As a leader, there are many ways you can [flex your brain](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brain_fitness). I’ve mentioned a few in my previous posts [here](http://www.linkresourcegroup.net/5-more-ways-to-develop-brain-fitness/) and [here](http://www.linkresourcegroup.net/6-on-the-job-brain-workouts-for-leaders/). To develop cognitive fitness, you don’t even have to invest in a gym or special equipment—just the right mindset.

Challenge and expand your worldview by reading different genres of books, visiting new places and listening to diverse viewpoints.

*To a lab rat, an enriched environment means getting stroked with a paintbrush or nibbling on a variety of foods and living in a colorful cage filled with lots of squeaky toys. To us humans, it means living an interesting life full of challenge, relationships and accomplishments. ~ Psychologist Jeff Brown and neuroscientist Mark Fenske,*[*The Winner’s Brain: 8 Strategies Great Minds Use to Achieve Success*](http://www.amazon.com/Winners-Brain-Strategies-Achieve-Success/dp/0738214698/ref%3Dsr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1363133862&sr=1-1)*(Da Capo Lifelong Books, 2011)*

Here are a few suggestions for busy leaders. If you tend to be analytical, engage in activities that stimulate the right brain which governs creative tasks. If you’re more entrepreneurial, try encouraging left brain activities that promote efficiency.

* Expand your vocabulary, conceptual storehouse and general perspective.
* Make an ongoing commitment to immersing your management teams in new systems and ways of thinking.
* Avoid filling teams with people who have followed the same career path as your own.
* Selection and succession plans that draw from an executive pool whose members think alike limit organizational competitiveness.

Cognitive fitness can prove to be your most sustainable competitive advantage. Promote a [rich working environment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Job_enrichment) where healthy brains thrive and your people can achieve their full potential.

As professors [Roderick Gilkey](http://goizueta.emory.edu/faculty/academic_areas/organization_management/gilkey_rick.html) and [Clint Kilts](http://psychiatry.uams.edu/?id=6501&sid=3) write in their [*Harvard Business Review*](http://hbr.org/2007/11/cognitive-fitness/) article “Cognitive Fitness:”

*The future belongs to the companies with leaders who develop cognitive fitness for themselves and their organizations. CEOs need to be cognitive coaches to those whose work and decisions collectively create and propel the company’s strategy.*

What are some of your ideas for developing leadership cognitive fitness on-the-job? How can you be a cognitive [coach](http://www.linkresourcegroup.net/services/executive_coaching_leadership_coaching/) for your people? I’d love to hear from you, leave a comment.