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Profiting from Multiple Intelligences in the Workplace

Joyce Martin

“...comprehensive, thoughtful, and useful.”

Howard Gardner

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INTRODUCTION

Aims

- To establish a rationale for learning about and using multiple intelligences
- To suggest what the materials can help achieve in the workplace
- To establish limits to expectations

*When you hire people who are smarter than you are, you prove
you are smarter than they are (R.H. Grant)*

From your own experience in selecting and deploying staff you can undoubtedly cite endless examples of people who are high performers in the workplace but who perform poorly on IQ tests. You may even cite your own IQ score as an example of how limited these scores are as indicators of workplace performance. So, when someone comes along and suggests that you go back to the concept of ‘intelligence’ to improve staff selection and productivity your reluctance is understandable. However, this book is not about defending IQ tests but rather about radically changing your concept of what constitutes intelligence in yourself and others. It is not about one more intelligence, such as emotional intelligence, but about multiplying recognition and application of intelligences ninefold. It is about how cultivating minds and a more intelligent workforce can increase your organization’s productivity, service, profitability and staff satisfaction.

The intelligent workforce

Assembly-line management models saw an effective workforce as one made up of highly robotized units each delivering a specific skill or set of skills. As each worker was hired for one or two skills which they used independently or in a linear sequence with others, the question of intelligence in workers was usually an irrelevant luxury. For example, an executive dictated messages, a typist transcribed the information, a secretary proofread the materials and presented them for a signature, a clerk took these dissemination points or the mail room where someone else stamped and posted them while yet another clerk filed the data.

Today the robotic typing pool and the single-task clerks have disappeared. Information is fed into a voice-driven computer program with the output supervised by a personal assistant whose minimal competencies must include: written and oral communication in one or more languages, computer literacy, formatting, editing, information dissemination and tracking, time and resource management, interpersonal skills, production and sometimes even the

mechanical genius to coax the temperamental or jammed photocopier back into service at the critical moment.

Today, workers with a narrow range of skills, no matter how highly developed, are a potential long-term liability. Organizations that have the edge and keep the edge are those that recognise the need for more intelligent workers, find them and keep them. This process is not unlike the process needed to plan, plant and maintain a well-balanced and fruitful garden.

Choosing the stock

Every successful garden begins with a well-thought-through strategic plan which includes a description not only of short-term flowering but how the plants will grow together and complement each other over time. Similarly, the productive organization is the one that defines its needs not only in terms of immediate or short-term demands for individual skills, but in light of a future vision and how all members of staff will grow together to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing technology, more competitive markets, a more fickle and labile client base and stakeholder demands for economic accountability.

The gardener has at least one distinct advantage over the manager in that the gardener can make a selection based on well-labelled stock which includes notes on the probability of how each plant is likely to respond in any given environment. The potential of humans is rarely so well displayed or labelled. As a consequence, for the manager looking for staff it is often rather like buying unlabelled or poorly labelled packets of seeds and hoping that they will take root, grow and become fruitful. This means that more time and effort has to be expended in transplanting those who are in the wrong place for their talents, pruning and weeding out those who will never flower and often diverting valuable resources to carrying those who, like weeds, get into the garden, take root and refuse to leave even though they contribute little.

The gardener who has a good plan, who plants and maintains the right stock with a healthy environment, will be rewarded as the colours, shapes, scents and textures bloom in harmony and fruitfulness. Similarly, the manager who selects the right staff, supports and maintains them by providing an environment which brings out the best in each of them, will be rewarded by minds that deliver the fruits of efficiency and profitability.

Multiple intelligences

The gardener can select appropriate plants efficiently because the labels they come with offer not just one bit of information but a number of different kinds of information about the plant. For example, you would not want to buy a plant whose label told you merely that it produces white flowers only to find out later that it hates the clay soil around your house, sheds leaves which clog your gutters, grows roots which destroy your pipes and produces flowers to which you are highly allergic. Yet, when looking at the capability of people we often fall into the trap of accepting a single piece of information or label such as an IQ score, EQ score or personality trait such as introvert or extrovert. In place of this cycloptic view of human ability

Professor Howard Gardner of Harvard University offers us a multidimensional view – *the multiple intelligences* view.

