

Have You Mastered these Tenets of Leadership Intelligence?

Today's world requires three core components for you to evolve as a leader.

By Magi Graziano

Being an effective leader in today's world is more complicated than in years past. For one thing, those in today's organizations must lead three generations of people, all with different operating contexts and outlooks on what work is all about. For another thing, today's workers expect more than ever before from their workplaces.

Surveys report that today's highly qualified people choose to work for organizations that build strong, inspiring cultures and that monitor and address workplace culture issues. If recruitment and retention of the best people is one your organization's goals, leadership intelligence ought to be another. They go hand in hand.

Your leadership intelligence relies on your ability to grow, learn, and master new ways to lead people. To boost your leadership intelligence, there are three tenets to consider:

1. Self-awareness

Self-awareness begins with the curiosity and courage to hear what works and doesn't work about your leadership and the culture that exists in the organization. Self-awareness is

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the doorway to emotional intelligence and gives you access to real improvement as well as personal and professional development.

Being aware of your negative behaviors isn't enough. You need to take responsibility for the impact of those behaviors. Working to shift those limiting ways of being is where leadership intelligence begins.

2. Executive Brain Function

Optimizing your executive brain function is a secret weapon of leadership intelligence. The prefrontal cortex is where the executive brain operates; it's like the controls in a cockpit. It's the part of your brain where strategic thinking, collaboration, reasoning, and creativity come from.



Recent research shows that you can improve your executive brain function. Doing so will help you prioritize, make decisions, concentrate on your goals, control your impulses, ignore distractions, and coordinate complex behavior.

3. Response Agility

Response agility is the ability to respond in an appropriate, controlled manner – regardless of the turmoil you’re facing. Being agile with response and reaction is key to effective leadership. Response agility takes discipline, awareness, new habit formation, and commitment.

Agility in your response means that you’ve trained yourself to think before reacting. Effective leaders ask themselves, “What is needed now?” Leaders who have a handle on how they respond in stressful situations, and can coach others in this manner, are contributing to a healthy organizational culture. 

Magi Graziano (KeenAlignment.com) is an employee recruitment and engagement expert and author of The Wealth of Talent. With more than 20 years’ experience as a top producer in the recruitment industry, she helps leaders bring transformational thinking to their day-to-day operations.

More on Leadership Intelligence

Take powerful action with these articles (NonprofitWorld.org):

Smart and Fast Are Not Enough: The Need for Better EQ (Vol. 29, No. 1)

Create a Powerful Culture (Vol. 35, No. 2)

Time’s Up! What Do you Really Want? (Vol. 33, No. 2)

Why Your Employees Are Losing Motivation – and What to Do about It (Vol. 29, No. 4)

The Great Generational Shift: How Will It Transform Your Workplace? (Vol. 35, No. 1)

Is It Time for a Time-Out? Take Stock of Your Life (Vol. 31, No. 4)

Risk & Your Brain (Vol. 38, No. 4)

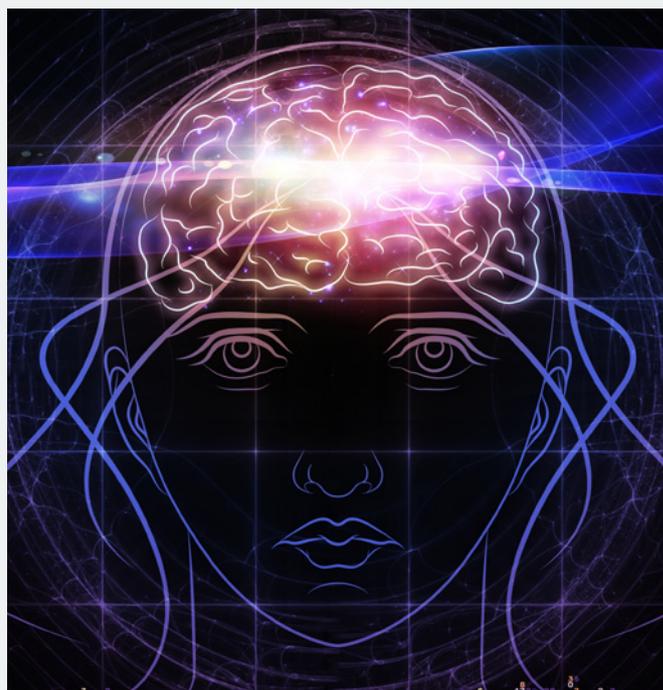
Think, Dream, and Do (Vol. 28, No. 6)

Are You Equipped to Lead in a World of Great Complexity? (Vol. 37, No. 1)

Dealing with Change in a VUCA World (Vol. 37, No. 4)

The High Cost of Employee Turnover – and How to Avoid It (Vol. 31, No. 3)

To Be an Ingenious Leader, Take Charge of Your Learning (Vol. 37, No. 3)



Ways to Strengthen Your Prefrontal Cortex

The following activities (heartmindonline.org) will help you empower your prefrontal cortex:

Create silly sentences, acronyms, and cartoons to help you remember things. These skills call on the executive function to access working memory. When you integrate jokes, riddles, and puns, you learn to think flexibly by shifting between different meanings and associations of words.

Deny the drama. Avoid getting caught up in histrionics, useless gossip, unproductive what-if’s, and theatrical reactions. Drama fires up the amygdala, which gets the prefrontal cortex off its game.

Follow a sleep routine. At the end of the day, choose a pleasant activity that brings your day to a peaceful end. Getting adequate sleep is connected with memory function.

Find ways to express your thanks. Gratitude activities activate the prefrontal cortex.

Play. Make-believe play, in particular, strengthens the executive function.

Be of service and volunteer. The social and mental activity required sends blood rushing to the prefrontal cortex.

Learn to juggle. Learning any new and engaging activity fires off neurons in a positive way. Other activities that require focus and practice such as dancing, circus arts, music, theater, and sports bolster executive function.

Create a positive future story. Optimism is associated with rising levels of dopamine, which engages the brain.