

Creative Intelligence

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By Claus Møller

Executive Summary

Peter Drucker and many with him claim that the key to success for organisations and nations is innovation. Innovation is made of creativity. Creativity is the result of people using their creative intelligence combined with their analytical and practical intelligence.

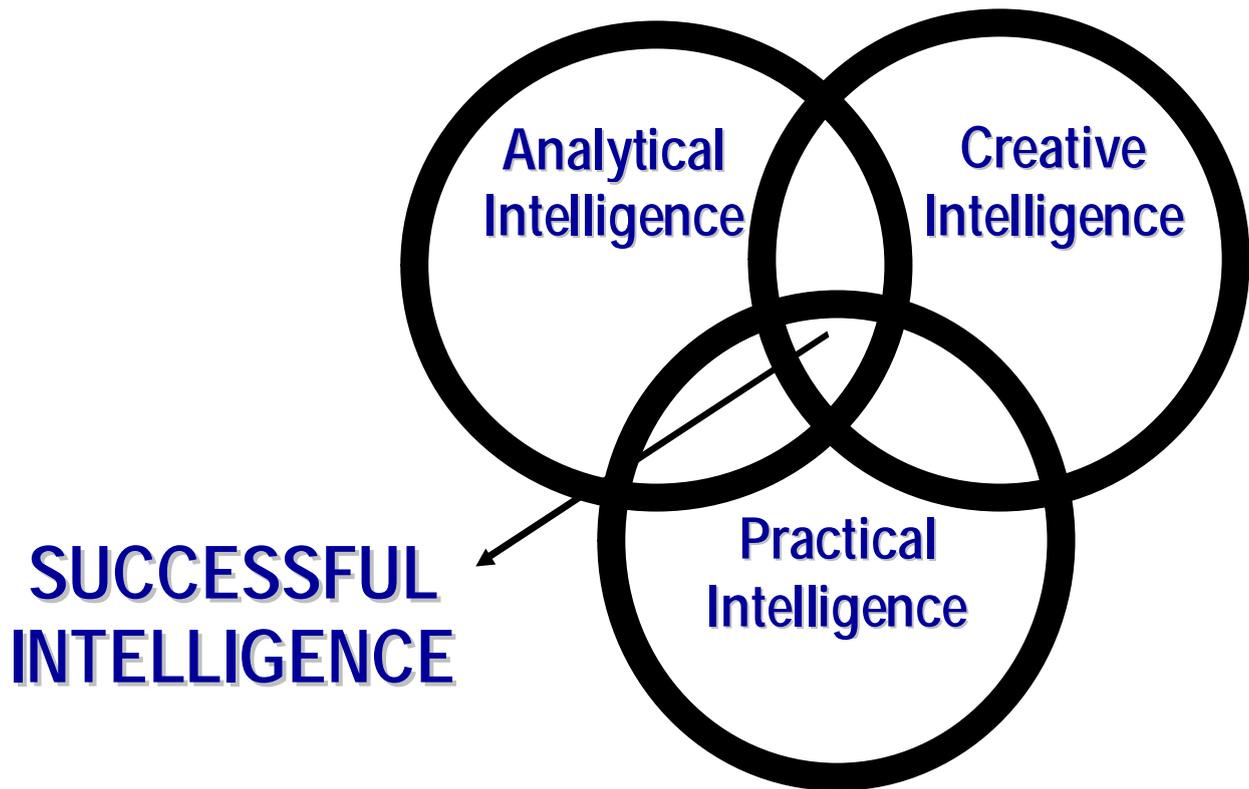
Creative intelligence is the ability to go beyond the existing to create novel and interesting ideas.

