

# A TAUTOLOGY OF ANCIENT LEADERSHIP INTELLIGENCE: AN INTERPRETIVE AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

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## Abstract

The main purpose of the article was to look into how business and management could extract from ancient data base of leadership intelligence for solutions. The article cherry picked a few great historical leaders who won wars using their leadership intelligence. An Interpretive auto-ethnography methodology was used and strategic intelligence qualities such as Changing the mood, Boldness of vision, Doing the planning, Leading from the front, Bringing people with you and finally Likeability Factor was explored from these leaders. The results was that all the above mentioned strategic intelligence qualities were quintessential for these historical leaders to achieve their objectives hence business and management today can learn and tap from these qualities for a competitive strategy.

**Keyword:** Leadership Intelligence, Tautology, Interpretive

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## 1 Introduction

According to a 2000 study by Yale University and the Center for Socialization and development-Berlin, “people, unlike animals, gain success not by being aggressive but by being nice. The research found that most successful leaders, from CEOs to PTA presidents, who treated their subordinates with respect and made genuine attempts to be liked. Their approach garnered support and led to greater success.” There is more to intelligence than getting a high score in an aptitude test or solving enigmas others are unable to solve. Intelligence comes in many forms; it’s just not limited to mental capacity. There are other ‘intellectual’ factors perhaps more important at work in a leader’s life. Intelligence is the ability of the mind to comprehend, use thought and reasoning for problem solving – the ability to acquire knowledge and use it practically. The 4 Intelligences of a Leader; they are wisdom, character, social and spiritual intelligence. According to Sternberg, (2003) Wisdom Intelligence is a form of intelligence, needed in today’s world and is having a deep understanding of the reality of people, things, events or situations, resulting in the ability to choose or act accordingly to produce optimum results. On the other hand Webb, (1915) defined character intelligence as pursuing and developing moral excellence, which leads to self-mastery.

For instance, skilled workers using the hammer and chisel crafted ancient statues very methodically and patiently, shaping some of the most renowned pieces of art we admire today. Within time, an onlooker could see a face or an image emerge from the granite rock. This process also happens with

people. During our childhood, we are similar to a marble slab, which, over time, through choice, action and self correction, you and I create the right actions and new outcomes, which form a new character. Social intelligence is a term coined by Daniel Goleman in his best seller bearing the same name. According to Goleman (2006), social intelligence possesses two components. The first component is what he calls social awareness that is what we sense about others. The second is social faculty, which is what we do with that awareness. In other words, social intelligence is how we read others and approach them to gain the best possible connection. The last part of intelligence is spiritual intelligence which is the ability to build and sustain a relationship with God where you attract His unrelenting favor, to the point it begins to overflow into your life. Favor can be defined in many ways. Cicero coined its original meaning; “to show kindness to someone” or a “gift given as a mark of favor (Zohar, 2012).

## 2 Research methodology: an interpretive auto-ethnography

Interpretive auto-ethnography is a narrative research approach that seeks to describe and systematically analyse (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno) (Ellis, Adams and Bochner, 2011) and performance of a person. It is decidedly 'context-conscious' with the researcher positioned at the centre as both a 'subject' performing the investigation and an 'object' of the investigation (Ngunjiri *et al.*, 2010). Autobiographical research uses various empirical sources (life narratives, oral stories, documents - both

official and personal -, diaries, memorials, epistles, videos, photos) and techniques (triangulation of information and in-depth analysis of the sources) (Abrahão, 2008a). This understanding can also be found in Pineau (2010). According to Ellis and Bochner (2006) auto-ethnography is a research method that uses “stories to do the work of analysis and theorizing” (p. 436). Holman Jones (2005) writes that auto-ethnography is “setting a scene, telling a story, weaving intricate connections among life and art, experience and theory, evocation and explanation . . . and then letting go, hoping for readers who will bring the same careful attention to your words in the context of their own lives.

### 3 Likeability factor in the ancient leaders

According to Sanders (2006), the Likeability Factor defines likeability as “an ability to create positive attitudes in other people through the delivery of emotional and physical benefits.” People with high L-factors generate positive feelings in others and, in doing so, improve their own lives. Author Tim Sanders posited that, the more likeable a person is, the better the chance that person has of receiving a positive outcome when faced with decisions that are out of his or her control. Sanders stress four characteristics that are critical to boosting L-factors:

- 1) friendliness, or the ability to communicate liking and openness to others;
- 2) relevance – the capacity to connect with others;
- 3) empathy – the ability to recognize, acknowledge, and experience other people’s feelings; and
- 4) Realness, or integrity and authenticity.

