

Multiple Intelligences are Changing the World of Business!

by David G. Lazear

Multiples intelligences, applied in the workplace, are helping managers, corporate trainers, and those charged with human resource development make the workplace a more productive, more creative, and more human place – all of which results in greater profitability for the company.

- *How often have you wished you knew how to help each member of your workplace team maximize their potential on the job and increase their productivity?*
- *How often have you been frustrated because you feel that you're just not communicating with your employees?*
- *How often have you felt that you're smarter than people give you credit for?*
- *How often have you been surprised by a creative idea or an approach to a problem from someone you didn't think had it in them?*
- *How often have you conducted training sessions that ended up being dull, boring, and a waste of time because little learning actually occurred?*

In 1985 the noted Harvard psychologist and educator Howard Gardner, proposed the theory of multiple intelligences based on several years of research investigating how we come to know what we know about our world. How do we learn and understand information? What is the process by which we acquire knowledge? In a nutshell, “What makes us smart? What makes us intelligent?” In this research, Gardner discovered that each of us possess at least eight distinct areas of intelligence, eight ways we acquire knowledge, process information, learn and understand.

Most of us grew up believing that intelligence is fixed and static at birth. We believe were born with a certain amount of intelligence and are stuck with it. Furthermore, through a series of tests, involving mostly paper and pencil tasks, one's intelligence quotient (IQ) can be assessed. After performing the tasks on a given test, one is assigned a number which, supposedly, is a valid indicator of his or her intellectual capabilities from that point on.



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The multiple intelligence (**MiQ™**) view of intelligence calls into question the basic assumptions about our intelligence represented by the “IQ paradigm.” The multiple intelligence understanding of our human capacities views intelligence as a biological, neurological, psychological, sensory, and cognitive phenomenon. It’s much more than what goes on between our ears! Our intelligence occurs throughout our entire brain, mind, body system and even beyond ourselves in our socio-cultural environment as well.

Furthermore, the “**MiQ™** paradigm” asserts that any of the tests, which purport to measure one's intelligence, by design are flawed, because they measure a very small range of our human intellectual capacities, namely our logical thinking abilities (per Western definitions of logic), various linguistic and math skills (which can be demonstrated in a paper and pencil manner), and fairly elementary spatial abilities such as choosing similar objects or shapes from a range of options.

Why have we chosen to define this narrow range of capabilities as “intelligence” but not our ability to express deep thoughts, emotions, and ideas through music, dance, art, drama, and interpersonal relationships? Why do we not call one’s inner knowledge about the self or the natural world around us intelligence? Multiple intelligences asks us to look at ourselves and our employees in a very different way, not asking “How smart am I?” or “How smart are they?” **MiQ™** leads us to ask “How am I smart?” or “How are they (our employees) smart?”-a very different question indeed!

Eight Kinds of Smart

WordSmart (*verbal-linguistic intelligence*) is responsible for the production of language and all the complex possibilities that follow, including poetry, humor, grammar, metaphors, similes, abstract reasoning, symbolic thinking, and of course, the written word. Verbal-linguistic intelligence is awakened by the spoken word; by reading someone's ideas or poetry; and by writing one's own ideas, thoughts, or poetry.

LogicSmart (*logical-mathematical intelligence*) is most often associated with what we call “scientific thinking.” Logical-mathematical intelligence is activated in situations requiring problem-solving or meeting a new challenge. This intelligence likewise involves the capacity to recognize patterns, to work with abstract symbols such as numbers and geometric shapes, and to discern relationships and see connections between separate and distinct pieces of information.



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ImageSmart (*visual-spatial intelligence*) involves such activities as painting, drawing, and sculpture; navigation, mapmaking and architecture, and games such as chess (which requires the ability to visualize objects from different perspectives and angles). The key sensory base of this intelligence, obviously, is the sense of sight, but also the ability to form images and pictures in the mind. Our childhood daydreaming, when we pretended we could fly or that we were magical beings, or maybe that we were heroes-heroines in fabulous adventure stories used this intelligence to the hilt!

BodySmart (*bodily-kinesthetic intelligence*) is the ability to use the body to express emotion (as in dance and body language), to play a game (as in sports), or to create a new product (as in devising an invention). Our bodies are very wise. They know things our conscious minds don't and can't know in any other way. For example, if I gave you a piece of paper and asked you to lay out the keyboard of a computer without moving your fingers, could you do it? Probably not. But your fingers know the keyboard without even pausing.

SoundSmart (*musical-rhythmic intelligence*) includes such capacities as the recognition and use of rhythmic and tonal patterns, and sensitivity to sounds from the environment, the human voice, and musical instruments. Many of us learned the alphabet through this intelligence and the “A-B-C song”. Of all forms of intelligence identified, the “consciousness altering” effect of music and rhythm on the brain is the greatest. Just think of how music can calm you when you are stressed, stimulate you when you're bored, and help you attain a steady rhythm in such things as typing and exercising. It has been used to inspire our religious beliefs, intensify national loyalties, and to express great loss or intense joy.

PeopleSmart (*interpersonal intelligence*) involves the ability to work cooperatively in a group as well as the ability to communicate, verbally and non-verbally, with other people. It builds on the capacity to notice distinctions among others, for example, contrasts in moods, temperament, motivations, and intentions. In the more advanced forms of this intelligence one can literally “pass over” into another person's life context (that is, stand in their shoes, so to speak) and experience their intentions and desires. One can have genuine empathy for another's feelings, fears, anticipations, and beliefs.

