

Multipliers - How the best leaders make everyone smarter

Harper Collins, New York, 2010 (ISBN 978-0-06-219134-2)

By Liz Wiseman with Greg McKeown

'Multipliers' is the collective name for any leaders who bring out the best in people, as opposed to the worst. Rather than at employees, this book is aimed at leaders. Those can be found in corporations, but also in hospitals, education, foundations, and government at any level.

Multipliers, as the table of contents already suggests, are talent magnets, liberators, challengers, debate makers and investors - rather than empire builders, tyrants, know-it-alls, decision makers and micro managers - where the capacity of the members in their team is concerned.

The Multiplier effect can be accomplished by adhering to the Multiplier principles. "Multipliers are leaders who look beyond their own genius and focus their energy on extracting and extending the genius of others", the first chapter states. Investing in this will result in a vastly greater outcome than the investment itself demands. Leaders rooted in the logic of multiplication believe that most people are under-utilised; capability can be leveraged with the right kind of leadership and therein multiplied, rather than diminished - as is often the case - without requiring a bigger investment.

The five disciplines of the multiplier are brilliant in their simplicity: attract and optimise talent, create intensity that requires the best thinking, extend challenges, debate decisions and install ownership and accountability.

Wiseman and McKeown address four practices of the talent magnet: look for talent everywhere, find people's native genius, utilize people at their fullest and remove the blockers. Genius watching is simply a matter of identifying, testing and working it. Plan, do, check and act - where have we read this before (Deming's four-step quality improvement cycle): it all seems to be a matter of quality improvement.

The liberator frees people from oppressive forces within corporate hierarchy. "They create an environment where the best ideas surface and where people do their best work", as is stated in chapter 3. They create space, demand people's best work and generate rapid learning cycles. Just play your chips or put your cards on the table, distinguishing between soft (debatable) and hard (clear) opinions and make your mistakes known. No leader is infallible after all!

The next step in becoming a true multiplier is seeding opportunities, laying down challenges and generating belief: becoming a challenger, in other words. Go extreme with questions - rather than giving orders or making statements; help people see the aims that must be met and taking small steps one at a time. Things like this do not happen overnight, after all.

Engaging and leveraging resources (team members) requires engaging people in a debate. Frame the issue, spark the debate and drive a sound decision that team members can adhere to and will support. Just ask 'the question' or 'posit a theorem', ask each person involved for their input and have them support any opinions with evidence. It is as simple as that!

Invest in achieving any results by defining ownership, investing resources and holding people accountable. Delegate, be clear and challenge people; allow people to experience the natural course of their actions; make an inventory of possible solutions for the problem under

discussion, ways to reach those and proposed contributions towards that from the team. But do not take over again once you have delegated responsibilities!

Becoming a Multiplier takes determination and unwavering awareness. Avoid being a Diminisher by eliminating any obstacles that might interfere with your goals. Rather aspire to become an Accelerator and sustain the momentum by building it up gradually, staying with it for an extended period of time and building a community / creating support.

All this - and practical tools and suggestions - can be found in this book. It is an eye opener for those leaders that have somehow forgotten how to awaken and motivate their teams. It is a guide book for those leaders who need tools to grasp the extend of effective leadership. And it is a reaffirmation for those leaders who already practice challenging forms of leadership. The Multiplier approach combines the four 'traditional' position, person, result and process approaches to leadership.

As such, this book comes highly recommended by both signatory and leadership expert Koos Groenewoud from The Netherlands, who pointed this book out to me.

Ron Brouwer MA, September 4th, 2017

Liz Wiseman is CEO with The Wiseman Group, a centre for research into and development of leadership in Silicon Valley. Greg McKeown is consultant and partner with The Wiseman Group.

Koos Groenewoud is the author of 'Authentieke leiders Echte leiders' (Authentic leaders, Genuine leaders), multiple articles and white papers on leadership and (facility) management related issues, the founding father of the AAA (Triple A) network and a senior manager, having worked within the hospitality industry for most of his professional career; www.aa-tfm.nl.

Ron Brouwer has worked as a teacher of English and German in secondary education, been chief editor with the leading magazine for facility management in The Netherlands and lecturer with the educational facility for facility management with The Hague University of Applied Sciences.