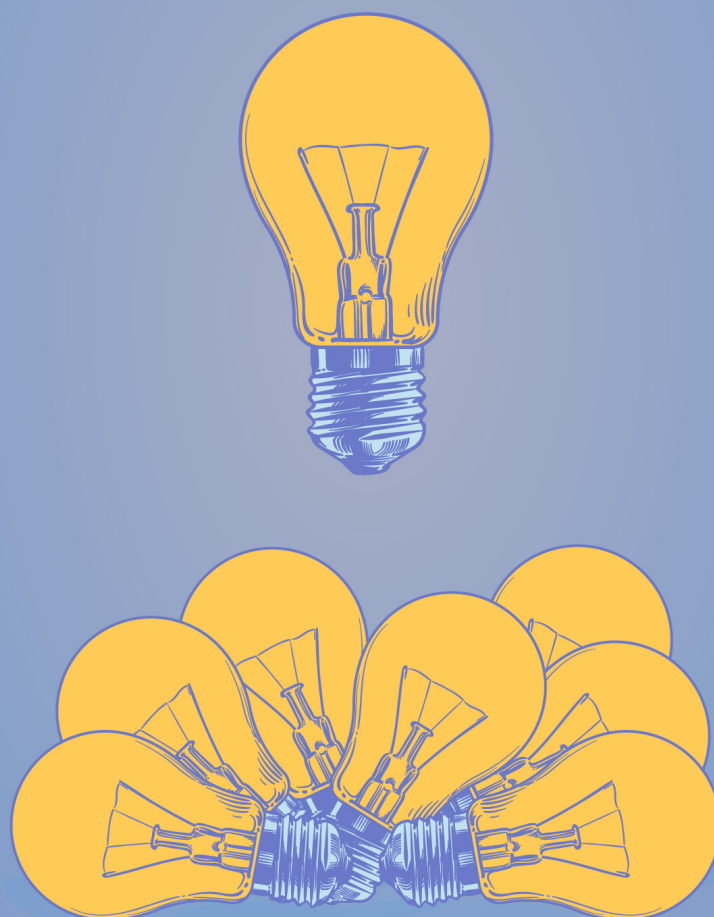


SUMMARY

MULTIPLIERS

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Summary of “Multipliers” by Liz Wiseman

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Multipliers (2010) invites you to explore the two styles of leadership and question which one you want to be.

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Introduction

What type of leader do you really want to be? Think about it for a moment and really be honest with yourself. Do you want to inspire others to learn, grow, and be their best? Or are you really just in it because you love the power offered by a leadership position? If the latter describes you, you're not necessarily a terrible person; we all want to feel like we're being listened to and respected and we all like a little bit of power now and then. But it's important to recognize that the way we approach our leadership opportunities can have a significant impact on others in either a positive or negative way. If you don't want to take my word for it, just think about some of your favorite shows like *The Office*, *Brooklyn Nine Nine*, or *Superstore*, all of which depict horrible employers.

Whether we're making fun of Michael's attempts to turn the office into a playground, mocking the replacement police captain who views his team as nothing more than productivity robots, or laughing at Glen's inability to manage the store, we like these shows because they're relatable. We like them because, in one form or another, we feel like we've worked for these guys before and we like to see them being ridiculed. But imagine if you were the kind of boss people loved to laugh at. Chances are, no one wants that to be their legacy and that's why Wiseman has invested in outlining the difference between Multipliers and Diminishers. So, through the course of this summary, we're going to unpack the core differences that define a "good boss" and a "bad boss" and what you can do if you want to improve.

What Type of Leader Do You Want to Be?

Maybe you've never asked yourself this question, but it's an important starting point when it comes to determining your future. That's because the answer to this question will decide whether your employees are inspired and motivated or have fantasies about getting you alone in a dark alley sometime. (Okay, maybe not literally, but no one likes to think about being hated that much). But unfortunately, that's the emotion that Diminishers overwhelmingly inspire in others. So, let's take a look at the characteristics which define a Diminisher and how we can eradicate them in our own lives.

Put simply, a Diminisher does exactly what the name implies; rather than promoting excellence and encouraging employees to grow, a boss who is a Diminisher will squash all ideas other than their own. Rather than inspiring their employees to shine, a Diminisher concentrates on brazen self-promotion, elevating their own status at the expense of others. For example, even-- or perhaps especially-- if an employee has a great idea, a Diminisher's own insecurities might drive them to shoot this idea down in a meeting or favor their own solution. Although they might not mean to make the employee feel disrespected and insignificant, this is ultimately the effect, especially if it's a consistent pattern. Unsurprisingly, this breeds resentment among employees and it certainly doesn't inspire respect! So, as a result, employees will inevitably start to dread coming to work and they'll lose all motivation to give it their best. After all, why should they when their ideas are consistently discouraged and invalidated? In light of this, you can easily see how Diminishers get their name: it's because their leadership style diminishes the motivation and creativity of everyone around them.