SelfSmart (*intrapersonal intelligence*) involves knowledge of the internal aspects of the self such as knowledge of feelings, the range of emotional responses, thinking processes, self-reflection, and a sense of or intuition about spiritual realities. Intrapersonal intelligence allows us to be conscious of our consciousness; that is, to step back from ourselves and watch ourselves as an outside observer does. Our self-identity and the ability to transcend the self are



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part of the functioning of intrapersonal intelligence. This intelligence is the most private and requires all other intelligence forms to express itself, such as language, art, music, dance, symbols, and interpersonal communication with others.

NatureSmart (*naturalist intelligence*) is related to our recognition, appreciation, and understanding of the natural world around us. It involves such capacities as species discernment, the ability to recognize and classify various flora and fauna, and our knowledge of and communion with the natural world. You can see the naturalist intelligence when you find yourself drawn to and fascinated by animals and their behaviors. You see it when you notice the effect on your mood and sense of well-being when someone brings plants and-or cut flowers into an otherwise sterile, humanly-created environment. Think how often we head for nature when we want to relax, “unwind” or find inner renewal!

What Does MiQ™ Bring to the Corporate, Business World?

A new vision of human resource development. The goal of an MiQ™ approach to HR is to maximize the full potential of the workforce by not only encouraging each employee to excel in his or her stronger intelligence areas, but also by providing ways to help people develop areas that are not strong, thus creating a more well-rounded team.

What can this mean for you?

- ***Understanding how to put together more effective teams.*** Group dynamics research has documented that heterogeneously grouped teams get more done. When you understand the different kinds of smarts of your people and when you use this information for team-building, you dramatically increase the productivity of your workforce.
- ***Finding and developing hidden leadership qualities and potentials.*** When you learn to look at people through the lens of the **Eight Kinds of Smart** you, discover numerous skills, abilities, gifts, and talents which have likely never been tapped on the job. Learning to access these capacities on a regular and ongoing basis profoundly impacts your employee retention and motivation.
- ***Learning how to activate each of the intelligences in yourself and your employees.*** People need to have a wide range of techniques, strategies, and methods to call on when faced with problems or new challenges which arise in the execution of their jobs. Teaching employees how to use all of their intelligences gives you a more creative, personally invested, and responsible workforce.



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A multimodal approach to corporate training. Effective training must balance knowledge acquisition with hands-on application of the knowledge. Often a training session fails to reach all learners or participants primarily due to the mono-modal style of the presentation. People learn in different ways; therefore, training must be delivered to reach the learner where they are.

What can this mean for you?

- ***Knowing how to plan “multi-modal” presentations which access the full learning potentials of the participants.*** Presenting information in just one way will not reach everyone. When you use a wide range of teaching and learning strategies, methods, and techniques, everyone gets it!
- ***Helping participants transfer the learning from the training session to their daily work assignments.*** In most cases transfer of the learning does not happen automatically. It takes variety of techniques to help participants apply the information from the training session on the job.
- ***Dealing effectively with the adult learner.*** Research has documented that the adult learner has distinct needs which must be addressed in a formal training situation. You must make sure you are addressing the hierarchy of basic human needs, and know how to handle the difficult participant, answer questions, and understand the dynamics of a group.

A multifaceted approach to strategic planning and problem solving. Using MiQ™ in corporate strategic planning guarantees that you access the full creativity and gifts of all involved in the planning process. Often planning does not get beyond a simple rehashing and reshaping of past ideas and solutions-ideas and solutions which have been less than effective.

What can this mean for you?

- ***Understanding the dynamics of creativity and how to tap them in corporate planning.*** Research has discovered that creativity is a learned process. Knowing how to nurture and develop the creative prowess in your workforce gets better answers to problems, a wider range of ways to meet challenges, and a much clearer vision of your goals-and you get the “buy in” of everyone involved.
- ***Promoting the best thinking of all involved in the planning process.*** When you understand the wide range of critical and creative thinking skills available in the



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different intelligence areas, you suddenly have many more ways to think about any problem you're trying to solve. You need to train your workforce to be better thinkers.

- ***Knowing how to move a group's thinking to higher-order realms.*** Effective planning must fully engage the full being of all involved in the planning process. You've got to know how to move people to a place where ideas are synthesized, integrated, and transformed into action.

Employee motivation and productivity. MiQ™ gives you an opportunity to understand the various “intelligence profiles” of your workforce. An intelligence profile gives a picture of the unique intellectual capacities of each person, including areas that are more developed and areas that less developed.

What can this mean for you?

- ***Understanding the full potential of each person on your team.*** Once you understand a person's intelligence profile you have very powerful information for helping each perform at his or her highest potential. You must use different strategies for dealing with and managing different profiles. You can't relate to everyone the same!
- ***Analyzing the intelligence profiles needed for leadership and management.*** In the past the criteria for leaders or managers were based on specific areas of expertise, technical knowledge about a given industry or business, or on the ability to communicate, motivate, and mobilize people. The capacities of the **Eight Kinds of Smart** listed earlier give a picture of the new intelligence-based leader.
- ***Interviewing with multiple intelligences in mind.*** Organizations which have and maintain the competitive edge recognize the need for workers who possess a wide range of intelligences. The interview process is the key to finding these people and keeping them for the long term. MiQ™-based surveys, when interviewing prospective employees, can save you big time and money.

All in all, as the **Eight Kinds of Smart** becomes part of the corporate culture, everyone is expected to tap the full range of their human intellectual capacities on the job. There is a profound appreciation for and valuing of human diversity and the multitude of approaches different individuals might employ to accomplish the same task.



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