
THE INTELLIGENCES

What This
Moment Needs

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We tend to treat the human side of leadership as one thing, usually labelled emotional intelligence, and then wonder why a leader who is wonderful in one setting struggles in another. There is not one intelligence, there are several, and the real skill is noticing which one a given moment is actually asking for. This is a short tool for doing exactly that.

THE SIX IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

Self. Leading yourself first. Knowing what is going on in you, and choosing your response instead of running on reaction.

Social. Reading and shaping the relationship right in front of you, one person at a time.

Political. Getting things done across a wider system of people and interests you do not control, through sincere and well-judged influence (Ferris et al., 2005).

Organisational. Seeing the whole system, and acting through direction, structure and culture rather than personal intervention.

Collective. Making a group of people think better together than any one of them could alone (Woolley et al., 2010).

Cultural. Working well across genuinely different cultural contexts.

THE EXERCISE

1. Name a situation where you are stuck. Pick one real situation that is frustrating you right now, and write it down in a sentence.
2. Which intelligence is it actually asking for? Read back through the six and notice which one the situation most needs from you in this moment.
3. Which one are you defaulting to? Most of us reach for the intelligence that made us successful in our last role. Name yours. It is usually the one you are most proud of.
4. Notice the gap. If the moment needs political or collective intelligence and you keep bringing self or social, that gap is your work. The good news buried in this is that every one of these can be grown.
5. The half second question. Before your next hard conversation or stuck meeting, pause and ask what this actually needs from me. Then notice how often the honest answer is not the thing you are best at.

You are not short on intelligence. You are reaching for a familiar one when the moment is asking for a different one. Noticing that, honestly, is most of the work.