

*For more nearly twenty years, the Executive Edge has been a value added service to encourage our employer and candidate clients in their Personal & Professional Development.*



## Genius or Genius-Maker? How Smart Leaders Bring Out the Best in People

*Some corporations have made hiring the most intelligent individuals a core strategy on the basis that smarter people can solve problems more quickly than the competition. But that only works if the organizations can access that intelligence. ~ Stephen R. Covey*

According to surveys on engagement, most workers have greater capabilities, creativity, talent, initiative and resourcefulness than their jobs allow—or even require—them to use.

Other surveys reveal that most workers feel pressured to produce more with less.

These results are paradoxical: People are underutilized and overworked at the same time.

Fortunately, some leaders understand how to create genius within their teams: They bring out the best in people. They're “genius-makers.” Many bosses, however, seem to excel at draining people of their intelligence and abilities.

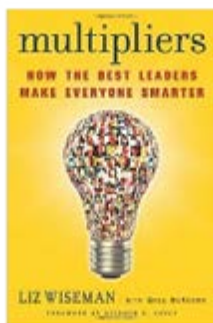
Management guru Peter Drucker predicted the challenge of managing knowledge workers in the 21st century:

The most valuable assets of the 20th-century company were its production equipment. The most

valuable asset of a 21st-century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity.

For the most part, leaders are highly intelligent and capable professionals—traits that facilitate their promotion to management. Some, however, experience a bumpy climb up the leadership ladder. So, how does one successfully make the shift from genius to genius-maker?

Leadership consultants Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown explore this question in *Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter, which I highly recommend.* (Harper Business, 2010).



Some bosses make us better and smarter by eliciting and revitalizing

our intelligence. Others seem to stifle intelligence and capability, always wanting to be seen as the smartest person in the room. They suck the energy out of the team, whose members end up looking or feeling dumb. IQs seem to drop, and meeting times double.

### Producing More with Less

Wiseman and McKeown interviewed and assessed more than 150 leaders on their managerial practices. Their research sheds light on the important differences between the geniuses and the genius-makers:

- It isn't how much you know that matters, but the access you have to what other people know.
- Team members should be smart, but success depends on how much of that intelligence you can draw out and put to use.

These fundamental differences in mindset separate the geniuses from the genius-makers.

People who work for genius-makers say they give more than 100 percent of their energy and abilities (often citing 120 percent). Genius-makers encourage people to stretch their capabilities and “get smarter.” Conversely, those who work for non-genius-makers report giving only 20 to 50 percent on the job.

Many leaders tackle productivity challenges by hiring more people and achieving linear growth. Genius-makers have a more efficient and cost-effective approach: They extract the capabilities of the people already employed, achieving more with the same headcount. Genius-makers know that most workers are underutilized and their aptitude can be leveraged with the right kind of leadership.

### The Mindset of Effective Leaders

Wiseman and McKeown divide leaders into two camps, based on the results they achieve: *multipliers* or *diminishers*.

Leadership effectiveness can be judged on a continuum. Some leaders, for example, are unintentionally diminishing, but they can switch directions when armed with the right mindset and communication tools.

Leaders are likely to act on one of two extreme beliefs:

**1.** Diminishing leaders believe their people will never be able to figure things out without explanation from a leader who provides all the answers.

**2.** Multiplying leaders believe their people are smart and can come up with solutions on their own.

The following table outlines the differences in these leaders’ approaches:



Challenge	Diminisher’s Mindset	Multiplier’s Mindset
How would you manage talent?	I must closely supervise people if I want them to complete assigned tasks.	If I can identify people’s genius, I can watch them succeed on their own.
How would you motivate for outcomes?	Pressure increases performance.	People’s best ideas must be given, not taken.
How would you solve problems?	I need to have all the answers.	People get smarter by being challenged.
How would you run debates?	There are only a few people worth listening to.	With enough minds, we can figure it out.
How would you develop your people?	People will never be able to figure things out without me.	People are smart and will figure things out independently.