*Creative people come up with ideas that are like undervalued stocks, which are generally rejected by the public at large. When creative people propose their ideas, others often view them as counterproductive, bad or even foolish. Creative ideas are often rejected and the person who proposed them is viewed with suspicion and perhaps disdain and derision. Creative ideas are, by definition both novel and valuable, so why are they rejected? Creative ideas are rejected because the creative innovator defies the crowd, standing up to vested interests in a way that makes people who have those interests uncomfortable. This article includes **12 characteristics of creatively successful people** and suggests how innovation and creativity can be encouraged and promoted. It is very unfortunate that we do not do more to encourage and develop creative intelligence. Teachers, parents, and employers want their students, children, or employees to succeed. Our society worships success – but without giving much thought to **how** it was achieved. There can be many contributing factors to success, but creative intelligence is always one of them.*

IQ and “Successful intelligence”

At school we learn the skills required in the “world of facts”. We do not learn how to meet the challenges in the world of emotions or how we become more creative, how we solve problems or how we make better decisions. The School system still focuses on “cognitive intelligence” and aims at developing abilities and skills measured by IQ (intelligence quotient). IQ has little to do with how successful we are in life. IQ is a measurement of “inert intelligence”. Inert means “unable to move or act.... not readily reactive with other elements”. Inert intelligence is what you show when you take an IQ test or a similar test used for university or graduate-school admissions. What counts in real life is applied intelligence that leads to goal-directed movement or action. High scores on tests of inert intelligence don’t guarantee success. People who can recall facts and even reason with them don’t necessarily know how to use them to make a difference.

What really matters in life in accordance with Robert Sternberg is *Successful Intelligence*: “What it takes to live a successful life”. It is the kind of intelligence that matters to everyone in reaching important life goals. To be successfully intelligent is to think well in three different ways: analytically, creatively and practically.



Of these three kinds of intelligence, typically only analytical intelligence (together with linguistic intelligence) is valued in school. However, in life after school creative and practical intelligence may be more useful. The three aspects are related. Analytical intelligence is required to solve problems and to judge the quality of ideas. Creative intelligence is required to formulate good problems and generate 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. Successful intelligence is most effective when it balances the three aspects. It is more important to know **when** and **how** to use the analytical, creative and practical aspects of successful intelligence than just to have them. Successfully intelligent people do not only have abilities – they reflect on when and how to use them.

Creative intelligence

Peter Drucker and many with him claim that the key to success for organisations and nations is *innovation*. Innovation is made of creativity. Creativity is the result of people using their creative intelligence combined with their analytical and practical intelligence.

This article will focus on one of the three aspects of successful intelligence: *Creative intelligence: The ability to go beyond the existing to create novel and interesting ideas.*

Robert Sternberg's "investment theory of creativity"

Creatively smart people are like good investors. They buy low and sell high. Investors deal in the world of financial instruments. Creative people deal in the world of ideas. Creative people come up with ideas that are like undervalued stocks, which are generally rejected by the public at large.

When creative people propose their ideas, others often view them as counterproductive, bad or even foolish. Creative ideas are often rejected and the person who proposed them is viewed with suspicion and perhaps disdain and derision. Creative ideas are, by definition both novel and valuable, so why are they rejected? Creative ideas are rejected because the creative innovator defies the crowd, standing up to vested interests in a way that makes people who have those interests uncomfortable. Most people do not maliciously or even purposely reject creative ideas. They simply do not realise or want to realise that creative ideas represent a valid and often superior alternative to the way they think. Most people tend to see creative individuals as oppositional in nature, a tendency they find annoying or even offensive. In order to promote creativity we need to encourage people to buy low and sell high – to defy the crowd. Creativity is not only a matter of ability. It is also a matter of attitude towards life.

Young children naturally display creativity. In older children and adults creativity is harder to find, not because the potential is missing, but because it has been suppressed by systems of raising and teaching children that encourage intellectual conformity. Children start to suppress their natural creativity both figuratively and literally, they are instructed to draw within the lines and are rewarded to do so.

Characteristics of Creative People

- developing creative intelligens

The following suggestions are based on Robert Sternberg's theories and work and my own experience from working with numerous individuals and organisations all over the world to promote innovation and creativity.