Let's look for a moment at how a multiple intelligences view compares with other models for describing your own abilities as a manager. Old-style criteria for managers were based either on specific areas of expertise such as technical knowledge and experience, or the ability to communicate with, motivate and mobilize people. As a result there were often great gaps between those who were hired for their technical skills or specific expertise and those who were hired for their people skills. Many organizations are still struggling to integrate these abilities, which have been allowed to grow apart for too long. On the other hand, a profile of a good manager today would require all of the following intelligences and attendant skills:

- **Linguistic intelligence** would be required for skills such as reading of trade literature, adaptive conversational skills, active and responsive listening, and writing reports and memos.
- **Mathematical technical logical scientific intelligence** would be necessary not only in the form of technical specialization or industry expertise, but as generalist skills to handle the mathematics of budgeting, the organization and sequencing of projects, the application of logic and objectivity to decision-making, and the appropriate interpretation and use of quantitative feedback related to processes and products.
- **Visual intelligence** involves the use of pattern, colour, shading, movement, depth, aesthetics and so on not only in product or service development, but in a variety of concrete applications to create and maintain a productive workplace or the marketing of goods and services.
- **Auditory intelligence** doesn't require that every manager sing for their supper but that they apply skill in attending to tone, volume, sequence and so on when dealing not only with people but with machines or environments. Some managers say they can walk into an office or factory blindfolded and tell you exactly what is happening in terms of workplace productivity.
- **Kinaesthetic motor intelligence** does not mean just physical strength or the ability to do the tango, but good managers frequently use many motor skills that they may not have given much thought to. These may include the acquisition of computer keyboard skills, demonstration of a complicated mechanical operation, or handling technical or scientific equipment. Today there is a whole industry helping executives to make themselves, their products and their services more credible.
- **Interpersonal intelligence**, according to Daniel Goleman, may be the linchpin which holds together the qualities of a good leader – the ability to understand the needs of others and of self and to respond appropriately to these.
- **Intrapersonal intelligence** or self-awareness – having insight into one's own feelings, goals, ethics, abilities and so on – is not only a 'nice thing' for managers but a

fundamental requirement for mental stability and resistance to depression or despair when things go wrong. It differentiates those managers who under- or overestimate their abilities and those who understand and use their strengths while acknowledging and compensating for their weaknesses.

- **Naturalistic intelligence**, or the ability to relate to and profit from the natural environment, may seem like a luxury. However, as more and more organizations are forced to take a more environmentally friendly approach to production, as more people demand environmentally pure or friendly products, and as governments tighten legislation regarding how we interact with the living world, managers will have to develop and exercise this intelligence to a greater and greater degree.
- **Philosophical ethical intelligence** is more than navel gazing; it allows managers to align their aims and objectives with those of team mates and with the larger organization. It allows the development of vision, the establishment of mission statements and the evaluation of processes using criteria which go beyond the immediate bottom line.

Which intelligences make the best managers?

The intelligences listed above give a general picture of what a good manager needs. However, the emphasis placed on each of these intelligences would vary according to the:

- Products or services supplied. Obviously, a manager of an advertising firm would have a different profile from the manager of a computer software firm or a pharmaceuticals firm.
- Level of authority or scope of operations overseen. Although there has been a great flattening of hierarchical structures in most organizations, there is still the need for different types of decisions at various levels. For example, the higher the level of authority and the greater the number of people or operations overseen, the greater the need for skills of communication and the skill to coordinate and organize.
- Nature of responsibilities. Responsibilities vary at different levels of an organization, and need different kinds of intelligence or expertise. For example, extensive knowledge of the technical applications at the coal face of production may be needed, but the emphasis at the board level will be on skill in collating and evaluating information.

The difference in managerial intelligences associated with different products or services can be seen from the following comparison of a manager in a computer servicing company and a manager of car sales and rentals. Each example lists the main intelligences outlined above and how these are expressed.

