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Book Review of "Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter"

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Multipliers: How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter
By Liz Wiseman, with Greg McKeown

Reviewed by Hannah Salz!

Did you ever have a professor who pushed you beyond what you thought you could do? Or a boss that inspired you to give more than 100 percent? Then you’ve seen a Multiplier in action.

Liz Wiseman, a leadership scholar and instructor, identified two types of leaders: Multipliers (who amplify the ability of people around them) and Diminishers (who drain ability). Because they use their intellect to help their employees shine, rather than to feed their own egos, Multipliers actually get more than 100 percent from their followers.

So, what’s the difference? How does one person become a multiplier, while another becomes a Diminisher? To answer those questions, Wiseman and her research partner Greg McKeown studied over 150 leaders (e.g., managers, teachers, and sports coaches) over four continents. They found that the difference wasn’t so much in action, but in attitude. Multipliers and Diminishers view people, and their relationships with them, in dramatically different lights.

However, Wiseman points out that many national or business cultures encourage being a Diminisher. Micromanaging and constantly having to prove one’s intellect take much more effort than stepping back and letting one’s employees share the workload and responsibility. Thankfully, Wiseman includes an entire chapter on how to become a multiplier. Her greatest piece of advice is to take “the lazy way” (pg 203):

1. Work the extremes. “Bring up your lowest low and take your highest high to the next level.”
2. Start with assumptions. Actions follow attitude, so think like a multiplier and see what happens.
3. Take the 30-day multiplier challenge. Work on one practice for one month, and keep that up for a year.

You don’t have to do it all at once. You can start now and use her advice to become a better leader, a better employee, a better spouse. We can all benefit from a better understanding of what it means to multiply.

To hear Liz Wiseman speak a bit more about being a multiplier, watch videos of her lectures on YouTube.

We’ve all at some point in our life felt largely inadequate. We have all felt that despite our best efforts and intentions, we may not be enough to accomplish the task at hand. I know there are times when I have felt trapped in the throws of mediocrity with little idea how to escape. We have all felt like true underdogs.

This past semester I read a book by Malcolm Gladwell entitled, David and Goliath. This book tells the story of numerous people who were perceived to be underdogs, but instead, found themselves having a competitive advantage.

One such example is particularly poignant for university students. Entitled the “Little Fish Big Pond Theory,” Gladwell relates the story of a young woman who finished at the top of her class in high school, where she developed a passion for science and chemistry. When deciding on a university, she yearned for the distinction of going to an Ivy League school and decided to head to Brown University. For the very first time in her academic career, she was challenged. She shockingly found herself in the bottom quartile of her class. In fact, she became so discouraged that she decided she wasn’t smart enough to study science at Brown, giving up her lifelong passion. Instead, this distraught young woman decided to study something