“Does developing Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) feature as an important factor in your business development?”

“The next five years will be precarious with high levels of uncertainty, risk, and complexity and we will not see a return to the way things were.” This was the key message from BDO and The Centre for Future Studies in their report “The Transitions” (Feb 2010). Sustainable success they said requires an inventiveness that leads to innovation throughout the organisation.

We are now more than half way through that five year period and one wonders how much progress organisations have made in this respect?

In simple terms the message in the BDO report is that “new thinking” is required. This message has been further reinforced by the CIPD report released 06 November 2013 which states that organisations are paralysed by the pace of change.

Both reports are really just stating what to most folk should be self-evident, but what may be less obvious is that the opportunity to grasp the benefit of natural creativity, and therefore successful change, already exists within every organisation. All that is needed is for management to explore the potential of engaging spiritual (intuitive) intelligence (SQ). This is an intrinsic human facility that in business is rarely acknowledged, recognised or valued. It is though, a facility that can readily be developed and enhanced. Danah Zohar & Ian Marshall describe SQ as the means by which we address and solve problems of meaning and value, and is the necessary foundation for effective functioning of both Rational Intelligence (IQ) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ).

In moving forward Peter Senge in “The Fifth Dimension” (2006) mentioned several factors that remain even more relevant today as at the time of writing, namely the need (1) to recognise Mental Models (identifying and looking beyond existing assumptions), and (2) to Build Shared Vision (one that is heartfelt).

It is important to acknowledge these two aspects are closely inter-twined.

Work by Daniel Goleman and others has increased general awareness of the value of Emotional Intelligence and Emotional Literacy (EQ) in recognising “what works” and “what does not”, what is a “mental vision” rather than one that is “heartfelt” or soulful.

Whilst this is important, IQ and EQ alone are insufficient in creating new models and identifying visions that are beyond current facts, knowledge or experience; to do so requires real insight, in other words the use of SQ. Such awareness is intuitive and inherent in everyone, not just Nobel Prize winners like Einstein, Kekulé, Cary Mullis and John Smith, to name just a few examples of innovative thinkers, all of whom valued this facility. Once acknowledged, intuitive intelligence or insight (SQ) can be developed and enhanced. It does not have to be understood.

Limited outcomes will always result if account is not taken of SQ which is intrinsic in a successful process that (1) eliminates limited beliefs and restrictive assumptions, and (2) increases personal awareness and sensibility.

As Zohar & Marshall commented, SQ is the necessary foundation for effective functioning of both rational (IQ) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ). Not only that, but any successful strategy to encourage and increase innovation will require the presence of “authenticity”
which is a natural outcome of developing (SQ). It is also fundamental in promoting leadership and developing relationships in the work environment.

So the question is “Does developing Spiritual Intelligence (SQ) feature as an important factor in your business development?”

Pete Middleton, MD Senseable Solutions - culture change & business development specialist, and writer.

Reply

Alan Staniforth
Interim HR Director at UKNR [reading approx 1 min – 256 words]

It's doubtful that I'll be mentioning SQ to any of my future clients as an interim HRD, unless of course in their enlightened state they believe it will do more for their stakeholders than IQ and EQ did.

My experience suggests that there is no direct link between natural creativity and successful change. The latter is usually a function of excellent planning, good change leadership and rigorous management of the processes.

It appears from your comments that CIPD seems to be as out of touch with the real world as it's ever been. In the last four years I been involved with some large plcs that have dealt with change very successfully, particularly from a shareholder perspective - far from paralysed.

Spiritual intelligence may be of interest from an academic perspective and worthy of further understanding.

I'm concerned that HR people who fail to understand how their organisations succeed, pick up concepts like SQ, vigorously selling them as the next panacea. This not only annoys operational leaders but undermines the credibility of HR.

Would the HR people in NHS organisations have headed off financial ruin and appalling patient care (in some cases) by promoting SQ rather than effectively establishing strong and effective leadership at every level. Would Blackberry Inc have successfully transitioned to the I phone concept and avoided being sold for a song by engaging with SQ?

Even if BDO/Cof FS predictions are right, many organisations have just what it takes to address uncertainty, risk and complexity - good people. What’s changed?

Pete Middleton reply [reading approx 2.5 minute - 606 words]

Currently organisations of all types are subject to greater demands on fewer resources, in markets in which the geographical boundaries have been largely removed. Pressure to perform is probably greater than ever at a time when the amount of information and choice is increasing exponentially. In these circumstances, the need for quality decisions and the ability to adapt quickly and respond to changing competition is a fundamental requirement if organisations are to not merely survive, but to succeed. To achieve this requires a culture of confidence and trust and there are sufficient studies that suggest this is not a prevailing condition in organisations.

I agree wholeheartedly that managing change requires excellent planning, leadership and rigour, and of course good people. There are excellent established processes available to
assist management. However, there are none that are capable of delivering inspired and creative ideas that are the source of future leading edge developments – those come from inspired thought processes. Such inspiration regrettably is hindered by fear in the workplace and by the ever present conflict between allocation of time and resources to service productivity on one hand and, on the other, to encourage and test new ideas and develop new products.

There is no panacea.

Various aspects of Spiritual Intelligence have been the subject of serious academic research for over 70 years and stood up to systematic Meta-analysis and scrutiny, the results of which are of equal quality to that achieved in research conducted in the Life Sciences such as medicine, biology and psychology. Unfortunately, for obvious reasons there is, and has always been, intransigence amongst academics to put their head above the parapet and challenge established thinking especially in the absence of corporate funding. As a result such research has tended to go unsung and any that has been reported outside of academic circles is generally to be found in minor or obscure journals.

I am not an academic but I do appreciate theory is essential to understanding. What interests me most is the question “can the theory be applied in practice and, if so, how?” Spiritual intelligence is highly relevant in any organisation because it involves, amongst other things, developing intuition, sensing, heightened self-awareness and self-management and recognition of the super-conscious. It is the source of inspiration, of authenticity and is a facility that enables individuals and groups to eliminate inherited limited beliefs and self-doubt that were laid as a foundation in childhood and adolescence by conditions that are now long out of date, and occurred before those individuals had the capacity for independent thought. Those foundations can negatively impact a lifetime. Such limited beliefs are barriers to change and creativity.

Make no mistake - any outcome from developing and using Spiritual Intelligence must be subjected to candid logical scrutiny and result emotionally in positive acceptance. Ideas must work and it actually takes little time to discover if this is the case once the relationship between logic, emotion and, for the sake of simplicity let’s call it intuition, is understood. If there is a lack of congruency between how something feels, (positive) emotion and a logical explanation (however at variance that logic may be to current thinking) then the idea simply does not, and will not work. It is that simple.

Spiritual intelligence can be developed rapidly, at minimum cost and risk and without disruption to ongoing established processes and procedures. However, it will never happen if, in the first instance, the possibility is dismissed out of hand simply because of the lack of personal experience.

I respectfully suggest the ideal approach to the subject is to be highly skeptical, but not dismissive.