

Intelligence Multipliers

Tapping Into Every
Company's Underutilized
Resource
Liz Wiseman



THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

What is the fate of the smart and the talented? The corporate world quickly finds really smart, talented people and then promotes them into management. But many of these leaders, having spent many years being rewarded for their intelligence, never look beyond their own capabilities to see and use the full genius of their team. These myopic leaders can end up draining intelligence from the people around them. These leaders become “diminishers” to others.

You know these people, because you’ve worked for them. They are smart leaders, but they shut down the smarts of others. They are idea killers and energy sappers. They are the ones who desperately need to prove they are the smartest person in the room. But, for them to be big, others have to be small. These leaders consume so much space that they leave little room for others to contribute. They create stress and pressure that can shut down good ideas. People quickly figure out that it is just easier and safer to retreat and let the boss do all the thinking.

Let’s face it. Corporate environments and modern organizations are the perfect set up for diminishing leadership. The org charts, the hierarchy, the titles, the approval matrixes have a built in tyranny that skews power toward the top and creates incentives for people to shut down and comply. In most hierarchical organizations, the playing field is rarely level. Corporations can be breeding grounds for diminishing leadership. As one CEO said, “it’s not like it isn’t tempting to be tyrannical when you can be.” The path of least resistance for smart, capable managers is often the path of the Diminisher.

THE MULTIPLIERS

On the other side of the spectrum are leaders who use their intelligence to amplify the smarts and capabilities of the people around them. When these leaders walk into a room, light bulbs go on over people's heads; ideas flow and problems get solved. These are the leaders who inspire employees to stretch themselves to deliver results that surpass expectations. These leaders are like Multipliers – intelligence Multipliers.

Multipliers liberate people from the inherently oppressive forces within corporate hierarchy. They liberate people to think, to speak, and to act with reason. They create an environment where the best ideas surface and where people do their best work. Multipliers liberate people from the intimidation of hierarchical organizations and the domination of tyrannical leaders. They create intelligence around them, and they release it into the organization so it can be freely utilized at its highest point of contribution. They create an environment where ideas can be heard and where intelligence can be given, grown, and stretched through challenge. They give people permission to think.

These Multipliers create genius everywhere and they make everyone smarter and more capable.

Multipliers liberate people from the inherently oppressive forces within corporate hierarchy.

GROUND HOG DAY: 730 DAYS, 1 QUESTION

I first noticed this effect during my seventeen year tenure at Oracle Corporation where I worked in a number of senior management roles and in close proximity with a lot of really smart executives. It was there that I first noticed that not all of these leaders had, what you might call, contagious smarts. I saw first hand the toll that diminishing managers had on the capability of their people and on the effectiveness of their organizations. But I also noticed intelligence and innovation flowed around other leaders and how these leaders seemed to get so much more from their people.

After leaving Oracle and seeing this pattern again in other executives, my curiosity shifted to a dogged determination to research the phenomenon to find out why leaders had such a different effect on the intelligence of people around them. My colleague Greg McKeown and I studied this question for 2 years. Working for 730 days with the same question was like the classic scene from the movie “Groundhog Day” in which Bill Murray wakes each day to the same time and song on his alarm clock destined to repeat the events of Groundhog Day. In our quest, we studied 150 leaders, in 35 companies, across 4 continents in pursuit of one really big question: Why do some leaders drain intelligence while others amplify it?

Why do some leaders drain intelligence while others amplify it?

MULTIPLIERS AND DIMINISHERS

So, what did we find? We found that Diminishers and Multipliers do many things alike. For example, they are both customer focused, have strong business acumen, and consider themselves thought leaders. But, we learned that they see the world through very different eyes and that they do a small number of things very differently. And, we found that they get extremely different results from other people. Multipliers don't just get a little more—they get vastly more.

What do they see?

Diminishers look out at their colleagues and see a scarcity of intelligence. They see a small number of really smart people, and they find others lacking. It is as if they are playing a version of the children's game "Duck, Duck, Goose" with their version going like this: "Smart, Dumb, Dumb." And, they appear to hold a fundamental assumption: People will never figure things out without me. While Diminishers see the world of intelligence in black and white, Multipliers see it in Technicolor. They see rich abundant intelligence all around them and they hold a basic assumption: People are smart and will figure it out.

What do they do differently?

Diminishers tend to tell others what to do, make the decisions themselves, create pressure and micromanage the details to ensure performance—all the while underutilizing the talent that they've brought into the organization. It is a fairly predictable, if not logical, management approach if you believe that people will never figure things out without you.

