



Stanford eCorner

Diminisher vs. Multiplier

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Liz Wiseman, author of “Rookie Smarts: Why Learning Beats Knowing in the New Game of Work,” compares opposite types of leaders. She says “diminishers” focus on their own intelligence and abilities, squandering the talent around them. Meanwhile, “multipliers” trust, support and empower others, challenging them to stretch their limits.



Transcript

What did your diminisher believe to be true? Could you get inside their head? What were they thinking? Audience Member They knew better. Liz Wiseman That they knew better, which is so easy when you are put - some of you here have had this experience, some of you are soon to have this experience when you get put in your first management role. Why were you put there? Charm, good looks, or is it because you're smart? And it's very easy to conclude I am the smartest one on the team, that's why they put me in charge. Therefore, my job is to tell, micro-manage, interrupt, show a better way. How about your multiplier? What did your multiplier do in contrast? They... Audience Member Supportive. Liz Wiseman They were supportive. They trusted they... Audience Member Listen. Liz Wiseman They listened.

Audience Member Made you feel important. Liz Wiseman They made you feel important. They... Audience Member Asked questions. Liz Wiseman ...they asked questions. Audience Member Got out of our way. Liz Wiseman They got out of the way. They sought help. Audience Member They appreciate it. Liz Wiseman They gave appreciation.

You have all captured what I consider some of the soft empowering sides of these kind of leaders. But we found these leaders, they tend to have a hard edge. My publisher looked at the first version of my manuscript for the book and she wrote back and she said, well, these aren't really cupcakes and kisses kinds of leaders, are they? They are demanding. They have a hard edge. What was on the hard edge of your multiplier leader? They... Audience Member Had high expectations. Liz Wiseman They have high expectations. They... Audience Member Challenged. Liz Wiseman They challenge.

We find that they're challenging their leaders who have become really comfortable asking other people to be uncomfortable. They are the leaders who let you squirm a little bit. They are leaders who, despite the fact that they might be really good hearted people, they let you suffer a bit. Your best professors, suffering around them, or just tons of fun, or a little of both, a little of both. Here's what we found in the research. Diminishers stuck to this belief that no one's going to figure it out without me. They operate from a place of knowledge, their knowledge and certainty. And the things that we found that they do very different, it starts with how they manage talent, they tend to be empire builders. And they love to hire smart people. These people come on to campuses like this and they scoop up the smartest, brightest minds they can.

But there is a danger in this, because what they do with them then? Often these brilliant, brilliant people become like little knick-knacks in grandma's curio cabinet, sort of there to be seen but not well used. And you don't want a job like that. In fact you probably want to shop for a boss, or be a boss, that sees talent very differently. The work environments they create, they tend to be tyrants, not yelling, chair-throwing tyrants, but creating anxiety and stress. They tend to be know-it-alls, decision-makers, micro-managers. Conversely, we find they get less than half of people's capability, and the corporate world is replete with these kinds of leaders. Multipliers on the other hand operate from a belief that people around me are smart and they're

going to figure it out. I hired them smart, and they're probably still smart on week two or month two or year two, and they manage in very different ways. They tend to be talent magnets, liberators, challengers, debate makers, and investors giving ownership and accountability to other people. Again, they are leaders who push people out into this place.

They are leaders who operate from a place of inquiry.