

## Bringing out the best in your people

By Liz Wiseman, Greg McKeown, Harvard Business Review, May 2010

Some leaders try to come across as the smartest person in the room. They end up stifling the ideas of their teams. Such leaders, whom the authors call the **diminishers** ensure that the creativity and talent of people are underutilized.

In contrast, there are the **multipliers** who care less about flaunting their own intelligence and more about making people feel smart. Multipliers believe that smartness can always be cultivated. The key question for them is not whether a person is smart but rather in what ways the person is smart.

Multipliers bring the right people together in an environment that unleashes their creativity and then stay out of the way. Multipliers take time to understand the natural capabilities of individuals and provide them the right opportunities. Unlike the diminishers, the multipliers create a productive environment, by leaving people free to think, speak and act. They have a high tolerance for failure and understand the importance of learning along the way.

Multipliers know that a new technology or business model can change the course of their industry. So, they push employees to look beyond what they already know. Multipliers ask good questions that force people to find the answers.

Multipliers involve people in decision making. They engage people in upfront discussions about the issues at hand. They give people a chance to consider different possibilities.

Multipliers give people the freedom to execute the tasks. They see themselves as coaches and teachers. Once they delegate a task or a decision, they do not try to take it back.

This article offers two practical steps for becoming a multiplier. By limiting our own comments during a discussion, we can create space for others to contribute. And when we meet people, we must stop worrying about having all the answers. Instead, we must use our knowledge of the business to ask insightful questions that prompt the team members to stop, think and rethink.

When we lead like a multiplier, team members will stretch themselves and become more energized and creative.