Fortunately, however, Multipliers are the exact opposite! Because they're already at ease in their own skin and confident in their own abilities, Multipliers aren't concerned with self-promotion or getting credit. Instead, their aim is to use their own talents to bring out the best in others. They accomplish this goal by connecting with each member of their team and identifying their goals and strengths. And once they've forged a genuine

relationship with that person, a Multiplier concentrates on using their resources to help another grow. So, if you want to learn how to be a Multiplier, a good starting place might be to ask yourself the question, “How can I inspire somebody today?”

Be a Talent Magnet

We all know what a magnet's job is, right? A magnet's entire purpose in life is to draw other things to itself. So, what if you were the human equivalent of a magnet? It might sound a little weird at first, but that's exactly what the author is suggesting! Because a Multiplier isn't just someone who encourages others, they're actually a Talent Magnet in that they attract talented people. How does it work? Well, it starts by engaging in four key practices that both help you grow as a Multiplier and help you build a solid team. And it starts with looking for talent. Although many people are blinded by traditional ideals which serve as gatekeepers, a great Multiplier understands that these standards are exclusionary at heart and fail to acknowledge nontraditional yet valid forms of talent. So, that might mean recognizing that even if someone doesn't have a college degree, it's possible that their innate skills make them the right person for the job. Likewise, this could mean acknowledging that someone who excels at creating with their hands but struggles in a traditional office job is still talented; they just need to find the right fit for their skills.

Once you've acknowledged the validity of nontraditional forms of talent, the next step is to delve deeper and learn more about that person's skills. Find out what comes naturally to them or what helps them attain their very own flow. Flow is a psychological term for that state we reach when we're doing something that feels so right to us, we don't even have to think about it. It's also usually our greatest passion or talent; it's an activity that's challenging enough to keep us engaged and pleasurable enough to make us excited. So, work closely with your team members and learn what defines that state of flow for each of them. Then work with them to help them strengthen it!

You can do that by diving into the next step: plugging them into an area that best suits their skills. This is vital because it will help you avoid one of the most common mistakes in team building: misallocating talent. Chances are, we've all been there at one time or another-- assigned to a project that doesn't suit our skills at all or watching as someone who struggles with

public speaking is assigned to a speech-heavy leadership role. A great Multiplier knows that that's not only miserable to deal with, it's a waste of talent. And if you take the time to get to know your team members, plugging them into the right roles will be a no-brainer! You can guarantee that this will result in happier employees and more successful projects.

And last but not least, your job as a Multiplier is to get rid of the obstacles that are holding your employees back. Whether that means dealing with some interpersonal conflicts in your department or shifting some roles around so that people can work together in a more harmonious fashion, the three steps we've discussed are only effective if those obstacles are removed. So, make sure you're empowering your team in the most effective way! You can also implement a few more strategies to keep your team happy, healthy, and motivated. Building on the previously mentioned steps, the author recommends praising specific qualities about your employees. For example, once you've identified their talents, tell them about it! We've all experienced the joy of blossoming under a mentor's praise and a great Multiplier knows they can give that gift to others. So, look for ways to encourage your team members.

You can also use this to fine-tune the second step we discussed earlier by putting each person in a role that encourages them to succeed. For example, if you have an employee whose gift is working with people, who loves to chat and network, don't force them into a lonely data entry position; that's obviously not a good fit. And lastly, you can learn to recognize when to set someone free. Let's say you have a great employee and you love them. They're doing awesome work and you never want to let them go. And that sounds great... unless that employee has already hit her limit in her position with you. If she's reached a place in your partnership where she can no longer grow and flourish, she might need a new environment that will help her go above and beyond. Maybe it's simply because of a better job offer or a position that requires her to relocate, but for whatever reason, her time with you is drawing to a natural close. And if

that's the case, your job is to let her go. Because, quite simply, to do anything else is to be the opposite of a Multiplier.

The Worst Kind of Diminisher

But now that we've taken a look at Multipliers and the awesome work they can do, it's time to dig a little deeper and explore the nuances at play in these leadership styles. Because most people aren't simply one or the other; sometimes, you're a natural Multiplier who has some unfortunate Diminishing tendencies that you need to cleanse. And sometimes, you're an automatic Diminisher who leans toward the very worst end of the spectrum. In this chapter, we're going to take a look at that spectrum and how it fluctuates by identifying the very worst kind of Diminisher, quite aptly known as a Tyrant.

