

MULTIPLIERS

Multipliers

*How the Best Leaders
Make Everyone Smarter*

LIZ WISEMAN
WITH GREG MCKEOWN



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FOREWORD *by Stephen R. Covey*

I had the opportunity to work with a Multiplier when I was in my early twenties. It profoundly shaped the rest of my life. I had decided to take a break in my education to provide extended volunteer service. The invitation came to go to England. Just four and a half months after my arrival, the president of the organization came to me and said, “I have a new assignment for you. I want you to travel around the country and train local leaders.” I was shocked. Who was I to train leaders in their fifties and sixties? Some of these individuals had been leading twice as long as I had been alive. Sensing my doubt, he simply looked me in the eye and said, “I have great confidence in you. You can do this. I will give you the materials to help you prepare to teach these leaders.” It is hard to overstate the impact this leader had on me. By the time I returned home, I had begun to detect the work I wanted to devote my life to.

His particular ability—to get more out of people than they knew they had to give—fascinated me. I have reflected on this many times, wondering *what he did that got so much from me*. The answer to this question is contained in this book.

Liz Wiseman and her collaborator Greg McKeown have written a book that explores this idea more deeply than anything I have read elsewhere on this subject. And their timing couldn’t be better.

New Demands, Insufficient Resources

At a time when many organizations do not have the luxury of adding or transferring resources to tackle major challenges, they must find the capabilities within their current ranks. The ability to extract and multiply the intelligence that already exists in the organization is red-hot relevant. Across industries and organizations of all kinds, leaders now find themselves in what David Allen has summarized as “new demands, insufficient resources.”

For some forty years I have worked with organizations that were grappling with “new demands, insufficient resources.” I have become convinced that the biggest leadership challenge of our times is not insufficient resources per se, but rather our inability to access the most valuable resources at our disposal.

When I ask in my seminars, “How many of you would agree that the vast majority of the workforce possesses far more capability, creativity, talent, initiative, and resourcefulness than their present jobs allow or even require them to use?” the affirmative response is about 99 percent.

Then I ask a second question: “Who here feels the pressure to produce more from less?” Again, a sea of hands goes up.

When you put those two questions together, you can see the challenge. As stated in this book, indeed, people are often “overworked and underutilized.” 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. Organizations that figure out how to better access this vastly underutilized resource won’t just be more enjoyable places to work; they will outperform their competitors. In this global environment this might well make the difference between companies that make it and those that don’t. And as with so many business challenges, leadership is clearly a critical force for leveraging the full capability of the organization.

The New Idea

Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter represents nothing less than the leadership paradigm necessary for accessing the intelligence and potential of people in organizations everywhere. It unearths and explains why some leaders create genius all around them while other leaders drain intelligence and capability from an organization.

Peter Drucker spoke of what is at stake when he wrote:

The most important, and indeed the truly unique, contribution of management in the 20th century was the fifty-fold increase in the productivity of the manual worker in manufacturing.

The most important contribution management needs to make in the 21st century is similarly to increase the productivity of knowledge work and the knowledge worker.

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.¹

This book explains with great clarity the kinds of leaders who will answer the promise outlined by Drucker and those who will not.

As I read this book, a key insight was that Multipliers are hard-edged managers. There is nothing soft about these leaders. They expect great things from their people and drive them to achieve extraordinary results. Another insight that resonated with me was that people actually get smarter and more capable around Multipliers. That is, people don't just feel smarter; they actually become smarter. They can solve harder problems, adapt more quickly, and take more intelligent action.

People who understand these ideas will be well positioned to make the shift the authors describe from genius (where they may try to be the smartest person in the room) to genius maker (where they use their

intelligence to access and multiply the genius in others). The power of such a shift is difficult to overstate. It is a night-and-day difference.

What I Love About This Book

I admire the work and insight in this book for several reasons.

First, for the journalistic integrity and sheer tenacity required to analyze over 150 executives across the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa. The book is full of rich and vivid examples gathered from all over the world.

Second, for the way this book focuses on just those few things that really differentiate intelligence Multipliers and intelligence Diminishers. This isn't a general book on leadership with all good qualities on one side and all bad qualities on the other. It is more precise than that, identifying and illustrating only the five most differentiated disciplines.

Third, for the book's "range of motion." This book names a phenomenon the way Malcolm Gladwell seems to be able to, but also goes down several layers to provide practical insight into exactly how to lead like a Multiplier.

Fourth, for the way the book seamlessly combines cutting-edge insight with timeless principles. Many books do one or the other. Few do both. This book will relate to your life today and it will connect to your conscience, too.

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown have written a book that is relevant for the entire world. Corporate executives will immediately see its relevance, but so will leaders in education, hospitals, foundations, non-profit organizations, entrepreneurial start-ups, healthcare systems, middle-size businesses and government at the local, state, and national

level. I believe this book is relevant to everyone from first-time managers to world leaders.

This book comes to the world at a time when it is greatly needed, a time of “new demands, insufficient resources” when CFOs and HR directors are surprisingly in synch about the need for an approach that better leverages current resources. The principles in this book will always be true, but in this economic climate they will win in the marketplace of ideas. Their relevance will give them life and attention that is deserved. These are ideas that matter *now*, and as Victor Hugo once said, “There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.”

I have a vision of thousands of leaders discovering they have unintentionally diminished the people around them, and taking steps toward becoming a Multiplier. I have a vision of schools with diminishing cultures being reinvented around Multiplier principles, to the benefit of the whole community. I have a vision of world leaders learning how to better access the intelligence and capability of those they serve, to address some of the world’s toughest challenges.

And so I challenge you to recognize the opportunity that is in your hands. Don’t just read this book; pay the price to really become a Multiplier. Don’t let this become a buzzword in your organization. Use the principles to reinvent your organization toward a true Multiplying culture that gets more out of people than they knew they had to give. Choose to be a Multiplier to people around you, as the president was to me in England all those years ago. I have great confidence in the good that can come from such an approach to leadership in your team and in your entire organization. Just imagine what would happen to our world if every leader on the planet took one step from Diminisher to Multiplier.

It can be done.