - 4 True

Answer Key

Now total your points and see what they say about you:

35-40 Points *Outstanding!* Based on your self-perception, you're a highly effective team member. If you're unsure of where you could improve, ask your team members for their recommendations.

25-34 Points *Not Bad!* You make an effort to be a good team member and this shows. However, there are some behaviors you can change for even greater effectiveness. Your answers that are less than 4 points indicate where you can focus your improvement efforts.

10-24 Points *Could be better!* There's definitely room for growth, but you should be commended for answering honestly. Your low-point answers can be interpreted as the goals you'd like to achieve as an "optimized" team member.

You're a Leader

The role of a leader is arguably the most difficult, as you also have to be a successful thinker and team member to have the ability and influence it takes to lead.

As a leader, you know that while your team might complete a project with success, this does not necessarily mean that you've led a team successfully. Oftentimes, a team is in great turmoil at the completion of a project because it was mismanaged or personalities clashed.

If you're not currently in charge of a team at work, consider situations at home or in the community where you perform as a leader. Then answer the questions below to the best of your ability.

1. Do you handle pressure well?

- a. Yes — I'm constantly at ease.
- b. Usually — I may feel pressure inside, but I don't let it show.
- c. Sometimes — I have been known to express my anxiety.
- d. No — It is obvious to others when I am stressed.
- e. I don't know.

2. Are you able to easily communicate your ideas and expectations?

- a. Yes — I find that my team easily understands me.
- b. Usually — There are times when I later realize that I have failed to communicate my expectations.
- c. Sometimes — Misunderstandings with my team occur regularly.
- d. No — Miscommunication is a continuous problem for me.
- e. I don't know.

3. Do you think your team feels appreciated by you and/or the company?

- a. Yes — I consistently show my appreciation for the team's hard work.
- b. Usually — They may occasionally feel unappreciated.
- c. Sometimes — They don't hear praise enough.
- d. No — My team feels very under-appreciated.
- e. I don't know.

4. Are you successful at giving your team the information they need?

- a. Yes — My team is always given adequate information for a task assigned to them.
- b. Usually — There might have been times when something slipped through the cracks.
- c. Sometimes — I'm not always good about getting my team the information they need to move forward.
- d. No — I often need to be asked for the information they need.
- e. I don't know.

5. Do your team members respect you?

- a. Yes — I know I can't always be liked, but I'm most certainly respected.
- b. Usually — There have been a few times when I did not feel I was getting the respect I deserve.
- c. Sometimes — I struggle with finding the balance between being a leader who is liked but also respected.
- d. No — My team members do not seem to respect me.
- e. I don't know.

6. Do you feel you set a good example to your team in all areas?

- a. Yes — I work as hard as I expect my team to work.
- b. Usually — I occasionally set a bad example, such as missing deadlines or arriving late to a meeting.
- c. Sometimes — I usually do not set the best example.
- d. No — My team would not do well to model me.
- e. I don't know.

7. Are you good at giving criticism?

- a. Yes — I'm not afraid to criticize, but I know how to do it delicately.
- b. Usually — Every once in awhile I find that I hesitate to give criticism for fear of hurting the person's feelings.
- c. Sometimes — I struggle with how to balance criticism with praise.
- d. No — I would rather avoid the conflict, or I find that I get a negative response from my critiques.
- e. I don't know.

8. Do you believe you're getting the best results from each member of your team?

- a. Yes — I have positioned each team member to give his or her absolute best.
- b. Usually — Most of my team members' skills are being utilized.
- c. Sometimes — I feel certain members of my team are not giving 100 percent.
- d. No — There are definitely some major performance issues with certain team members.
- e. I don't know.

9. Do you regularly take the time to get to know your team members' wishes, goals, and aspirations?

- a. Yes — I am well aware of each individual's wishes, goals, and aspirations.
- b. Usually — I do take the time, but I feel I could learn more.
- c. Sometimes — I should have this conversation more regularly.
- d. No — I have not had the opportunity to get to know my team in this way.
- e. I don't know.