On the other hand, Multipliers, believe people are smart and will figure it out. Because of this they look for valuable talent in others, give people space to think, and instill the accountability that commands people's best work. They ask the challenging questions that unlock thinking and generate possibilities.

In isolating the practices that truly differentiate these two types of leaders, we found:

1 | Multipliers are Talent Magnets: They look beyond their own capabilities to see the deep capabilities —or genius—of others. And then they utilize people at their highest point of contribution.

2 | Multipliers are Liberators: They eradicate stress and fear from their organization and instead create an intense environment that requires people's best thinking and work. They keep the pressure on but make it safe to make mistakes. The result is a climate that is intense without being tense.

3 | Multipliers are Challengers: Instead of telling people what to do, they show them what they can do. They seed opportunities and let people discover needs for themselves. Then, they lay down challenges that cause people to stretch beyond what they thought was possible.

4 | Multipliers are Debate Makers: Instead of making isolated decisions that leave others in the dark, they engage people in debating high-stakes decisions up front. This leads to decisions that people understand and can execute efficiently.

5 | Multipliers are Investors: Instead of getting things done by micromanaging, they give other people the ownership for results and invest in their capability and success.

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they get vastly more.

What impact do they have?

We found that Multipliers get vastly different results from their people. Our research consistently showed, across companies and industries and countries, that Multipliers get twice the capability from their people compared with Diminishers. That is 2X! They use others at their fullest. Multipliers get so much brainpower from their people that they essentially double their workforce for free.

Meanwhile, Diminishers are costly. Sure, these Diminishers can get the job done, but they come at a very high cost. Why? Because they waste talent and intellect. At a time when organizations are expected to do more with less, leaders can't afford to overlook the intelligence and capability that sits right in front of them. Organizations simply can't afford these leaders.

In down markets and times of scarcity, managers must find ways to get more capability and productivity from their slimmer organizations. As companies shed excess resources, the need for leaders who can multiply intelligence and capability is more vital than ever. Leaders who are weighed down by enormous challenges and work demands might just find that the organization's new challenges can be met, not by re-hiring more resources, but by better utilizing the brainpower that currently exists in their organizations.

Multipliers ... are more than just geniuses.
They are genius makers.

MULTIPLIERS: HOW THE BEST LEADERS MAKE EVERYONE SMARTER

Multipliers know how to find this dormant intelligence, challenge it, and put it to use at its fullest. Multipliers are out there. And the world needs more of them, especially now when leaders are expected to do more with less.

These Multipliers exist in business, in education, in nonprofits, and in government. They come from all walks of life—from corporate board rooms, to our schools classrooms, and from the Oval Office to the fields of Africa. Consider a few of these Multipliers:

- **Lutz Ziob**, GM of Microsoft Learning, who transformed an education business by creating an environment of learning and productive debate. His team says of him, “Lutz creates an environment where good things happen.”
- **Sue Siegel**, former President of Affymetrix now Venture Capitalist, whose partner says of her, “There is a Sue effect. Everything around her gets better and companies grow under her guidance. I often wonder what people are like when they aren’t around Sue.”
- **Larry Gelwix**, head coach of Highland Rugby team, whose high school varsity team’s record is 392 wins and just nine losses in thirty-four years. He attributes this extraordinary record to a deliberate leadership philosophy that engages the intelligence of his players both on and off the field.
- **Wangari Maathai**, 2004 Nobel Laureate and founder of the Green Belt Movement, who has inspired and orchestrated the planting of over 40 million trees across Africa.
- **Twin Brothers Thomas and Andreas Streungmann** who built Hexal in Germany to 7 billion in value by scouting great talent and then unleashing people’s genius into their organization.

→ **Bill Campbell**, former CEO of Intuit, who transformed himself from Diminisher to Multiplier and now advises top leaders how to do the same.

Multipliers like those above are more than just geniuses. They are genius makers. They know that at the apex of the intelligence hierarchy is not the lone genius but rather the genius who also brings out smarts and capability in everyone around them.

Multipliers have an effect much like that of Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli. Bono recently referred to this when he said, “It has been said that after meeting with the great British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone, you left feeling he was the smartest person in the world, but after meeting with his rival Benjamin Disraeli, you left thinking you were the smartest person.”

Which type of leader are you? Are you a genius or a genius maker?

Multipliers ... know that at the apex of the intelligence hierarchy is not the lone genius but rather the genius who also brings out smarts and capability in everyone around them.

