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The Power Tool of the Business Jungle©

In many ways, our business environment is no less a jungle than our general existence was 5,000 years ago. In the places of dangerous beasts, treacherous terrain, disease, and enemy tribes, we have highly competitive markets, rapidly changing economies, unethical business people, and torrential downpours of complex and confusing data. In each case, the result is uncertainty, confusion, trepidation, and great overall risk.

Technology and all its accoutrements, in particular, are a major cause of our new jungle environment. Technology is not a bad thing. In fact, I happen to believe it is a very good thing. It represents a meaningful part of the human potential. But we have to recognize all of its dimensions and deal with them. We have to recognize that all these technologies have conspired to overwhelm us with increasing amounts of increasingly complex data, downloaded at faster and faster rates. As a collective practice, business leadership has simply fallen behind the pace of everything else in the world that has been accelerated and complicated by technology. Often we are unable to distinguish useful from useless data. Even if we can, we don't have time to understand what to do with the useful before it quickly becomes useless. We're trying to "drink out of a fire hose." As a result, fear, stress, resistance, lapses in integrity, inability to focus, lack of personal responsibility, absence of creativity, and most importantly, a lack of positive results are the hallmarks of business leadership today.

Just as it was in the jungle 5,000 years ago, every day presents myriad risks. As a leader of a tribe back then, in the absence of the right tools to manage those risks, you would have found yourself in constant crises. And that is where we are today in all sectors – government, political, corporate, religious, social, and even the family.

In the business world, which is where I work, just look – at the mild end of the spectrum - at the number of companies that under-perform and miss their earnings estimates. Their chief executives are not able to grasp what is really going on all around them. Many err in product development and release a product that is either defective or incompatible with what the consumer wants. Many miss what is happening in the competitive landscape and learn too late that a competitor has trumped them. Look at the complete mismanagement of risk that led to the subprime mortgage disaster. Looking at the more extreme end of the spectrum, CEOs are resorting to crime. We know all about Enron, Tyco, WorldCom, Adelphia, and the many scandals relating to the back-dating of stock options. Faced with this high velocity, highly complex world – this jungle - too many CEOs lack the right tools to manage in this environment and are failing – everything from just doing a poor job to committing crimes.

So, what's the solution? Same one used in the jungle 5,000 years ago. It's called intuition. *Intuition* is a powerful tool for acquiring knowledge without the process of rational thought. What is the source of this knowledge? Simply put, the universe. It is everything you have ever experienced or known. In fact, it is everything humankind has experienced or known. Carl Jung, the famous Swiss psychiatrist, conducted extensive studies and concluded that there is a "collective unconscious" that is common to every person. This collective unconscious is essentially a library of human experience into which any of us can tap at any time.

At some point in the millions of years of human evolution, the human brain developed a capacity for intuition. This capacity is in the right side of the brain and inward-focused, whereas our rational, logical capabilities reside in the left side and are outward-focused. Until the last two centuries, we humans relied upon intuition as heavily as we relied upon our other five senses. We were "balanced-brain beings."

During the past two hundred years, however, most people became primarily left-brain beings. As the velocity and complexity of life accelerated, we focused outward. This change was not due to a conscious choice; we were simply been



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overwhelmed by the external world. With very little time to ground ourselves amid the onslaught of external data, we lost confidence in intuition and came to rely disproportionately on rational thinking.

Ironically, the primary cause of intuition's fall—technology and the resulting flood of data pouring into our left brains—is fueling its revival. We are overwhelmed with data. We are not making better decisions than we used to. We are not behaving better. We need to find an anchor in the storm—an anchor that will help us manage the data better and with less stress, an anchor that will make the data more relevant and thus help us make better decisions and behave better, an anchor that will bring us closer to reality, that will ground us and rejuvenate us. That anchor is intuition.

I think of *intuitive cues* as conduits for reality. They include clairsentience (i.e, feeling something in your body), clairvoyance (i.e., seeing something in your mind's eye), clairaudience (i.e., hearing something in your head), and just simply knowing something. They are simply how we receive our "signal" of reality. There is a reality, either outside or within us, that is trying to express itself to us. Our responsibility is to ensure that the channels are open and clear so that the reality can be seen, experienced, and utilized in a positive way.

Intuition should not be used in a vacuum. At least I would never use it alone. My intuitive skills are just not advanced enough—and likely never will be—to depend upon to the exclusion of external data and logical thinking. Conversely, the savvy leader will never ignore it. At a minimum, intuition is a tool to be used in conjunction with all other input in the decision-making process. At certain times, however, intuition can be dominant, including the following:

- When relevant facts are scarce or conflicting;
- When you just can't decide among alternatives;
- When under time pressure; and
- When dealing with human issues (e.g., hiring, firing, staffing, partnering)

Even when not dominant, though, intuition is always powerful fuel for the businessperson of today trying to make positive headway in our high velocity, highly complex existence. In my experience, the best business people are highly intuitive. This intuition enables them to be highly defined as a person, form the optimal vision for the business and organization, and inspire and engage a team to execute that vision.

And what to do if you believe you aren't intuitive? First, change your belief. Everyone has this sixth sense. It's just that some can access it better than others. Second, learn how to access it. Chapter Six of my book, *The Source of Leadership*, has an exercise to assist in the development of intuition. And then go navigate the jungle safely and successfully!

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