

Analytical Intelligence

By Claus Møller

The three aspects of successful intelligence

To be successfully intelligent is to think well in three different ways: **analytically, creatively** and **practically**.

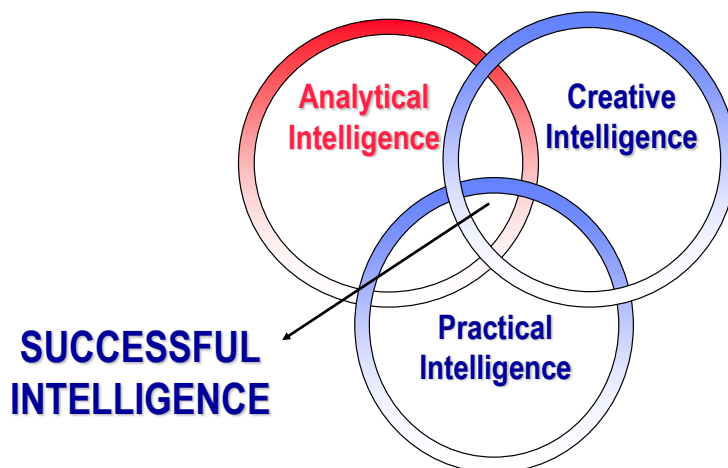
Typically only analytical intelligence is valued in school. However, analytical intelligence in life after school may well be less useful to many of us than creative and practical intelligence.

The three aspects of successful intelligence are related.

Analytical thinking is required to solve problems and to judge the quality of ideas.

Creative intelligence is required to formulate good problems and ideas in the first place.

Practical intelligence is needed to use the ideas and their analysis in an effective way in one's everyday life.



Analytical Intelligence

Analytical Intelligence, the first key element of successful intelligence, involves conscious direction of our mental processes to find a thoughtful solution to a problem. Analytical thinking can be used for different purposes.

In **problem solving**, the goal is to move from a problem situation to a solution, overcoming obstacles along the way. In **decision making**, the goal is to select from among choices or to evaluate opportunities.

Problem solving

Problem solving requires six basic steps, which constitute a cycle. The cycle develops because the solution to one problem usually becomes the basis for the next problem. The six steps in the problem-solving cycle are not always completed in exactly the order described below, although this order is probably the most typical. Moreover, people sometimes return to steps they completed earlier. But in solving a problem, you are likely at some point to pass through all of these steps.

1. Problem recognition

In order to solve a problem, you first need to recognise that you have a problem. This step is in some sense the most important of all, because if you don't recognise the existence of a problem, you are not going to make any effort to solve it.

How do you know when you have a problem? There is no one way. But symptoms indicate that things aren't working as they should: That people, including yourself are uneasy, that techniques that once produced one set of results are now producing another less adequate set of results, that your competitive position is declining, etc.

When people fail to be sensitive to the existence of problems, they wait to take action until it is too late, or a much more radical solution is needed.

Successfully intelligent people don't wait for problems to hit them over the head. They recognise their existence before they get out of hand and begin the process of solving them.

2. Problem definition

Once a problem is recognised, it still needs to be defined. For example, it is common for people to recognise that they have a problem in their relationships but not to be able to define exactly what it is. Or they misdefine it.

The key point is that we must recognise and correctly define the problems we have, or we can waste a lot of time trying to solve problems we don't have. Problems cannot be solved unless they are correctly defined. Normally, the more time we take to figure out exactly what our problem is, the less time it takes to solve it.

Successfully intelligent people define problems correctly and thereby solve those problems that really confront them, rather than extraneous ones. In this way, they avoid the same problems coming back into their lives. They also make the effort to decide which problems are worth solving in the first place and which are not.

3. Formulating a strategy for problem solving

Once a problem is defined, the individual or the group needs to devise a strategy for solving it. This is equally important in private as in business life.

Successfully intelligent people invest significant resources in strategic planning. They think in terms of long-range rather than bottom-line strategies and are more willing to delay gratification.

Successfully intelligent people carefully formulate strategies for problem solving. They focus on long-range planning rather than rushing in and then later having to rethink their strategies.

4. Representing information

How one represents information when solving problems has a substantial effect on whether one is able to solve the problems. It also has a substantial effect on what the ultimate solution is.

Representation of information is important in many life arenas: intimate relationships, business negotiations etc. The correctness of the information is not the only issue. If one side or the other is perceived as the “enemy”, it will be difficult to reach common ground.

Successfully intelligent people represent information about a problem as accurately as possible, with a focus on how they can use that information effectively.

5. Allocating resources

In solving problems, we need to decide what resources we want to allocate to that problem. The decision is an important one, because we almost always have too much to do in the time available to do it.

We all develop strategies in order to save ourselves time. Smart people allocate time in an effective manner, spending just as long as a task is worth. The negative effects of misallocating resources are found all over, from people who overspend their credit cards to governments that build enormous, expensive monuments to their leaders while their people starve.

Successfully intelligent people, like everyone else, will sometimes misallocate resources. The difference is that every once in a while, they step back and consider the results. If they are not getting the results they want, they reallocate their resources.

Successfully intelligent people think carefully about allocating resources, for both the short term and the long term. They consider the risk reward ratios and then choose the allocations that they believe will maximise their return.

6. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring simply means keeping track of our progress during the problem solving process.

Evaluation is our judgment of the quality of our problem-solving process and the solution we have reached. They are the final, analytical steps in problem solving.

Failure to monitor and evaluate the way we solve problems can lead to impractical and even wrong conclusions. Being too wedded to a certain solution and failing to see that problems continue to exist and that better solutions are possible, may be disastrous, in private as well as in business life. It all boils down to what will achieve the desired result – a solution to the problem – and an aspect of successful intelligence is the ability to focus on results.

Successfully intelligent people do not always make the correct decisions, but they monitor and evaluate their decisions and then correct their errors as they discover them.

Decision-making

We make decisions in less than ideal circumstances, given inadequate or incomplete information and using limited objectivity and rationality.

Successfully intelligent people recognise the limits of rationality and are aware of the traps into which they can fall in their thinking. Their solutions and decisions may be either intuitive or reasoned, or a combination of both, but they are seldom guilty of those thought processes that can lead to errors in judgment.