EXAMPLE A
A MIDDLE-LEVEL MANAGER IN A COMPUTER SERVICING AND
SUPPORT COMPANY

Linguistic intelligence

- Efficient and accurate reading of trade and professional literature on a regular basis.
- Active and responsive listening to the needs and demands of senior management, empathetic and open listening to colleagues, staff and clients.
- Clear summative report writing and communication with senior management; production of readable and regular written communication for colleagues, staff and clients.
- Adaptive and flexible language whether speaking with senior management, clients or cleaners.

Mathematical technical logical scientific intelligence

- Understanding and preparation of budgetary and financial reports.
- Technical awareness and understanding of hardware and software.
- Objective and logical assessment of problems related to people or products.
- Efficient organization of time, energy and resources.

Visual intelligence

- Decipher and translate diagrammatic information.
- Create visual representations of information and information systems.

Interpersonal intelligence

- Create, lead and work within teams.
- Exert leadership by example.
- Understand and respond appropriately to needs of others at all organizational levels.
- Provide constructive feedback.
- Provide motivation and inspiration to others.

Intrapersonal intelligence

- Develop, review and work towards clear personal and professional goals.
- Have insight into personal strengths and how these can be used to foster professional growth.
- Understand own personal limitations and display ability to adjust to, or compensate for, these.

Philosophical ethical intelligence

- Understand and commit to organizational mission statement.
- Perform with honesty and integrity.



3

INTELLIGENCES WHICH MAKE YOU SUCCESSFUL

Aims

- To provide a rationale and directions for preparation of Personal Data Bases
- To offer tools for preparation of effective PDBs
- To suggest uses for PDBs.

Rationale

What we learn from failure is how to fail; what we learn from success is how to succeed. Therefore, after a warm-up exercise to review the intelligences, we'll begin to examine in detail the intelligences and skills you use to make you successful at work. This examination is a two-step process. In this chapter we'll complete the first step, the building of your Personal Data Bases (PDBs). Then in the following chapter we'll use the PDBs as a foundation for the preparation of your Personal Profile (PP).

As a busy person you will naturally want to see a return for the time you invest in the preparation of your Personal Data Bases. The following are some of the returns you may expect from that investment:

- Greater insight into how your many different intelligences are applied to your work. While you may already see yourself as being multiskilled in performing your role, the PDBs may extend your appreciation of the range of skills you actually use.
- Opportunities to identify intelligences which are underutilized or which could be used to greater advantage. The discovery and use of these may add another dimension to your role or it may allow you to deal with problems in a new way. You may, for example, have great interpersonal skills outside of work but have not developed them in relation to your role at work.
- Alternatives for thinking about compensating for intelligences which are not areas of strength. When you have examined your stockpile of strengths it may become apparent that it is more important for you to build on these than to spend time and energy developing an area which you have little interest in or talent for. For example, you may have extremely good organizational skills, people skills and general problem-solving skills. However, you have little affinity for understanding the details behind technical operations. Your PDBs would then indicate that your use of consultants, a more balanced team, or

other compensatory approaches would be a better use of your talents than the time you would need to raise your technical skills.

- A new basis for identifying and highlighting skills which you wish to include in an up-graded CV or put forward as part of an application for promotion. Even the best CV preparation houses may not identify the full range of your skills unless you can call specialist items to their attention and show how they are valuable.
- Opportunities for discussion about the complementary use of intelligences. Teams, whether formally defined as such or not, depend on the complementary use of intelligences. Personal Data Bases allow members to share and discuss what they contribute and the skills they have on offer in a more organized way.
- A new framework for understanding and appreciating the intelligences of your staff. This framework will be useful when you begin to apply new tools to staff selection and deployment.

Warm-up exercise

Consider the following dialogue between Christopher Columbus (CC), the manager of a proposed large new enterprise, and the executive officers (EOs) of a very large, profitable and expansive organization under the Spanish banner, and the response by Isabella, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Using the outline of intelligences from the previous chapter, see if you can identify CC's use of different intelligences in making a case for a proposed new enterprise.

