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Relational Competencies and Collective Intelligence

There is a powerful phenomena that occurs in a group setting: collective intelligence. Intelligence rises in both individuals and groups, and collective intelligence can be easily defined by groups acting in ways that are intelligent. Just as the “g-factor” measures general intelligence, the “c-factor” measures collective intelligence. This “c-factor” is not a result of the individual intelligence of group members, but is correlated with the “average social sensitivity of group members, the equality in distribution of conversational turn-taking, and the proportion of females in the group.” (Woolley, 2010) The backbone of the modern economy is the group setting, the office, the team. Unlocking the keys to the c-factor will provide us with a way to maximize intelligence and productivity in life-changing ways.

Based on their worldview, people can be grouped into two categories: individual and relational. As shown in the study, “Closing the Gender Gap,” recognizing the differences between the genders is crucial because it enables people to highlight the specific talents of women and men, and utilize them in a way that creates the best outcome. Before continuing, it is important to make a distinction in regards to gender and worldview. Socially sensitive people are relational, which means they think through relationships and possess certain relational competencies. On the contrary, individualistic people are more focused on transactions and data than connections with others. Typically, women tend to be more relational, and men tend to be

more individualistic; this is not always the case, as I, an individualistic female, am a direct counter-example. This distinction is important because it shows that the “ terms ‘relational’ and ‘individualistic’ are not tied to masculine and feminine, allowing for adaptability for both women and men, and a spectrum of gender identity” (Banducci 2017).

The skill set that relational people possess makes most women critical to increasing the collective intelligence of groups. Reading people is a type of literacy, just like reading books, and it requires an analysis of tone, facial expressions, body language, and words. Picking up on non-verbal cues enables people to understand the emotions (such as frustration, satisfaction, or anger) their teammates are experiencing, it turns out that relational women are much more fluent in this language than their male counterparts (Thompson 2015). Proving that something as subjective as the ability to read between the lines exists is a difficult endeavor, but people were ultimately able to prove it. People with higher scores on the “Reading the Mind in the Eyes” test were able to identify complex emotions such as shame or curiosity by looking at photos of eyes. Additionally, groups with these people performed better at tasks ranging from board games to brainstorming. These people were overwhelmingly female, which is a testament to the link between gender, social sensitivity, and successful teams (Engel 2014).

Relational Competencies

Before diving into the ways to maximize collective intelligence throughout teams, it is critical to establish the competencies that relational people bring to the workplace. They easily engage in high context thinking, and they’re able to view larger systems and connect the dots within them. Being able to see how things are connected allows relational people to perceive

future problems and prevent them from happening. This means that they behave as fire-preventers, which is the opposite of individualistic people and their tendency to solve problems as they come along as fire-fighters (Banducci 2006). By approaching the project as a process instead of chasing after a particular goal, relational people are able to work without being solely focused on solving problems. Empathy and high context thinking offer a broader way of examining things from the consumer perspective, which allows them to step into the shoes of the customers and create complicated, satisfying solutions. Technical and relational skills are equally important for production in the workplace, and relational people possess both these characteristics. It is precisely this balance of skills that makes them critical to creating collectively intelligent groups.

In order for a group to perform well, there has to be the correct combination of individual skill and collaborative effort. In order for someone to balance a chemical equation, they would need to know the basics of elements and reactions. A group without much knowledge in chemistry wouldn't be able to correctly solve the problem, no matter how sensitive they were. However, in problems requiring deep thinking and complicated analysis, groups with a high 'c-factor' often perform better than groups with a low 'c-factor.' In the modern age, there is no shortage of highly skilled individuals and no shortage to complicated problems. Creating well-balanced teams that can navigate these issues in intelligent ways while playing off of their individual talents is the most effective solution.

Now what? How to Maximize Potential and Production

There are two scenarios in team-building; the first is when the team members can be changed, and the second is when they cannot.

To create the elusive “ideal team,” one needs to take into account what makes the *smartest group*. Group intelligence has little to do with group satisfaction, cohesion, or motivation, and is not a result of the “g-factor” (Wolley, Malone 2011). The first step in building a team is to make sure that all of the participants are socially sensitive. Selecting people who scored highly on the RME or ToM tests is a good start. The easiest way to create a well functioning team is by adding women. Compared to their male counterparts, women score much higher on both tests, and groups with higher proportions of women perform significantly better on complex problem solving (Wolley 2010). One reason for this is that women make more eye contact than men, in both social and work-related situations. Most of women’s friendships are built face-to-face, as opposed to the men’s shoulder-to-shoulder, and most women make an effort to look people in the eyes during professional situations (Tannen, 2001). This habit may be the reason why women are better at reading the mind through the eyes - they have more practice doing it! The emphasis on connection helps put teammates at ease and make them feel valued.

