

“Multipliers”
How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter
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The ability to extract and multiply the intelligence that already exists in the organization is red-hot relevant. People are often “overworked and underutilized.” People actually get smarter and more capable around Multipliers.

As Victor Hugo once said, “There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.”

There was a type of leader, those I came to call **Multipliers**, who saw, used, and grew the intelligence of others, while other leaders, whom I labeled **Diminishers**, shut down the smarts of those around them. The role of leader has shifted, too—moving away from a model where the manager knows, directs, and tells and toward one where the leader sees, provokes, asks, and unleashes the capabilities of others.

When you think about what is best for the organization and remove your ego, being a Multiplier is the only way to go.” In 2011, after assessing hundreds of executives, we found that managers were utilizing just 66 percent of their people’s capability on average. Our greatest gains in the workplace will not come by reforming hardened Diminishers but by helping Accidental Diminishers become more intentional Multipliers. These leaders weren’t just intelligent themselves—they were intelligence Multipliers. Perhaps these leaders understood that the person sitting at the apex of the intelligence hierarchy is the genius maker, not the genius.

What are the vital few differences between intelligence Diminishers and intelligence Multipliers, and what impact do they have on organizations?

Manager No. 1: The Genius Maker. George grew people’s intelligence by engaging it. He wasn’t the center of attention and didn’t worry about how smart he looked.

Manager No. 2: The Genius. He had really strong opinions and put his energy into selling his ideas to others and convincing them to execute on the details. No one else’s opinion mattered.”

The second leader was so absorbed in his own intelligence that he stifled others and diluted the organization’s crucial intelligence. One leader was a genius. The other was a genius maker.

Let’s begin by examining how Multipliers influence the people who work around them.

- Extracting Intelligence
- Extending Intelligence
- Resource Leverage

A leader’s need to micromanage limits what the rest of the organization can contribute. Leaders rooted in the logic of multiplication believe that you can more efficiently extract the capability of your people and watch growth skyrocket by multiplying the power of the resources you have.

Here is the logic behind multiplication:

1. Most people in organizations are underutilized.
2. All capability can be leveraged with the right kind of leadership.
3. Therefore, intelligence and capability can be multiplied without requiring a bigger investment.

Multipliers don't get more with less; they get more by using more.

The diminishers conclude that they are so special, other people will never figure things out without them. Diminishers regard intelligence as something basic about a person that can't change much; they believe it is static, not able to change over time or circumstance. Diminishers' two-step logic appears to be that people who don't "get it" now, never will; therefore, I'll need to keep doing the thinking for everyone. Multipliers see that their job is to bring the right people together in an environment that liberates everyone's best thinking—and then to get out of their way and let them do it!

In twenty years of watching and coaching executives, I have observed how leaders' assumptions affect their management.

The Five Disciplines of the Multiplier

1. **ATTRACTING AND OPTIMIZING TALENT.** Multipliers are Talent Magnets; In contrast, Diminishers operate as Empire Builders, The Diminisher is an Empire Builder who acquires resources and then wastes them. The Multiplier is a Talent Magnet who utilizes and increases everyone's genius.
2. **CREATING INTENSITY THAT REQUIRES BEST THINKING.** They are able to remove fear and create the safety that invites people to do their best thinking. The Diminisher is a Tyrant who creates a stressful environment. The Multiplier is a Liberator who creates a safe environment that fosters bold thinking.
3. **EXTENDING CHALLENGES.** While Diminishers set a direction, Multipliers ensure that a direction gets set. The Diminisher is a Know-It-All who gives directives. The Multiplier is a Challenger who defines opportunities.
4. **DEBATING DECISIONS.** Diminishers are Decision Makers who try to sell their decisions to others. Multipliers are Debate Makers who generate real buy-in.
5. **INSTILLING OWNERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY.** Diminishers serve as Micromanagers who drive results by holding on to ownership, jumping into the details, and directly managing for results. The Diminisher is a Micromanager who jumps in and out. The Multiplier is an Investor who gives others ownership and full accountability.

MULTIPLIERS: These leaders are genius makers who bring out the intelligence in others. They build collective, viral intelligence in organizations.

DIMINISHERS: These leaders are absorbed in their own intelligence, stifle others, and deplete the organization of crucial intelligence and capability.

A Multiplier is:

1. The Talent Magnet who attracts and optimizes talent
2. The Liberator who requires people's best thinking
3. The Challenge who extends challenges
4. The Debate Maker who debates decisions
5. The Investor who Instills accountability.