THE ACCIDENTAL DIMINISHER

In our research, we were surprised to discover how few Diminishers understood the restrictive impact they were having on others. Most had moved into management having been praised for their personal, and often intellectual, merit. They assumed their role as boss was to have the answers. The greatest power of these ideas might be in realizing that you have the mind of a Multiplier but that you've been long living in a Diminisher world and you've lost your way. Perhaps you are an Accidental Diminisher.

Accidental or not, the impact on your team is the same – you may be harnessing only half of the true brainpower of your team.

We've watched as leaders challenged themselves upon learning of their diminishing tendencies. One MIT and Harvard educated bio-tech director saw how his ability (and enthusiasm) to solve hard, complex problems might be having a diminishing effect on his team. He said, "When I started to look at my team through the lens of a Multiplier, I began to see people's capabilities." Instead of feeling frustrated at having to step in and redo work, he found ways to help other people take their thinking to the next level. He could take charge without taking over. He began to do things differently because he began to see his role differently.

Another CEO (who was one of the Multipliers we studied) after learning about "the Accidental Diminisher," assembled his management team, exposed them to the Multiplier ideas and asked a simple question: "How might I be accidentally diminishing people in this organization?" He then listened intently as his team taught him how to be a more universal Multiplier.

THE END OF DIMINISHING LEADERSHIP

You can be a Multiplier. You can create genius everywhere and with everyone. Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter shows you how. And, it will show you why it matters for every leader trying to accomplish more by getting more from their people.

You can indeed become a Multiplier, and collectively we can end diminishing leadership. We can liberate and multiply the intelligence around us. We desperately need leaders who do more than establish their vision or their goals. Our world needs leaders who can extract and utilize all available intelligence to solve our most complex and vital challenges.

It matters at a number of levels.

1 | It matters because people will give you more. The research showed consistently that even high-performing people gave Multipliers 2X more than they gave their Diminisher counterparts. People don't give a little more – they give a lot more. They give all their discretionary effort and mental energy. They dig deep and access reserves of brainpower that they alone know exist. They apply the full measure of their intelligence. They reason more clearly, comprehend more completely, and learn more quickly. In the process they get smarter and more capable.

2 | It matters to the people you work with as they experience the reciprocal benefit.

As your people give their max, they get a richly satisfying experience. As one person said, “It was exhausting, but exhilarating.” And “I was ready to do it again.” People desperately want to think, to be challenged and to grow. It's not a burn out experience; it's a build up experience.

3 | It matters to the organizations you work for or lead. In down markets and times of scarcity, managers must find ways to get more capability and productivity from their current resources. And, in growth markets, companies need leaders who can multiply the intelligence and capability

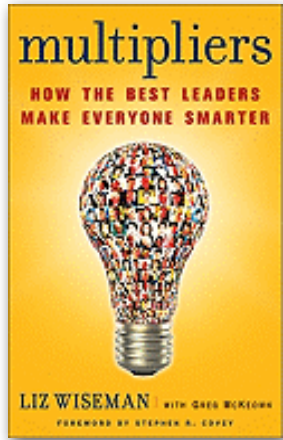
of their colleagues and increase the brainpower of the organization to meet growth demands. No organization can scale without Multipliers.

4 | It matters to the world. We face an enormous number of large, complex challenges across the world. As Albert Einstein said, “the significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” We will need access to new levels of intelligence. What if we could truly access twice as much of the available intellect in solving these perennial problems? What solutions could be generated if we had access to all the underutilized brainpower in the world? Surely we would be able to tackle pervasive problems like treatable disease or provide an enabling education to every child.

Are there diminishing assumptions holding business back? Are there diminishing assumptions underlying failing schools? Many governments are suffocating, even collapsing. Could diminishing leaders be replaced by those who serve as true Multipliers, inspiring collective intelligence and capability on a mass scale?

I believe that the Diminishing cultures we see in organizations, schools, and even families are not inevitable. Indeed, in the last analysis, diminishing cultures may simply be unsustainable. For these cultures are built on incorrect assumptions and violate truths about how people actually work and thrive. Like many historical empires, they will eventually collapse. Those institutions left standing will be built on truths about the true abundance of intelligence available to us.

It is time to call for the end of diminishing leaders. It is time for leaders to look around and see fields of intelligence, ripe for harvesting. It is time to us to utilize all of our intellect. It is time for Multipliers. 📖



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Get more details or buy a copy of Liz Wiseman's [*Multipliers*](#).

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Liz Wiseman is president of The Wiseman Group, a leadership research and development center headquartered in Silicon Valley. She advises senior executives and leads strategy and leadership forums for executive teams worldwide. A former executive at Oracle Corporation, she worked as the Vice President of Oracle University and as the global leader for Human Resource Development for 17 years.

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