



Leadership and Raw Intelligence

INTRODUCTION

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In the past observations about the intellectual capabilities of other people were common and significant emphasis was placed on this attribute. More recently there has been societal pressure to not make judgments about the intellectual capabilities of people and it has become politically incorrect to do so.

In addition, some new types of “intelligence” have been formulated. There is significant discussion about emotional intelligence. Even newer concepts include “social intelligence” and “physical intelligence”. These new types of “intelligences” have pushed aside serious discussion and reflection about the raw intelligence of old.

Despite these societal pressures and new types of “intelligences” the fundamental fact remains that raw intelligence is critical in all fields of endeavor including leadership.

LEADERSHIP AND RAW INTELLIGENCE

Effective leadership requires capabilities that are the direct result of raw intelligence. Leaders need to do thorough analyses of complex business and organizational issues. Leaders need to be incisive and get to the impactful variables underlying significant business problems and opportunities. Effective leaders need to anticipate linkages between courses of actions and functions and constituents within and outside the organization. Highly intelligent leaders also understand how events and circumstances unfold over a period of time. Often a course of action that is effective in the short term winds up being ineffective in the long term. Solid thinking and planning anticipates and prevents unanticipated consequences.



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Leaders with high intelligence are particularly good at collecting data appropriate to the opportunities and the problems. Highly intelligent leaders consider the multiple contributing factors that go into causing problems and create solutions that fix the problem in the most cost effective and efficient manner. Highly intelligent leaders actually think about issues. They collect appropriate data, analyze the data and carefully come to well thought out solutions to problems. They use these same skills to capitalize on opportunities. Less intelligent leaders are more likely to generate simplistic and ineffectual answers to complex problems. They are also less likely to see the business opportunities and capitalize on them.

Some executives are highly overestimated because they were successful in jobs which only required the monitoring of tasks or significant social skills. When placed in a position which requires significant thinking some of these executives fail because they lack the necessary intelligence. When making promotion decisions it is important to judge the complexity required in a candidate's former positions.

Short of requiring executives to take an intelligence test it falls on an executive's boss to consider whether lack of sufficient raw intelligence is a root cause of various organizational problems. These same bosses also need to question whether the failure to capitalize on opportunities in the market place is a result of lack of intellectual capacity.

STEPS TO TAKE

If the boss determines that lack of sufficient intellectual capacity in an executive is at the root of various problems he or she is left with the question of what to do about it. Unfortunately, lack of raw intellectual power is not modifiable. There are no training courses or steps that can be taken to enhance intellectual capacity. The boss is left with courses of action such as reducing an executive's responsibilities to a level commensurate with his or her intelligence. The boss can decide to personally do the thinking and have the individual executive implement the concrete steps that the boss has created. Another alternative is to assign the executive responsibilities to monitor the implementation of tasks rather than create a sequence of tasks. It is also possible to assign responsibilities that are heavily repetitive or primarily social in nature and don't require especially high levels of intellectual capacity. If none of these steps is feasible termination of the executive may be indicated.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the plethora of purported types of intelligence and the societal pressure to not make judgments about intellectual capacity, leaders have to have significant amounts of raw intellectual power. The lack of such power can result in significant organizational problems and the failure to capitalize on business opportunities. It behooves bosses to make judgments about the intellectual capabilities of individuals within their organizations so that this capability is fully utilized or the lack of such capability mitigated or eliminated.



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