Leading like a multiplier requires more than mimicking the approaches described above. You must believe in your people’s capabilities and trust them to use their intelligence and creativity to develop their own solutions.

Act as a guide instead of an expert to achieve buy-in and self-sufficiency.

### 5 Ways Leaders Diminish Others

Diminishers, who hog the spotlight and focus on ways to boost their careers, fall into five categories:

1. **Empire Builders** hoard resources and underutilize talent.
2. **Tyrants** create a tense environment that suppresses people's thinking and capabilities.
3. **Know-It-Alls** issue directives that showcase how much they know.
4. **Decision Makers** make centralized, abrupt decisions that confuse the organization.
5. **Micromanagers** drive results through their personal involvement.

### The 5 Disciplines of Genius-Makers

Multipliers follow five principles to bring out the best in people. Each allows workers to stretch so they can contribute greater effort and productivity.

#### 1. Attract and Optimize Talent: Be a Talent Manager

- a. You attract the best people when you take full advantage of their strengths.
- b. They subsequently let other talented people know about the benefits of working on your team.
- c. Talented people seek opportunities to grow and appreciate your efforts.

#### 2. Create Intensity that Requires Best Thinking: Be a Liberator

- a. You create an intense environment that demands people's best thinking and work.
- b. People flourish under the right amount of pressure and support to perform their best work.
- c. You are empathetic, yet firm about expectations for high-quality work.

#### 3. Extend Challenges: Be a Challenger

- a. You define an opportunity that causes people to stretch.
- b. You give them freedom to make mistakes, learn from them and be creative.
- c. Instead of giving people answers, you ask the right questions and then stay out of their way.

#### 4. Debate Decisions: Be a Debate Maker

- a. You drive sound decisions through rigorous debate.
- b. People own outcomes and participate in course corrections without blaming.
- c. You challenge your people to ask the right questions and debate the true issues.

#### 5. Instill Ownership and Accountability: Be an Investor

- a. You give other people ownership for results and invest in their success.
- b. You hold high expectations across the organization, which leads people to hold themselves and each other accountable.

- c. You provide the necessary resources for success.

## Is this your best work?

### Working for a Genius-Maker

Henry Kissinger, who served as Secretary of State under President Richard M. Nixon, was a master at extracting people's best work.

When his chief of staff once handed in a foreign-policy report, Kissinger asked, "Is this your best work?"

His chief became worried and said he thought he could do better. Two weeks later, he turned in the report again. Kissinger repeated, "Are you sure this is your best work?"

Realizing something must have been missing, the chief rewrote the report yet again. When he handed it in, he said, "Mr. Kissinger, this is my best work."

Upon hearing this, Kissinger replied, "Then this time I will read your report."

Requiring people's best work is different from insisting on desired outcomes. People become stressed when they're expected to produce results beyond their control.

They do, however, respond well to positive pressure to do their best work.

### Becoming a Genius-Maker

You needn't excel in all five disciplines to be considered a multipli

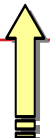
er who brings out the best in your people. You must, however, master two or three disciplines and be "good enough" in the remaining ones.

Instead of trying to perfect all five disciplines, create a development plan with your executive coach. Pick one

key area of strength and develop it to a higher level.

Next, choose an area of weakness and strive to make improvements. View your leadership effectiveness on a continuum so it can be realistically achieved.

### Diminisher-to-Multiplier Performance Continuum

Multiplier	Talent Manager	Liberator	Challenger	Debate Maker	Investor
Strength					
Competent					
Vulnerable					
Diminisher	Empire Builder	Tyrant	Know-It-All	Decision Maker	Micromanager

This Executive Edge was created by  
The Hunt Executive Search, Inc.  
Lead Editor: J.B. Hunt

**Contact US:** 212.861.2680 or 800.486.8476  
e-mail request

#### Array of Services:

- Retained Executive Search
- Executive Assessment
- Executive Coaching & Outplacement
- Human Capital Consulting

#### Learn More About Us:

- Centers of Excellence:  
Americas • EMEA • Asia Pacific
- Download E-Dossier
- Video Presentation