

What All
Great Leaders Have

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Executive Intelligence
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EXECUTIVE INTELLIGENCE

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"A breakthrough. This book shows what it takes
to be a successful leader in any organization."
—Noel M. Tichy, professor, the Ross School,
University of Michigan, and author of *The Cycle of Leadership*

Q: What is executive intelligence?

A: The particular kind of smarts that is responsible for making exceptional leaders so much better than their peers. These abilities don't make star executives the best athletes, the best spouses, or the best at crossword puzzles, but they are the substance that causes them to be the best executives.

I've found through hundreds of interviews with senior executives, including 30 of the most celebrated CEO's in the world, that there are an identifiable set of cognitive skills or aptitudes that all brilliant leaders have in common. Just as a person's ability in the subject of math is determined by certain cognitive skills, such as arithmetic, multiplication, and spatial reasoning, an individual's aptitude for executive work is also determined by certain cognitive skills.

Q: What are some of the skills that make up Executive Intelligence?

A: Leaders are constantly making decisions on the fly. They must be able to properly define a problem or differentiate high priority issues from secondary concerns. Further, they must be able to anticipate the probable effects of their actions, or recognize underlying agendas and how they might be in conflict with one another. And always, executives must be able to look critically at their own thinking and behavior and make appropriate adjustments. These are some of the specific skills that determine a person's aptitude for executive work.

Q: Why haven't these skills been identified until now?

A: Because if you ask the most successful people what enables them to be so effective, they will inevitably answer in vague generalities. Most tend to be unaware of the specific skills they possess—they act intuitively. If you asked Michael Jordan how he made a particularly spectacular play, he wouldn't be able to offer a step-by-step guide. Like any other great performer, he brought his skills to bear on a situation as it unfolded. But if we were to look at a video tape of his performance we would see things like exceptional quickness, strength, or leaping ability. These are the core aptitudes that made Jordan so much better than his competitors. Similarly, there are core aptitudes that make great business leaders so special. And that's what Executive Intelligence does; it lays bare the core abilities that make great leadership happen and shows how these skills can be measured.

Q: Can Executive Intelligence be taught?

A: Absolutely. Like any skill, with practice Executive Intelligence can be learned and improved upon. However, traditional education and teaching methods are not enough. Research has shown that with specialized instruction people can significantly improve their cognitive skills, including their IQ test scores. This is of profound importance—it means people can actually make themselves smarter. But first they must recognize the specific aptitudes most essential to star leadership so that they can focus their training on those skills.