10. Are you a good leader?

- a. Yes — My team respects me, and I know how to get the best results.
- b. Usually — I feel I'm an effective leader but could improve.
- c. Sometimes — I've been successful as a leader, but I've also had trouble with this role.
- d. No — I do not feel I'm a good leader.
- e. I don't know.

Answer Key

You've taken a critical look at one of the toughest life roles there is... Use the chart below to calculate your score and see what your answers reveal!

How many questions did you answer "A"?		X 5 points =
How many questions did you answer "B"?		X 4 points =
How many questions did you answer "C"?		X 3 points =
How many questions did you answer "D"?		X 2 points =
How many questions did you answer "E"?		X 1 point =
<i>Example: In the first row, if you selected "A" for your answers on 2 questions, you would multiply 2 x 5 points to get a total of 10.</i>		

Now total your points in the right-hand column to get your Score.

My Score: _____

What does your score mean?

Whether you're a good leader or not is something you have to determine for yourself, which is why this question was asked directly in #10. However, you can use this activity to see if you've mastered the behaviors good leaders have in common.

42-50 Points *Superior job!* Your answers show that you are a conscientious and effective leader. This is a very impressive score.

31-41 Points *Good work!* A score in this range indicates that you have great qualities of leadership. You can sharpen them to be even more effective.

20-30 Points *Okay!* With your answers, you acknowledged that you could be a better leader, but your participation in the program demonstrates your effort to grow in this area.

Less than 20 Points *Could be better!* You answered very honestly about an ability you know you need to hone. This *Thinking Journal* will show you the steps you can take for immediate improvement.

Note: *If you're surprised to find your score so low, you may have chosen "I don't know" in the previous questions. As a leader, it's your job to be "in the know," which is why this answer can drastically reduce your score.*

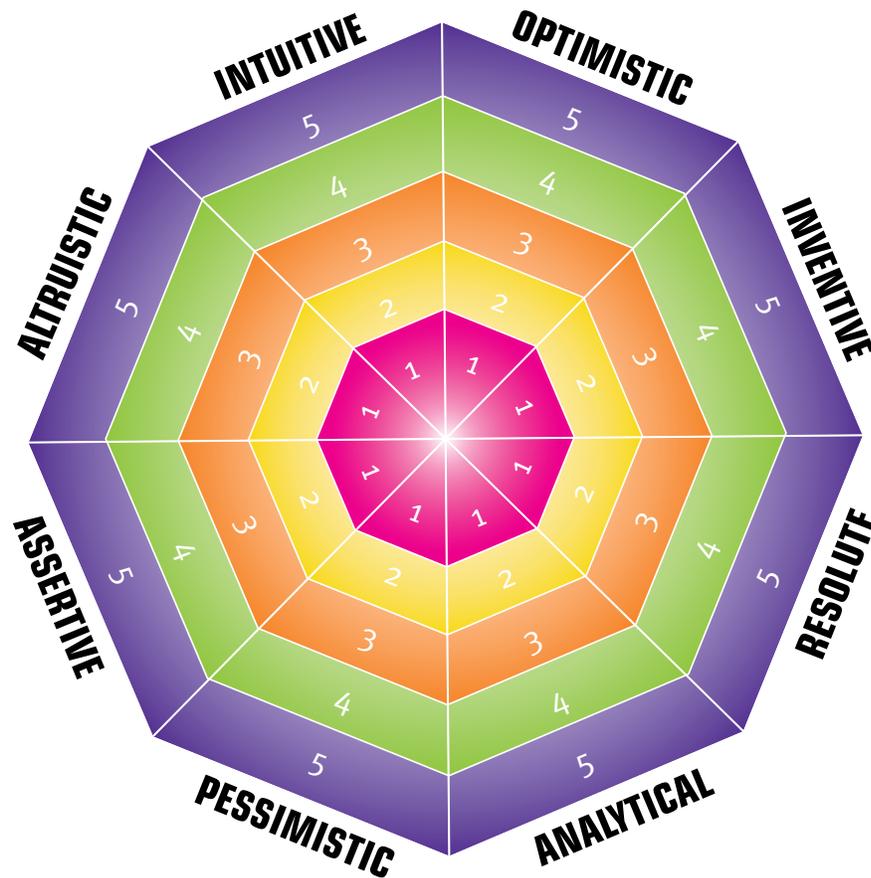
THE PHILOSOPHY : Discover the 8 Ways of Thinking