While true Diminishers are easier to spot, much of the diminishing that transpires in the workplace is a result of well-intended leaders (accidental diminishers) whose honest attempts to lead or be helpful shut down ideas and cause others to hold back. By extracting people's full capability, multipliers get twice the capability from people as do diminishers.

Multipliers are leaders who have a reputation not only for delivering results but for creating a place where young, talented people can grow. They are accelerators to other people's careers.

Would your people describe you as someone who recognizes talented people, draws them in, and utilizes them at their fullest, or would they describe you as someone who pulled them into your organization not as a talent to be developed, but more as a resource to be deployed? Some leaders are like magnets that draw in talent and develop it to its fullest. Other leaders acquire resources to build their empire.

The Empire Builder Versus the Talent Magnet

Diminishers operate as Empire Builders who hoard resources and underutilize talent. Talent Magnets attract talented people and use them at their highest point of contribution.

Practices of the Talent Magnet

1. **Looks for Talent Everywhere.** Appreciate All Types of Genius. IQ is a practical but limited measure of the true intelligence of our species. A Talent Magnet knows that genius comes in many

forms. Talent Magnets live in a world without walls and without hierarchical or lateral restrictions. Instead, they see talent networks.

2. Finds People's Native Genius. A native genius or talent is something that people do, not only exceptionally well, but absolutely naturally. They do it easily (without extra effort) and freely (without condition). What do they do better than anything else they do? What do they do better than the people around them? What do they do without effort? What do they do without being asked? What do they do readily without being paid?

3. Utilizes People at Their Fullest. When leaders connect people's natural passions and native genius to big opportunities, those people are used at their highest point of contribution. "She not only tells you that you are doing a great job, but she tells you why it matters to these girls. I know my work is appreciated."

4. Removes the Blockers. Is it possible that your smartest people are impeding the smarts of your organization? And is it possible you are waiting too long to remove the blockers? Get Out of the Way. One corporate VP had a favorite saying, quoted often and written on her door: "Ignore me as needed to get your job done."

The Diminisher's approach to managing talent? Diminishers are owners of talent, not developers of talent. Here are the ways Diminishers see the world and operate, and a glimpse at how these behaviors affect people and organizations:

- Acquiring resources
- Putting people in boxes
- Letting talent languish

Whereas Talent Magnets give credit, Empire Builders take credit. These managers actively acquire talent, but then are passive about growing it. "Developing the talent of the team" was among the lowest three skills of the Diminisher. They continue to operate in a **"one brain, many hands"** organizational model that stunts the growth of both intelligence and talent around them.

EMPIRE BUILDERS bring in great talent, but they underutilize it because they hoard resources and use them only for their own gain. Talent magnet get access to the best talent because people flock to work for them, knowing they will be fully utilized and developed to be ready for the next stage.

1. Both Talent Magnets and Empire Builders attract top talent. What differentiates them is what they do with the talent once it's in the door.

2. Talent Magnets don't run out of talent by moving their people on to bigger, better opportunities, because there is a steady stream of talent wanting to get into their organization.

Policies are established to create order, but often unintentionally keep people from thinking.

Formal hierarchies suppress the voices, and often ideas, of those at the bottom.

The Liberator

Multipliers free 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 create an intense environment in which superior thinking and work can flourish. Tyrants create a tense environment that suppresses people's thinking and capability. But intimidation and fear rarely produce truly great work. Tyrants create a tense environment that is full of stress and anxiety.

Liberators like Robert, on the other hand, create an intense environment that requires concentration, diligence, and energy. Diminishers create a stress-filled environment because they don't give people control over their own performance. Tyrants get diminished thinking from others because people only offer the safest of ideas and mediocre work. While a Tyrant creates stress that causes people to hold back, a Liberator creates space for people to step up.

Practices of the Liberator

1. **Create Space:** Release Others by Restraining Yourself Shift the Ratio of Listening to Talking Liberators don't just listen a lot of the time, they listen most of the time, massively shifting the ratio and creating space for others to share what they know. Define a Space for Discovery Level the Playing Field The leader has to ask questions and invite the most junior people to express their ideas." Titles don't bring you more respect; it's about what you're contributing.

2. **Demand People's Best Work:** Here are a few ways that Liberators demand the best from those they work with. Defend the Standard. Distinguish Best Work from Outcomes. Requiring people's best work is different from insisting on desired outcomes. Stress is created when people are expected to produce outcomes that are beyond their control.