We can identify a number of famous Tyrants throughout history-- people like Hitler, Caligula, or Ivan the Terrible-- and it is this cruel and dictatorial behavior we have in mind when we complain that our bosses are tyrannical. But where some employers might simply be overbearing or unwilling to listen, those who fit the true Tyrant stereotype take it to a whole new extreme. Because these are the managers who are relentless in their criticism, who appear to take sadistic delight in berating their employees, and who seem to be devoid of human compassion. They are, understandably, the worst types of people to work for.

Fortunately, however, to every negative aspect of the Diminisher spectrum, there's a multiplier equivalent. And where there are Tyrants, there are also Liberators. These are the super-Multipliers and they don't just pride themselves on helping people to grow-- they actively create an environment in which positive pressure motivates people to bring their A-game and become better than they were before. And the good news is that anyone can become a Liberator! Even if you started out as a Tyrant, you can learn to become the opposite extreme by following these three practices. However, the author reminds us that these strategies are built on the steps we've discussed in the previous chapters, so make sure you've gotten the basics of being a Multiplier under your belt first!

Once you do that, you can focus on becoming a super-Multiplier by first giving people room to work. Now that you've identified your team members' talents and the roles for which they're best suited, it's important to make sure that you're not one of the obstacles holding them back. This can occur-- even unintentionally-- when you get in your employees' way through micromanagement and constant suggestions for improvement that are really just demands to do it your way. It's easy to see how this can build resentment and impede productivity, so just don't do it! Although you can-- and should-- know everything there is to know about each job in your office, don't insult your employees' intelligence by insinuating that you can do their job better. If there are genuine issues, you can discuss them respectfully, but otherwise, show your employees that you trust and value their experience.

Once you've cultivated an atmosphere of respect and growth, you can take that one step further by creating a culture of excellence. This occurs when you focus on encouraging your employees to do their best work by removing the threat of failure. It's effective because, as you probably know from your own work experience, people rarely do their best work when they're motivated by fear. It might drive them to finish a project but it doesn't encourage them to grow or excel. That's because excellence only occurs when you show your employees that failure is not only inevitable, it's okay. If you create a company culture that is defined by the pursuit of excellence, then your team has the freedom to learn, grow, and push boundaries. Instead of being motivated by fear, they'll be inspired to do their best because you've shown them that failure is nothing more than a learning opportunity.

This lesson is closely connected to our third and final step, which involves showing your team that mistakes are okay as long as they help you grow. A lot of new leaders get hung up on this part because they worry that, without pressure, people will grow careless, failing left and right because there are no consequences for doing so. But that doesn't have to be okay. A company culture that prioritizes growth isn't okay with sloppiness or lazy mistakes and it doesn't indulge employees who don't care. Instead, it simply removes

the fear factor by encouraging employees to grow in the knowledge that they won't be punished for honest mistakes which facilitate their learning. To take a look at how this would function in practice, let's consider an example.

Let's say you have a new employee who has never used the type of software necessary for her project before. She's demonstrated that she's passionate, eager, and willing to give it her best; she just needs to learn the ropes. Unfortunately, however, as she's struggling with the new software, she hits the wrong key and deletes every bit of the information she needs to complete the project. Of course, you can easily imagine how scared and devastated she must be as she wonders if she's going to lose her job, if she can get the data back, if everyone will now think she's stupid.

And under these circumstances, a Liberator recognizes all those things and frees her from the weight of that fear. You can do this by showing her that, in a culture which prioritizes excellence without fear of failure, this incident is okay because it was both an honest mistake and a learning opportunity. She didn't mean to delete the data, of course, and now she's learned a little more about the software. She's also definitely learned what not to do again! And that's the value of working in a Liberator's environment. Because this employee will recognize that you could have berated her or fired her on the spot. You could have intentionally made her feel worse. But instead, you chose to help her recognize this as a learning opportunity and give her a chance to grow. And as a result, she will not only be grateful, she will be more motivated to succeed. Doesn't that sound like a pretty great environment to work in?

Final Summary

In life and in leadership, nobody's perfect; nobody gets it right all the time. But some people bring out the best in others and some suppress it. That's why the author categorizes the two main types of leaders as being Multipliers and Diminishers, with nuances on each spectrum that can take you from one extreme-- the super-Multipliers known as Liberators-- to the other, as in the case of Tyrants, which are the very worst type of Diminisher. Fortunately, however, no matter which one you are, there is always room to improve!

You can self-police by checking your ideology against the key Multiplier practices and identifying your weaknesses. If, for example, an honest self-inspection reveals that you have a tendency to relentlessly criticize your employees or shoot down their ideas in favor of your own, you can remember that a Multiplier's main question is, "How can I inspire somebody today?" This will help you realign your mentality with the Multiplier's core values and tap into the key practices of the Talent Magnet and the Liberator. This in turn will help you to curate a company culture that focuses on positive reinforcement and encourages everyone to strive for excellence without fear of failure.



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