Creatively intelligent people actively seek out role models

The most powerful way of developing creative intelligence in your children, students or employees is to serve as a creative role model yourself. People develop creative intelligence not when you tell them to but when you show them how. When you teach other people how to develop creativity they will probably ask you what exactly to do and how to do it. But this is a bad start. There is no recipe for developing creativity, and if there was it would probably hamper creativity. To encourage creativity you yourself have to be creative.

Creatively intelligent people question assumptions

We all tend to have assumptions about the way things are or should be. Usually such assumptions are widely shared. Creative people question many assumptions that others accept, eventually leading others to question those assumptions as well. When Copernicus suggested that the earth revolves around the sun, the suggestion was viewed as idiotic because for centuries it had been assumed that the sun revolved around the earth. Without creative people questioning assumptions little or no progress would ever be made in any human endeavour. Teachers, parents, and managers should encourage children and employees to question assumptions. In that way they will encourage them to think creatively and express their own ideas about the way things are and should be. Many assumptions are of course valid. Even so, it is important for children and adults to understand why we think and act the way we do. It is probably safe to assume that all creative thinking begins with one question: **Why?**

Creative intelligent people allow mistakes

Schools tend to be unforgiving of mistakes. When children hand in workbooks their errors are often marked with a large and pronounced “X”. When children answer a question incorrectly in class some teachers pounce on them and their classmates snicker. When children go outside the lines in a colouring book, or use the wrong colour they are corrected. In many ways we learn that it’s not all right to make mistakes. As a result we become afraid to err and thus to risk the independent thinking that can lead to the development of creative intelligence. Insisting on “right” answers and the “right” way of doing things encourages conformity, not creativity. Making mistakes is inevitable when you are exploring new territory. Great thinkers make mistakes. But they learn from their mistakes – and enable us to learn from them.

Creatively intelligent people take sensible risks

When you buy low and sell high you always take a risk. Creative people are willing to take that risk. In risk taking, creative people will sometimes fail. We have to let them do so. Creative people take sensible risks – not the risks that endanger life and limb. They are taking the risks involved in exploring new ideas and new ways of doing things. They take the risk of being different. Schools, parents and employers often discourage children and employees to take risks and encourage them to take the safe, narrow road. Only by allowing and encouraging intellectual risk taking can we help others and ourselves to unleash creative potential. We should even reward intellectual risk taking.

Creatively intelligent people seek out tasks that allow for creativity

If schools and organisations want to encourage creativity and the display of creative intelligence, they need to include opportunities for creative thought in their assignments and tests. Creative people realise that tasks may be solved in many different ways and they always experiment to find new and better ways. Successfully intelligent leaders inspire their employees to use their creativity to come up with better solutions. If companies want to encourage creativity and innovation they need to include opportunities for creative thought and reward them.

Creatively intelligent people actively define and redefine problems

By redefining a problem you may find an entirely new and creative way of solving it. By allowing others to choose their way of solving a problem, or choose the projects they want to pursue, you encourage their creative intelligence.

Creatively intelligent people seek and give rewards for creativity

It seems to be a universal truth that **what is rewarded – is done!** If we want people to display creativity and to develop creative intelligence we have to look for and reward quality. We should not only reward people when they think like us – or when they come up with solutions that would normally be expected from them. We should reward people when they come up with new ideas that represent a synthesis between ideas they have heard or read about and their own ways of thinking.

Creatively intelligent people allow time to think creatively

We are a society in a hurry and with less and less patience. We love fast food, we rush from one place to another and we value quickness. To say that a person is quick is one way to say the person is smart, which shows where we place our values. Who would have time to think creatively, even if they were allowed to? Contrary to popular myth, most creative insights don’t happen in a flash. People need time to understand a problem, mull over it and come up with a creative solution. If employers never give their people time to think, the resulting work will not be creative. If we want other people to develop creative thinking skills, they have to be given time to do so.