3. **Generate Rapid Learning Cycles:** Perhaps most important, Liberators give people permission to make mistakes and the obligation to learn from them. Admit and Share Mistakes Insist on Learning from Mistakes

The Diminisher's Approach to Environment

Timothy created a tense environment by dominating the space, creating anxiety, and judging others in a way that had a stifling effect on people's thinking and output. Diminishers dominate meetings and hog all the airtime. They create anxiety. The hallmark of a Tyrant is their temperamental and unpredictable behavior.

Make space for mistakes . Create freedom to think and experiment. Multipliers don't tell people what to think; they tell them what to think about.

Tyrants create a tense environment that suppresses people's thinking and capability. As a result, people hold back, bring up safe ideas that the leader agrees with, and work cautiously. Liberators create an intense environment that requires people's best thinking and work. As a result, people offer their best and boldest thinking and give their best effort.

The Challenger

“The number one difference between a Nobel Prize winner and others is not IQ or work ethic, but that they ask bigger questions.”— Peter Drucker

“What would be your Mission Impossible?”

The expert While he thinks he’s inspiring others, it is more like he’s wearing them down and flogging people into submission.

The Know-It-All Versus the Challenger. In setting direction for their organizations, Multipliers have a fundamentally different approach. Instead of knowing the answer, they play the role of the Challenger. If a leader holds the assumption that it is their role to provide the answers, and if the employees resign themselves to this mode of business, a downward Know-It-All spiral naturally follows.

Practices of the Challenger

Among the Multipliers we studied in our research, we found some common practices.

1. Seed the Opportunity. Multipliers don’t give answers. Instead they begin a process of discovery:
2. Show the Need. You don’t get the most out of people if you just tell them what to do. You get full effort if you help people discover opportunity and then challenge themselves.
3. Challenge the Assumptions Multipliers ask the questions that challenge the fundamental assumptions in an organization and disrupt the prevailing logic. Lay down a challenge. Multipliers create a space between what people know and what they need to know, and that draws people into the challenge. Extend a Concrete Challenge
4. Ask the Hard Questions Diminishers give answers. Good leaders ask questions. Let Others Fill In the Blanks
5. Generate Belief
6. Cocreate the Plan
7. Orchestrate an Early Win

The Diminisher’s Approach to Setting Direction

They tend to sell their ideas rather than learning what others know. “He is so busy sharing what he thinks, there is no space for anyone else.” They ask questions to make a point rather than to access

greater insight or to generate collective learning. Rather than shift responsibility to other people, Diminishers stay in charge and tell others—in detail—how to do their jobs. Diminishers often unintentionally shut down the intelligence of others.

A bad leader will tell people what to do. A good leader will ask questions and let his or her people figure out the answers. The first step in this journey is to stop answering questions and begin asking them. I learned that the best leaders ask questions and let other people find answers.

When leaders offer a challenge and then create a culture of belief, the organization steps up.

We often think burnout is a result of working too hard; more often burnout occurs when people are merely doing more of the same or when they can't see the results of their hard work.

KNOW-IT-ALLS give directives that showcase how much they know. As a result, they limit what their organization can achieve to what they themselves know how to do. The organization uses its energy to deduce what the boss thinks.

CHALLENGERS define opportunities that challenge people to go beyond what they know how to do. As a result they get an organization that understands the challenge and has the focus and energy to take it on.

The Debate Maker

“It is better to debate a decision without settling it than settling a decision without debating it.”
Joseph Joubert

Diminishers lack a rich view of intelligence in which there are many sources of insight waiting to be more fully utilized and where intelligence develops through engagement and challenge.

The Decision Maker Versus the Debate Maker

Multipliers hold a very different view. They don't focus on what they know but on how to know what others know. Multipliers approach decisions by bringing people together, discovering what they know, and encouraging people to challenge and stretch each other's thinking through collective dialogue and debate.

The Decider Versus Civic Discourse

The Practices of the Debate Maker

1. Frame the Issue

There are four parts to a well-crafted frame:

- The question
- The why

- The who
- The how

Multipliers ensure that people don't waste their brainpower and enthusiasm "spinning" on tangential issues. Multipliers aren't just debaters; they are Debate Makers.

2. Spark the Debate

I've never gotten into trouble telling my manager what I think

Multipliers create safety, but they also maintain pressure for a reality-based, rigorous debate.