### 3.1 Strategic intelligence qualities

Gifford, J. (2010) summarized the concept of Strategic Intelligence and likeability factor based on studying successful leaders of change. These leaders shared these seven qualities:

1. Changing the Mood
2. Boldness of Vision
3. Doing the Planning
4. Leading from the Front
5. Bringing People with You

### 3.2 Changing the mood

Nelson Mandela changed the mood of South Africa to an extent that seems unbelievable, even with hindsight (Gifford, 2010). For decades, black and white South Africans had been embattled in an increasingly bitter conflict. Nelson Mandela himself was regarded as a violent terrorist leader, in league with foreign powers, determined to overthrow the government of South Africa. To understand Mandela’s achievement it is necessary to remember that during the apartheid

period and the civil unrest that it created, Nelson Mandela was clearly perceived to be a terrorist and a communist, apparently in league with foreign powers, determined to bring down the South African state and install a black communist regime that would be implacably hostile to whites. Mandela’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission took much of the poison out of the bitter recriminations that both sides had stored up against the other, but in a real sense it was simply the personality of Mandela himself that provided the cure; calm, smiling, dignified, inclusive (Mandela, 2008).

### 3.3 Boldness of vision

According to Andrews, (1988), leaders are often judged by the vision that they bring to their organization. A great vision for any organization is simple and, well, bold, but it need not be grand. At this more understandable, more mundane level, it becomes clear that every leader does indeed need a vision. The leaders from history in this section were able to offer their nations a truly momentous vision, a vision that changed the course of history. What is interesting is that they had not been born, as it were, with this vision. They had not been carrying it around, waiting to proclaim it to the right audience. They found themselves in a particular set of circumstances; with a particular set of issues—and suddenly it all became clear. In order to lead their country forward, they were able to articulate what everybody needed to hear.

#### 3.3.1 Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865)

Abraham Lincoln had most, and possibly all, of the qualities that are needed in a great leader ( Hesselbein, & Goldsmith, 2006). He had a sharp and enquiring mind, able to absorb large quantities of information. Helped by his study and practice of the law, he could consider every facet of an argument, and then present a closely-argued narrative that spelled out the most compelling interpretation of the salient facts. He had great mental toughness and physical stamina: he worked hard. He was a good judge of people; he assembled good teams and helped to bring people of differing opinions together so that they would work towards the common goal. When he found a colleague whom he could trust, he gave them considerable freedom of action. As President of the nation, he had a clear and detailed vision of the way in which he wanted that nation to develop, and was able to pursue that vision single-mindedly through the most difficult of imaginable political circumstances: a civil war. If he had delayed pursuing the emancipation issue much longer, the war, and an exhausted nation, might have swung in favor of an independent Confederacy. He gave the nation the vision that it needed at exactly the moment when most people were ready to receive it.

### 3.4 Doing the planning

One of the most underrated accomplishments of any manager is planning. Not in the obvious sense in which planning is one of the key functions of every managerial job specification (many managers' jobs consist of very little else than planning, that is ensuring that a certain result has been delivered by a particular deadline) but rather in planning the broad outline of what it is that you intend to achieve in your current role. It is dauntingly easy to get bogged down in the details of any job. It is dauntingly easy to get bogged down in the details of any job. Sometimes simply keeping things running on a day-to-day basis seems like a pretty big achievement. In fact, that always feels like a pretty big achievement, because it is. But every manager needs also to find the time to plan exactly how they intend to achieve their broader objectives on the timescale that they have allowed themselves. The really great planners are the ones who seem able to hold huge amounts of information in their heads, who never for one moment lose sight of the objectives, or of the precise order in which they should be achieved. As a result, such managers seem to pull off a succession of miraculous successes. They are not, of course, miraculous; they are the product of meticulous planning.