There are 8 *Ways of Thinking* we can all master in order to become more effective thinkers, team members, and leaders. The textbook definition of each way of thinking can guide you in recognizing your *dominant* way of thinking, but, ideally, you want to use a combination of the thinking styles as you tackle life's challenges.

Activity You Are What You Think

Based on your initial understanding of the 8 *Ways of Thinking*, rate your comfort level with the styles below by circling the corresponding number. For instance, if you feel you're exceptionally strong as an inventive thinker, then you'd give yourself a "5."

Strong = 5 Above Average = 4 Average = 3 Below Average = 2 Weak = 1



After you circle your rating for each way of thinking, draw straight lines to connect the ratings. Ideally, this would reveal the shape of a large octagon, although most people are not "optimized" — meaning they don't effectively and regularly use all 8 *Ways of Thinking*.

Remember, this diagram only reflects your first impressions of the 8 *Ways of Thinking*. After you read the chapters in *Optimize Your Thinking* and gain a new understanding of your strengths and weaknesses, you will most likely discover that you relate more, or even less, to a way of thinking than you first believed. In the conclusion, you'll have an opportunity to reevaluate your answers here by utilizing your scores from the Strength Assessments found in each chapter of this learning guide.

THE TOOL : See 8 Sides to Every Story

As you strive to *Optimize Your Thinking*, you can look to the Optigon® to serve as your memory tool. Featuring 8 characters who represent the *8 Ways of Thinking*, the Optigon puts a recognizable face to each style of thought.

However, you might also have a face you can match to each character to make them even more memorable for you. For instance, perhaps your sister reminds you of Dr. Disaster — the pessimistic thinker. If this were the case, you would put her name in the column below next to Dr. Disaster.

<i>The character of the Optigon</i>	Reminds me of...
This person can be a colleague, friend, or even someone famous! <i>Example: Stir-It-Up Stacey reminds some people of a pop star.</i>	
1. Ivan the Inventor	
2. Donna the Detective	
3. Dr. Disaster	
4. Stir-It-Up Stacey	
5. I've-Got-a-Hunch Harry	
6. Nurse Nancy	
7. Susie Sunshine	
8. Fireman Fred	

THE STORY : Put the Principles into Action

You can see the real-world application of the *8 Ways of Thinking* by observing the characters in the story. While each character depicts a way of thinking, you can bring your own individuality to each style of thought.

Activity What Would You Do?

Based on the story you just read at the end of the **Introduction** in the *Optimize Your Thinking* book, answer the questions on the following page.

1. The spirit of competition can be a powerful motivator, which is why Mrs. Jones chose to make the fundraiser a competition for a trip. What's another way she could have rallied the team for the cause?

2. In the story, you get to witness the first time Mrs. Jones meets the characters of the Optigon. With whom do you think she's most impressed and least impressed so far? Why?

3. If you were in the characters' positions, what's the next step you would take?

4. Mrs. Jones told the team to "Give it your best thinking." Now that you know there are *8 Ways of Thinking*, how would you apply her advice?



THE BRAINPOWER MYTH

Despite the popular myth, we use much more than 10 percent of our brains! There is no statistical evidence that proves humans use less than 100 percent. It's how we apply this brainpower that truly matters.