COLUMBUS PROPOSES A NEW ENTERPRISE

Setting Enthroned at the head of the board meeting sits the CEO, Queen Isabella of Spain. Around the table sit her six hand-picked EOs, long-serving advisers to the family-run organization. Before them, a man seeking support to explore and open new worlds of opportunity.

CC: I know that there are risks involved, but there is a great deal to be gained.

EO1: So, tell us, how will we justify such expenditures to our loyal stockholders?

CC: Well, I have done a great deal of *research* and made *calculations* which indicate that this enterprise could open up whole new world markets for our existing products and exports. They suggest new products for export and provide new materials for production or resale as well as adding to our status in the eyes of those who trade with us.

EO2: Why should we believe that this venture should succeed where others have failed?

CC: Just look at these *maps and charts* for a moment. They show exactly what others have used and why the proposed venture is more likely to succeed.

EO3: I respect your enthusiasm, but do you have the support of those who would have to risk their careers to support you and this proposal?

CC: This plan is too vast to have been conceived by one person. It is the result of the work of *many minds working together* to combine their perspectives, skills, talents and experience. We have spent a great deal of time *talking* about our plan, *writing* to others to get more information, *reading* and then refining our final plan.

EO4: But, some of our best scientists have looked at this and concluded that it cannot be done.
CC: Many of those who feel that this is an impossible mission do so without having looked at the facts which the *natural world* provides. My team, however, has taken careful note of the things which the earth tries to tell me about its natural shape, and believe that the truth lies not in preconceptions but in the voice of nature.

EO5: Have you considered how this promotes our overall mission?

CC: The mission statement, while it has a healthy respect for wealth, includes commitment to other non-economic goals, goals related to *values and ideals*.

EO6: This team you speak of – does it have the physical skills and endurance?

CC: By all measures we have the *energy and physical skills* to sail through the undertaking.

CEO: Are you not perhaps apt to oversell yourself or your team?

CC: We have, beginning with myself, taken careful stock of *our own assets* and weighed them carefully against our *liabilities*. We have pushed the levels of self-awareness to the limits in order to ensure that our confidence was well balanced by constructive criticism.

CEO: You have presented your case well and from every angle argued well for its support. Therefore, I would support the funding of Three Ships with the expectation that the long-term return for the investment be justified by the evidence of history...

CC: *'Tis music to my ears...*

See if you can match the intelligence Christopher Columbus used to convince the Chief Executive Officer of the desirability of his plan with those in this list:

- (a) Linguistic
- (b) Mathematical technical logical scientific
- (c) Visual
- (d) Auditory
- (e) Kinaesthetic motor
- (f) Interpersonal
- (g) Intrapersonal
- (h) Naturalistic
- (i) Philosophical ethical.

Economic competitiveness depends on having the smartest workforce possible. Organizations who want to survive and grow need to be open to new ways of uncovering and developing their employees' abilities.

Profiting from Multiple Intelligences in the Workplace turns Howard Gardner's revolutionary theory of multiple intelligences into user-friendly tools for understanding and assessing success in everyone from CEOs to cleaners. It provides a complete system for:

- **the examination of staff needs**
- **matching applicants and job specifications**
- **successful interviewing and induction**
- **effective supervision**
- **focused training and development**

The results not only allow the identification of individual abilities but also uncover the mosaic of abilities needed for multi-skilling, multi-tasking and efficient teamwork.

No other book provides a method of translating the theory of multiple intelligences into workplace practice. Unlike other books which centre on only one intelligence (for example emotional intelligence) the inventories presented here work towards a balance between traditional skills, general competencies and social skills.

Joyce Martin is a lecturer in social psychology at the Australian Catholic University, Sydney. She has been involved in adult education and training for over 20 years and has produced a wide range of research papers, books for working with diversity and career advice materials for Zonta International, Sydney. Joyce has also worked as a consultant with the New South Wales police on the use of action learning.

“Until now, the theory of multiple intelligences has been applied primarily in schools. Joyce Martin presents an original synthesis of the ways in which the theory applies to a range of roles and situations at the workplace. Her book is comprehensive, thoughtful, and useful.”

Howard Gardner
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