#### 3.4.1 Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821)

Napoleon is known as one of the great military commanders of all time – possibly the greatest (Semmel, 2004). His leadership skills were based on a wide range of personal characteristics and strengths. He had a remarkable memory, able to store and recall huge amounts of information in great detail. He could focus on any issue for very long periods of time without losing concentration; his keen intelligence and his shrewd grasp of the key issues of the day gave him a commanding air of authority. He was personally brave, to the point of a kind of fatalism (“the bullet has not yet been made that has my name on it”); he had the ability to inspire others, and to drive them very hard. He had great breadth of vision; huge self-belief; and considerable personal charm when necessary. Napoleon's agile mind was always turning things over, investigating the options, thinking of alternatives. He had a mind like a filing cabinet, but he also used some important tools to help his memory. He used a system of record books of key governmental and military information, constantly updated by clerks and all presented in precisely the same format. The internal organization of these books could not be changed without Napoleon's agreement; he knew exactly where he could find the information that he wanted. He described his own mind as being like a cabinet, with information stored behind certain doors. If he wanted to think about a certain topic, he opened the relevant drawer in his mind – and there it was. When he wanted to sleep, he closed all of the

doors and he slept. This astonishing mental resource meant that Napoleon was able to plan, not only in broad brush strokes, but in detail. When he conceived of a grand plan, he also supplied the logistics to deliver that plan, down to the last detail. Napoleons astonishing victories owed little to luck (though there is always fortune in battle, both good and bad). His victories – his success in many fields – owed almost everything to his meticulous planning.

### 3.5 Leading from the front

Nothing is more impressive in a manager than to lead from affront. This can take many forms, the most obvious of which is the “traditional tarnished golden rule concept” of not asking anybody else to do what you wouldn't do yourself – of exposing yourself to danger along with your troops (Topel, 1998).. The military analogy is not so far-fetched: it is inspiring when a manager picks up the phone to talk to a key client if there is a problem; when they step in to mediate a dispute; when they stick their neck out to make the case to senior management for the needs of their own team or division; when they take on a difficult interview with the media; when they are seen to be out and about promoting the organization to the outside world.

#### 3.5.1 Horatio Nelson (1758–1805)

Horatio Nelson – Lord Nelson as he became – was an odd-looking, likable, passionate, and intelligent man with many human frailties, including sea-sickness, vanity, and an ill-considered and very public adulterous affair with the wife of the British Envoy to Naples (Knight, 2005). Nelson inspired huge confidence and fanatical loyalty amongst his officers and crew. In July 1797, during the Napoleonic wars, Nelson was leading an attack in small boats on the town of Cadiz, when they were boarded by Spanish defenders. Nelson was at the forefront of the hand-to-hand fighting: his life was saved on two occasions by his coxswain, John Sykes, who parried one sword blow to Nelson's head with his bare arm. “Thank God, sir, you are safe,” said the badly wounded Sykes (Knight, 2005). Nelson was constantly experimenting and innovating. “He possessed the zeal of an enthusiast,” wrote Nelson's second-in-command at Trafalgar, Admiral Collingwood, after Nelson's death, “and everything seemed, as if by enchantment, to prosper under his direction. Nelson is often thought of as being a shining example of a leader who genuinely empowers his team, which he was. In the Mediterranean, with his first fleet, he wrote in a letter home: “Such a gallant set of fellows! Such a band of brothers! My heart swells at the thought of them. By spending time with his “band of brothers” discussing strategies and tactics, outlining possible plans of attack, discussing the enemy's strengths and weaknesses, Nelson brought his fellow captains to the

point where they began to think like him – to the extent that, in a sudden, unplanned engagement, they could be hoped to react exactly as he would himself. Like any great leader, Nelson had much strength. Perhaps his most defining characteristic, one which he demonstrated throughout his career, was his outstanding personal bravery and his habit of leading from the front. Nelson was always in thick of it. He had lost an arm and an eye on separate occasions leading attacks on the enemy on shore. He never asked his crew to do anything that he would not do himself and, as a result, he could be certain that they would follow him.

### **3.6 Bringing people with you**

Bringing people with you is not one skill, but a set of skills. Some managers bring people with them because they are good speakers. They may or may not be good at motivating people face to face, but if you put them on a podium, or behind a microphone, then they are able to inspire an audience to follow them to the ends of the earth. Others achieve the same ends, more painstakingly, through their actions. They keep on doing the right thing, consistently, until people can see the intention that runs through their actions. In the wider context within which an organization works, managers must also try to bring along their various constituencies – customers and suppliers; the local community; the media; the industry – without them having bought into the plan in the same way. These constituencies may be brought with you by a combination of factors, including appeals to self-interest and common interest. They may come with you, but only because there is something in it for them.