Creatively intelligent people tolerate ambiguity

In the highly industrial world, as a general rule, we have a low tolerance for ambiguity. Historically, we have always liked things to be delineated in black and white. We like to think that one way of doing it is “right” and another “wrong” or that a certain idea is “good” or “bad”. In the realm of creative work, there is usually a period of time when there are a lot of “greys”. Even when things are worked out, a creative idea, like any other idea, may have its pluses and minuses. The development of a creative idea almost always takes time, and during that time we tend to be uncomfortable and impatient. You want the solution now, when you only have half of it. Without time or ability to tolerate ambiguity you may jump to a non-optimal solution prematurely. Because ambiguity is uncomfortable and anxiety-provoking, people strive to resolve it. To make the most of our creative potential, we need to be able to tolerate the discomfort of an ambiguous situation long enough, so that we produce closest to the best, we are capable of. Creative intelligence includes a tolerance for ambiguity and a willingness to take all the time necessary to come up with good solutions – and make good decisions.

Creatively intelligent people understand the obstacles creative people must face and overcome

Creative people always encounter obstacles since it is in the nature of the enterprise. Creative thinking almost inevitably encounters resistance. The question is not whether creative thinking will encounter resistance but whether the creative thinker will have the fortitude to persevere in the face of it. A lot of creative thinkers disappear. Sooner or later they give up. They decide that being creative isn't worth the effort, especially when they find that creativity is punished rather than rewarded. Truly creative thinkers, who stay the course, and are willing to pay the short term price will in the long term reap the richest award.

Creatively intelligent people are willing to grow

Once a person has a major creative idea, the tendency may be to stop there and spend the rest of the career following up on that idea. It is frightening to contemplate that the next idea may not be as good as the last one, or that the success to which one has become accustomed may disappear with the next idea. Many people who have successfully launched one idea become complacent and stop being creative. Many people become so comfortable with their own expertise that they assume they know all there is to know and stop growing. Complacent people come up with no new ideas and are reluctant to consider new ideas from others. Meanwhile, the world has passed by them. We are all susceptible of becoming victims of our own expertise, entrenched in ways of thinking that may have worked for us in the past but will not necessarily do so in the future. Being creative means, that we are willing to step outside the boxes that we and others have built for ourselves, before we become trapped inside.

Creatively intelligent people recognise the importance of person-environment fit

Creativity is not really a phenomenon that can be evaluated objectively. What is judged as creative is an interaction between a person or persons and the environment in which they work. The very same product that is rewarded as creative in one time or place may be scorned as pedestrian in another. We should all be encouraged to develop our creativity in the areas where we have a contribution to make. We need an environment that lets us capitalise on our strengths. Research shows that people do their most creative work when they love what they do.

Creative intelligence and success

It is very unfortunate that we do not do more to encourage and develop creative intelligence. Teachers, parents, and employers want their students, children, or employees to succeed. Our society worships success – but without giving much thought to **how** it was achieved. There can be many contributing factors to success, but creative intelligence is always one of them.

*As founder of one of the world's leading corporate training and soft consulting companies, **Claus Møller** has 30 years of experience in improving personal and organisational effectiveness. He has been a pioneer in the area of personal, team and organisational quality and service management. He has developed groundbreaking concepts in business like "Time Manager", "Putting People First", "The Human Side of Quality", "Employeeeeship" (what it takes to be a good employee), "Teamship" (what it takes to be a good team), and "Organisational Emotional Intelligence (OEI)". He has written more than ten books on these topics, and his ideas have been implemented by numerous well-known organisations around the world. He is one of the most important business gurus of our times. Based on his specific approach to training and consulting, his avid interest in emotional intelligence was natural and inevitable. Claus Møller has explored how best to describe, monitor and apply emotional intelligence and other kinds of intelligence (analytical, practical and creative intelligence) to improve effectiveness in the corporate setting and on the individual as well as on the organisational level.*