



# Executive Intelligence: What All Great Leaders Have

By Justin Menkes

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## Executive Intelligence: What All Great Leaders Have By Justin Menkes

The final word on what traits make for highly successful managers—and a detailed explanation of how to identify potential standout performers.

*Executive Intelligence* is about the substance behind great leadership. Inspired by the work of Peter Drucker and Jim Collins, Justin Menkes set out to isolate the qualities that make for the 'right' people. Drawing on his background in psychology and bolstered by interviews with accomplished CEOs, Menkes paints the portrait of the ideal executive.

In a sense, Menkes's work reveals an executive IQ—the cognitive skills necessary in order to excel in senior management positions. Star leaders readily differentiate primary priorities from secondary concerns; they identify flawed assumptions; they anticipate the different needs of various stakeholders and how they might conflict with one another; and they recognise the underlying agendas of individuals in complex exchanges.

Weaving together research, interviews and the results of his own proprietary testing, Menkes exposes one of the great fallacies of corporate life, that hiring and promotion are conducted on a systematic or scientific basis that allows the most accomplished to rise to their levels of optimal responsibility.

Finally, Menkes is a passionate advocate for finding and employing the most talented people, especially those who may have been held back by external assumptions.

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## Executive Intelligence: What All Great Leaders Have By Justin Menkes Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #518911 in eBooks
- Published on: 2009-10-13
- Released on: 2009-10-13
- Format: Kindle eBook

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

The basic premise of Justin Menkes's book is simple: just as math problems require a certain kind of quantitative intelligence, or relationships require the delicacy of emotional intelligence, strong business leadership rests on executive intelligence. Menkes has worked as an organizational consultant for an impressive roster of blue-chip companies--the CEOs of Gillette, Amgen, and Tyco offer their praise on the back cover of *Executive Intelligence*--and his experience shows in this thought-provoking volume. Clearly patterned after Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence*, the seminal book that explained a theory of multiple intelligences which might leave a person highly expert in one area but surprisingly deficient in others, *Executive Intelligence* provides a helpful analysis of the cognitive abilities which define strong leaders.

Menkes starts his book by breaking down the different components of executive intelligence. He argues that conventional behavioral frameworks which try to prescribe rote behaviors fail for leadership coaching, due to the need for customized solutions based on the specific circumstances of each business and leader. Instead, the best executives benefit from critical thinking, which helps them gather, process, and apply information to reach goals and navigate complex situations.

Three key areas of this executive intelligence receive significant attention through the book's 17 chapters. The first centers on tasks, and executives' ability to identify problems, devise solutions, and exercise good judgment in pursuing those solutions. The second area of intelligence is social, and revolves around executives' management of relationships with others. Intriguingly, Menkes does not view the social component of executive intelligence as "charisma", or a "good personality", per se; more important than those qualities, he argues, is the ability to see others' viewpoints, to be able to balance among competing views, and to communicate effectively. The third area of executive intelligence is more inwardly focused on leaders themselves, on their abilities to learn from their mistakes, and to adjust behavior to avoid repeating them. In each of these sections, readers will find a mix of real-world examples from the experiences of Fortune 500 leaders like Gillette's Jim Kilts or AOL's Jon Miller, and more theoretical arguments grounded in review of other management books and business-review articles.

The potential audience for *Executive Intelligence* is large: it includes executives and aspiring executives, of course, but also those who must coach or evaluate leaders, and scholars focused on leadership development. As an addition to the literature on leadership development, following classics like *On Becoming a Leader* and *The 21 Indispensable Qualities of a Leader*, this book will find its way onto many managers' shelves. --  
*Peter Han*

#### From Publishers Weekly

On the heels of bestsellers about emotional intelligence and multiple intelligences have come titles on moral, cultural, social and visual intelligence. Consultant Menkes introduces the concept of *executive intelligence*, which he characterizes as "a blend of critical aptitudes that guide an individual's decision-making process and behavioral path." Menkes collects terrific first-person anecdotes of corporate failure and success, but the stories don't necessarily prove what he wants them to. With 20/20 hindsight, he attributes every setback—whether caused by shortsightedness, venality, stubbornness or simple bad timing—to some CEOs "severe lack of Executive Intelligence." And of course, EI gets credit for every decision that happened to pan out. The book's second half convincingly debunks time-honored techniques for assessing executive acumen

and abilities; researchers, Menkes argues, "have for too long been enamored with attributes, such as personality and style, that are only tangentially related to how well executives actually do their job." But the author's surprisingly skimpy research doesn't clinch his case for replacing traditional hiring practices with EI-focused interviews. And it doesn't help that Menkes is unclear whether EI is ingrained or learned. Are we stuck with the EI we were born with, or is it something we can work on? If the former, why should general readers worry about it? (*Nov.*)

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## Review

Menkes does a great job of dissecting executive intelligence -- the ability to analyze and solve problems in a business environment."

## Users Review

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