Source: Eric H. Chudler, Ph.D., University of Washington¹

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SOURCES

The content in this work is based on the book, *Optimize Your Thinking: How To Unlock Your Performance Potential*, the *Optimize Your Thinking*[®] seminar, the seminar participant guide, as well as *The Optigon*[®]: *A Team-Building Game*, all published by OPTIMO, Inc. Copyright 2003-2006.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Whitt is a speaker, trainer, coach, author, and company president of Optimo, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in team and leadership enhancement as well as project management. She is a PMI-certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and is the Editor in Chief of *The Optimo Exchange Newsletter*.

For almost twenty years, Jennifer has tackled the challenges that come with managing individuals, teams, and multimillion-dollar projects. With her sense of humor, bottomless energy, and ability to gracefully exceed client expectations, Jennifer cultivated her own techniques to overcoming what she calls “tough nuts” — also known as difficult situations, projects, and people. Drawing from her extensive experience and working with a highly qualified team of experts, Jennifer refined the techniques into proven and practical life skill principles, which can be applied to virtually any situation in life.

A captivating and influential speaker, Jennifer has led numerous keynotes, seminars, workshops, and roundtable discussions about how to identify the characters and *Optimize Your Thinking* for maximum effectiveness at work, home, and in the community.

She is a member of the National Association of Female Executives, Women in Technology International, and Atlanta Chamber of Commerce. Jennifer works with NAAR, the National Alliance for Autism Research, to help coordinate the signature fundraising event for the Atlanta metropolitan area. She also volunteers her time to handle event coordination for Visionary Films and the Georgia Big Picture Conference.

Those who work with Jennifer know she’s proud to be an Athenian (from Athens, Alabama, that is), where much of her family still lives.

Characters Jennifer identifies with: Nurse Nancy, I’ve-Got-a-Hunch Harry, and Ivan the Inventor.

For more information about Optimo, Inc., please visit: www.OptimoInc.com.

CHANGE YOUR POINT OF VIEW. CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

8 Ways of Thinking® Assessments
Scenario-based Exercises
Guided Journal Entries

Self-scoring Quizzes
Reflective Questionnaires
Thought-provoking Quotes

“While examining your personal thoughts takes courage and fortitude, the rewards are as limitless as your performance potential.”

– Jennifer Whitt, PMP

The essential companion to Jennifer Whitt’s first book — *Optimize Your Thinking: How to Unlock Your Performance Potential* — this journal takes you on an unprecedented journey of self-exploration. From the *8 Ways of Thinking*® strength assessments to the introspective activities, the *Thinking Journal* offers personally relevant insight into the complex workings of the human mind.

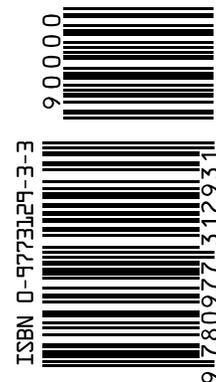
The approach to this cerebral topic is both educational and enjoyable. With eye-opening statistics, nuggets of wisdom, engaging explanations, and the memorable characters, Whitt reveals the inherent value of the *8 Ways of Thinking* and shows how applying these styles can give you a distinct advantage in life.

As a thinker, a team member, and a leader, you’ll learn how to leverage this uncommon sense to gain new ground in all your endeavors.

Move beyond limited thinking. Solve the people puzzle. Unlock your performance potential — and see the world through enlightened eyes.



Jennifer Whitt, PMP is a speaker, trainer, coach, author, and president of Optimo, Inc., a consulting firm specializing in team and leadership enhancement as well as project management. She is a PMI-certified Project Management Professional (PMP) and is the Editor in Chief of *The Optimo Exchange Newsletter*. Her books include *Optimize Your Thinking: How to Unlock Your Performance Potential* and the *Thinking Journal*™, both based on Whitt’s celebrated seminar series: *Optimize Your Thinking*®.



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