Women are also more likely to take turns during conversation, which involves listening to others, asking people for their opinions, and creating a culture where people feel safe to share. The inclusive environment created by the connection-based approach relational women have towards professional workplaces is a critical component of creating a smart group. The final step to building the dream team is to add relational people with specific skills. Groups with individualistic people are often less intelligent because the conversation becomes dominated by one person, and there is less room for everyone else. To ensure that the team can successfully

navigate complex issues that require specific skills, it is important to add relational people who are skilled in specific areas (Thompson 2015). For example, if the goal of the team is to create an app, it would be important to have people with strong programming skills. Adding skilled people with relational instincts is the way to go, and could be achieved by bringing on female programmers. Overall, the focus should be on creating a smart group, not a group of smart people.

While the concept of creating a “dream team” is highly appealing, in practice, it might be difficult to change all of the members of the team. Helping existing teams become more socially sensitive would benefit the individual members while increasing output. The first step is to encourage every person to be more aware. Socially sensitive people, particularly women, value eye contact and looking at people when they talk. This can help team members learn more about one another, gain more exposure to reading between the lines, and pay more attention to their peers (Woolley, Malone 2011). This first step shifts the members’ mindset from self-centric to people-centric. Once people have become more conscious, it is important to structure the conversation in a way that maximizes output. Emphasising turn-taking and building upon ideas is a good start. Additionally, it could be useful to ensure that people listen to one another, and think before speaking. Individualistic people can undoubtedly add value to group settings, both in terms of their skill sets and through their interactions with others. Emphasizing social sensitivity will help them utilise both their IQ and EQ, which will be useful in different ways. The key is to ensure that all people transform their own self-interests into the interests of the group, a habit typically adopted by relational leaders (Banducci 2006). Encouraging social sensitivity and

collaboration leads to widespread adoption of the tools and behaviors that relational people use, and creates powerful, intelligent groups.

The Future of Collective Intelligence

The modern society is progressively becoming more intertwined with technology, which is shown through activities for leisure, home systems, and economic production. The future of collective intelligence lies in online communication and incorporating technology.

The tests that predicted social sensitivity were able to measure the collective intelligence of groups that communicated face to face and groups that communicated online. This is particularly fascinating because the online groups only contacted one another through text, and never saw each other in person (Engel et al 2014). The study showed that, even in situations where communication is removed, social sensitivity played a big role in determining the collective intelligence of groups. Online collaboration is objectively more difficult because of the limited communication channels, which makes it harder for teams to produce. Socially sensitive members are even more important in online situations because collaboration is even more difficult, and it's more difficult to create environments that maximize intelligence. As the global economy becomes more interconnected, the amount of production that occurs online is only going to increase. By valuing and promoting people with relational competencies including social sensitivity, we are able to ensure that this maximization of intelligence continues throughout the digital age.

Intelligence can arise in any situation, from an individual person to a democratic nation. It is notable to examine the intelligence that can arise from people and computers working

together. As shown in “Superminds,” computers can use their specialized intelligence to perform time-consuming tasks, while humans can use their general intelligence and creative capabilities to do things technology isn’t capable of. In this situation, the computers can aid by using algorithms to figure out the most efficient sequence of tasks, predicting which person is best suited to the task, or just finding and sorting information in a fraction of the time it would take a person (Malone 2018). Adding IT to human brain-power creates a supermind that is much more technically capable, skilled, and cognitively intelligent than a group of people could ever be. For example, with some machine learning training, computers could predict the next plays in American football games in human prediction markets (Nagar 2011). While the future of technology is both rapidly expanding and increasingly uncertain, it can be sure that collective intelligence will play a big role in fashioning it.

Collective intelligence is the foundation for everything, and maximizing it can lead people to the brink of knowledge. Relational people are a strength, and one of the biggest assets in society. Incorporating these findings and highlighting the skills of relational people will result in better production, collaboration, and intellectual output. The dream team can be built by emphasizing the collective intelligence of the group while including members with the interpersonal skills to tie the group together. The applications of groupthink surpass the limits of human imagination, as there is no limit to what intelligence systems that incorporate both humans and technology can accomplish. Relational people and collective intelligence are brimming with potential, and it is up to us to take advantage of it.

Citations will be added December 2019