

LIVING

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Signposts: brain teaser

Rixt Kuiper

Two years ago, I was on a 16-hour flight from New York to Shanghai, on my way to conduct a two-day leadership programme for a Fortune 50 company. I was to coach a small international team, with members from China, India, Britain and the US. I began reading *A Whole New Mind* by Daniel Pink, which had been recommended by one of my clients, Ravi.

The book explains that "right brainers", people who make effective use of their right hemisphere in addition to their left, have a bright future ahead of them. Pink gives his readers six different ways to develop the right side of their mind. He argues that IQ only accounts for 4 to 10 per cent of career success, a fact supported by the latest research.

This reminded me of a coaching conversation with Ravi, who is senior vice-president of an IT outsourcing company. We had talked about what he had noticed about the market and how this could affect his business. Although he wasn't sure what was going to happen, he did sense that he needed to change his strategy. Ravi prefers logic and facts and doesn't feel comfortable talking about gut feelings.

I asked him: "What would help you make this decision?" He said: "I don't know ... time maybe? If I wait too long I might be too late."

We talked about how to make decisions without having all the facts. "Would time provide the data you are looking for," I asked. "Not all," he replied.

"How much more time do you need?" I asked. "Maybe another month," he said. "OK, let's wait another month and if you still feel

you need to change strategy, then do so," I said.

Within two weeks of our conversation, Ravi e-mailed me. He realised that time was only an excuse and he was afraid to risk being wrong. "I'm letting my mind get in the way of my intuition," he confessed and decided to act on his instincts. Instead of looking for more customers, he decided that his department needed to stay in closer contact with current customers and deliver more diversified services. Because of this slight change in strategy,

the company also needed to market itself differently and he made plans to do so.

Although Ravi thought he was following his intuition, he was actually using his whole mind. He was being self-aware of his fear of failure and was able to regulate that feeling. These components, as well as motivation, empathy and social skills, are part of Emotional Intelligence, or EQ, which, according to psychologist and author

Daniel Goleman, is born in the limbic system of the brain. Ravi also saw the bigger picture, was able to deal with uncertainty and broadened his perspective, which are functions of the right side of the brain. His analytical, logical thinking skills came from his left hemisphere.

Leadership differs from management. A leader needs to have a vision and create a strategy, while the manager implements what leadership has generated. This requires a different set of skills and abilities. Too often managers are being promoted into leadership roles without knowing how to cultivate and express a vision or strategy. A shift from IQ to EQ and from the left to the right part of the mind is needed.

Here are four things you can do to evoke your whole mind:

- Keep notes of your feelings and thoughts during the day, even if they're uncomfortable, because this process increases your self-awareness.
- Pay attention to body language, especially facial expressions, during conversations. It will tell you more about what the other person is communicating, and you'll be able to show empathy.
- Learn to meditate because it will help you to observe and regulate your emotions. You will also more likely see the bigger picture and be less concerned about details.
- Use your time on a plane to reflect and refresh your mind. This is where I have gained new insights on how to best coach my clients.

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