3. Drive a Sound Decision

First, they reclarify the decision-making process. Second, they make the decision or explicitly delegate it to someone else to decide. And third, they communicate the decision and the rationale behind it.

- Reclarify the Decision-Making Process
- Make the Decision
- Communicate the Decision and Rationale

The Diminisher's Approach to Debate

Instead of framing issues for debate and decisions, Diminishers tend to raise issues abruptly, then dominate the discussion with their own ideas before forcing a decision.

Becoming a Debate Maker

And how does someone go from being a Decision Maker to a Debate Maker?

I was sent to a one-day training workshop to learn a technique called "shared inquiry." What I found was a simple but powerful technique for leading debate. There are three rules in shared inquiry:

1. The discussion leader only asks questions.
2. The students must supply evidence to support their theories.
3. Everyone participates.

As you rethink your role as a leader, you will come to see that your greatest contribution might depend on your ability to ask the right question, not have the right answer.

You are shooting for discussion, dissent, and debate, not a quick decision made by you as the leader

DECISION MAKERS decide efficiently with a small inner circle, but they leave the broader organization in the dark to debate the soundness of the decision instead of executing it. Debate-Makers engage people in debating the issues up front, which leads to sound decisions that people understand and can execute efficiently.

The Practices of the Debate Maker

- Frame the decision
- Spark the debate
- Create safety for best thinking
- Demand rigor
- Drive a sound decision
- Reclarify the decision-making process
- Make the decision
- Communicate the decision and rationale

Unexpected Findings

1. As a leader, you can have a very strong opinion but also facilitate debate that creates room for other people's views. Data is the key.
2. Debate Makers are equally comfortable being the decision maker in the end. They are not only consensus-driven leaders.
3. Rigorous debate doesn't break down a team; it builds the team and makes it stronger.

Multipliers enable others to operate independently by giving other people ownership of results and investing in their success.

The Micromanager Versus the Investor

A leader is someone who helps others lead.

The Three Practices of the Investor. We'll look at each of these three steps in turn:

1. Defining Ownership He could spot smarts in others and gave people a chance to stretch well beyond their current capabilities.
2. Investing Resources
3. Holding People Accountable Investors get involved in other people's work, but they continually give back leadership and accountability; seeing a clear distinction between micromanaging and being involved in the work people are doing. "I give people feedback as guidance rather than an order. He signals that he is interested and engaged, but not the one in charge.

Their ideas are validated and the onus for solving the issue is back with them.

Multipliers have a core belief that people are smart and will figure things out.

Multipliers generate independence in others.

The Diminisher's Approach to Execution

Let's look at the ways in which Diminishers cripple the capability of their people and create dependent organizations.

MAINTAIN OWNERSHIP.

When they delegate, they dole out piecemeal tasks but not real responsibility.

In reality, Eva was a Micromanager who did all the thinking for

her team and hoarded the ownership of the work.

JUMP IN AND OUT. Micromanagers hand over work to others, but they take it back the moment problems arise.

bungee bosses.

TAKE IT BACK.

As a manager, my job was no longer about me. It was my responsibility to manage the work, not do the work.

The cost of the Micromanager is that organizations cannot grow beyond them and struggle to leverage the other intellect inside the organization.

While some CEOs are addicted to praise, this leader is addicted to growing other people.

A Multiplier to his core, he recognized that his greatest value was not in his intelligence but in how he invested his intelligence in others.

MICROMANAGERS manage every detail in a way that creates dependence on the leader and their presence for the organization to perform. **INVESTORS** give other people the investment and ownership they need to produce results independent of the leader.

Practices of the Investor

- Define Ownership
- Name the lead
- Give ownership for the end goal
- Stretch the role to Invest Resources
- Teach and coach
- Provide backup
- Hold People Accountable
- Give it back
- Expect complete work
- Respect natural

1. Multipliers do get involved in the operational details, but they keep the ownership with other people.

2. Multipliers are rated 42 percent higher at delivering world-class results than their Diminisher counterparts.

Unfortunately, the “mama bear” can prevent staff from learning from hardship and taking full accountability.

If the leader continually protects people from danger, they never learn to fend for themselves.

ACCIDENTAL DIMINISHERS are managers who, despite the very best of intentions, have a diminishing impact on the people they lead.

A leader’s responsibility is to inspire others to accomplish the “what,” not to dictate a specific “how.”