#### **3.6.1 George Washington (1732–1799)**

George Washington, the first President of the United States, led the revolutionary army that was to defeat the British Empire, and turned the 13 east-coast colonies – from Massachusetts and New Hampshire in the north to South Carolina and Georgia in the south – into the 13 “United States” of America (Ellis, 2005). A man of commanding personal presence, Washington came to personify the struggle against the British. As commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, as it was known, he fought a dogged war for eight long years, suffering some heavy defeats but also some occasional victories of great psychological significance. Washington seemed to hold his army together by sheer willpower and force of personality. Washington at first declined a salary (\$25,000 per annum) on the grounds that his was a public service that should not be rewarded, but then accepted the salary so that the future presidency should not become a rich man’s preserve. He opposed the idea of party politics. He reluctantly accepted the second term of office to which he was elected in 1792, and then

refused a third, establishing the practice that would become law when the 22nd amendment was passed in 1947.

### **3.7 Making things happen**

One of the most basic things that a manager has to do is to make things happen. As a junior manager, even a middle manager, it will do you no harm at all to be seen rolling up your sleeves and sorting out whatever mess you may have inherited: whether it be completely revamping the training program, overhauling the bonus system.

#### **3.7.1 George S. Patton (1885–1945)**

Patton once said, “‘I don’t want to get any messages saying, ‘I am holding my position.’ We’re not holding a goddamned thing. We are advancing constantly and we are not interested in holding onto anything, except the enemy’s balls. We are going to twist his balls and kick the living shit out of him all of the time. Our basic plan of operation is to advance and to keep on advancing regardless of whether we have to go over, under, or through the enemy. We are going to go through him like crap through a goose; like shit through a tin horn! From time to time there will be some complaints that we are pushing our people too hard. I don’t give a good goddamn about such complaints. I believe in the old and sound rule that an ounce of sweat will save a gallon of blood. The harder we push, the more Germans we will kill. The more Germans we kill, the fewer of our men will be killed. Pushing means fewer casualties. I want you all to remember that” (Forty, 1996). George S. Patton was in command of the US Third Army in the lead-up to the Allied invasion of northern Europe in 1944, as the final effort to defeat Nazi Germany got under way. Patton believed above all things in training and discipline, in being prepared to meet the enemy. “If men do not obey orders in small things, they are incapable of being led in battle. I will have discipline – to do otherwise is to commit murder.”<sup>62</sup> Patton trained his men hard and insisted on tight discipline: sloppiness, lack of alertness, and waiting in foxholes for the enemy to come to you – these were what got you killed.

### **3.8 Creating opportunities**

Creating opportunities is a different skill from that of successful delegation or of genuinely empowering team members. Once the team is empowered, they need chances that they can take, opportunities that they can exploit. A really good manager helps to create these opportunities – and a really well-run team eventually begins to create their own opportunities, which is when the whole thing really begins to take off. We all recognize this in sport. When a team is playing at its best, with every player making the best

use of their individual skills and playing at the top of their game, then opportunities start, as if by magic, to appear. The individual skills of one player create the opportunity for the next player. The cumulative effect of a number of small opportunities suddenly becomes one big opportunity. A coach can set out the general strategy for a team like this, and encourage them to play a certain sort of game, but even the best coach cannot plan for the precise opportunity that will win the game. Opportunities can be created in many ways. Building the right team is essential: highly talented individuals will bring opportunities to a manager's doorstep. Developing a really outstanding marketing idea can do the same thing: suddenly a particular image or a slogan incorporates the organization's goals so well that other things start to fall into place; apparently unrelated bits of activity suddenly make more sense from this new perspective; different departments suddenly come up with new ideas that fit neatly into the new perspective. Entering a new market or entering a market at a particularly well-judged time can do the same thing: suddenly opportunities are falling at a team's feet.

#### 4 Conclusion

Ancient leaders with Strategic Intelligence moved their followers to become willing collaborators. These collaborators tended to feel that they were participating in the creation of their relationship to their work. Erich Fromm (1947) emphasizes the connection between productive work and happiness. Effective leaders provided the opportunity for people to connect their work to their values. To do this they worked with both intellectual and emotional issues, knowledge of both the head and the heart. It took both head and heart to develop a philosophy of leadership and a philosophy of life. In short, it took leadership Intelligence to become a leader who is needed to win.

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