Relational Intelligence

Title: Relational Intelligence: How Leaders can Expand Their Influence Through a New Way of Being Smart

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Book Description:

Relational Intelligence (RI) reminds us that the way we choose to relate to one another determines the quality of our human experience and reveals what we value most. If we took a panoramic view of humanity, we'd discover that human relationships unfortunately are often reduced to a commodity, as if people were buying, selling, and trading relationships for personal benefit. This book challenges leaders to no longer see people as a means to an end but to approach people with relational intelligence.

In this book, thought leader, relational intelligence practitioner, and professor Steve Saccone defines the six roles of a relational genius and why they're essential for the relationally intelligent leader. These life-changing principles can be applied both to church leadership and any other leadership context.

While many leaders want to be relationally intelligent, they struggle to understand what it means and how to implement it. Saccone defines RI in a clear and provocative way: "Relational" in RI means learning to see people as the highest value and conveying that to them. The "Intelligent" part of RI means learning effective interpersonal skills and then applying them in ways that expand influence.

Many leaders long to be influential and missional but, mistakenly, this pursuit is often at the cost of valuing people. When leaders get the relational part right (loving well), and combine it with the intelligence part (applying effective interpersonal skills), their impact will be far- reaching, and even immeasurable.

As a result of becoming relationally intelligent, the world will become not only a smarter place, but a more human one. This is the world Jesus envisions, where love and mission intersect—a world that can only become a reality if we begin to live—and lead with—this new way of being smart.

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Book Quotes:

The way we choose to relate to one another defines the quality of our human experience and reveals what we value most. (4)

Relational Intelligence strives to guide leaders in reprioritizing their emphasis on the quality in their relationships, and in doing so expand their ability to influence others more effectively. (5)

Our ability to forge healthy relationships is increasingly critical to our leadership effectiveness. In the past authority and credibility were build on status, power, or position, but in today's world it's build on relationship and trust. To be relationally intelligent, we must shift from a positional authority mind- set to the crucial leadership mind- set of relational authority. (10)

And just as the global economy is all about money, the human economy is all about relationships. (11)

Because the human economy revolves around relationships, how we choose to spend, invest, and give our lives is of primary importance. Relationships define what it means to be human, which makes them both complicated and fragile. They are the most challenging and complex arena of our lives. They can create enormous amounts of pain, but they can also be the source of indescribable joy. (11)

True spiritual leaders create relational health around them because they know that their influence flows best wherever healthy relationships exist. (15)

It never ceases to amaze me how a meaningful relationship can open a person's heart to new spiritual realities never thought possible. Through something as simple as friendship, a person can make decisions that change the trajectory of an entire life. Intelligent relationships are the key that opens the door to humanity's heart, to true spiritual influence. The relationships we build have a viral effect on humanity and will have a direct impact in our leadership. (17)

When we love people well, we become the proof of God. (19)

Relational intelligence is the ability to learn, understand, and comprehend knowledge as it relates to interpersonal dynamics. (20)

The more relationally intelligent we become, the more we will demonstrate increased love, respect, and trust in every relationship in our lives, which will inevitably elevate our influence. (21)

The more we lack self- awareness, the more potential there is to create a negative environment where we constantly offend people because we don't understand their point of view, or we hurt people's feelings regularly because we lack sensitivity to what they're going through. (27)

When we find the courage to look inside without allowing the filters of self- protection and self- preservation to blind us, it opens up a vista to personal growth that we never thought possible. (31)

The path toward increasing our greatest leadership impact begins with honestly acknowledging our inability to see ourselves clearly. (33)

Six Defining Roles of a Relational Genius: 1. The Story Collector 2. The Energy Carrier 3. The Compelling Relator 4. The Conversational Futurist 5. The Likeable Hero 6. The Disproportionate Investor (53)

1. The Story Collector The path to helping a person feel known involves learning to be a story collector—that is, someone who draws out the story of people's lives with genuine interest. When someone is relationally intelligent, he or she cultivates relationships where people are able to share the most interesting facets of their life story. (55)

To increase our RI, we must learn how to become more interested in others by exploring the story their lives are telling. (56)

Story collectors focus on drawing out the dreams, life history, and personhood of the people in their lives. (58)

Becoming interested in people is not about discovering facts or information about them but exploring what drives their lives, what makes them different from you and me, and what has shaped who they've become. (59)

Making people feel known not only comes through understanding their dreams but also involves exploring the story of their past. (64)

However, the weight of our responsibility is not to draw out every detail of people's past, but rather to identify the most defining moments in their own story. (65)

The path to understanding a person often begins with looking at what fuels the person internally. People's values drive their life choices; what kind of relationships they engage in; where they give time, money, and energy; how they treat people; and even how they wish to be treated. (73)

2. The Energy Carrier

There are two kinds of people in the world: those who are able to read the tone and those who are able to set the tone. It's the difference between being a thermometer that measures the temperature and being a thermostat that sets the temperature. A relational genius has made the shift from being a tone reader to a tone setter. (79)

Relational geniuses know how to identify and harness their internal power to affect outer change. (80)

To be able to shift the undercurrent of a given situation in a better direction, our leadership must have force and strength behind it. Leadership without this component is leadership without influence. (81)

The energy we carry within, and the force of its strength, is determined by how alert we are internally. It is entirely possible to appear highly alert on the outside, while being virtually asleep on the inside. (82)

Leaders can often remain so task- oriented that they disconnect from assessing the energy in the room and therefore miss an opportunity for positive impact with their teams. (94)

If we can see the significance in what appears to be mundane, we can recognize the weight of that meaning at an internal place and then share the power of it with our surrounding environment. (96)

3. The Compelling Relator

People want everything faster, better, and more interesting because people get bored more quickly and easily than ever before. This is the generation we live in. Although this reality is revealed through how we interact with technology. I think the arena of life that's affected most is our relationships. (104)

The simple truth is this: the more interesting we are as people, the more compelling we become as leaders. (107)

In his book Tribes, Seth Godin writes, "Heretics are the new leaders." He isn't emphasizing theological heresy but declaring that leaders must challenge normal patterns of thinking. They must dare to be controversial. Relationally intelligent leaders don't try to please everyone, and they refuse to relinquish what they care about simply to make others happy. As a result, they encounter resistance because the majority of people resist change. (107)

Jesus once said, "Beware when all people speak well of you." If everyone always agrees with you, and if no one ever criticizes you, then you're probably not leading as much as you think. There's no doubt that leaders sometimes create controversy by leading from their convictions. An underlying fear could be what holds you

back. Maybe it's fear or failure. If it's not fear that hinders your willingness to step into controversy, then maybe it's lack of clarity about your values, mission, and convictions. If everyone speaks well of you, you are giving in to the forces around you more than you are allowing the force from within you to emerge from the strength of who you are. (108)

As a leader, you will never maximize your effectiveness unless there are moments when you speak and act in a way that creates necessary and productive tension. (108)

The quest to become a relational genius involves developing this ability to discern when to courageously step into a moment and be boldly controversial. (108- 109)

Daring to be controversial in a mode that is relationally intelligent involves willingness to act or speak for the greater good of others, even if we need to relinquish our grip on harmony and personal comfort or put our fears aside. (112)

Remaining relevant happens in two spheres. First, it involves cultural relevance, which keeps us attuned to the concerns and contests in the world around us. A second sphere comes through interpersonal relevance, which occurs through one- on- one conversation and helps us stay aware of the important issues people face everyday. (114)

Though it is important to discover our own unique voice in how we communicate to others, there is something much more important to the communication process—begin with the other person in mind. (119)

Relational geniuses understand that people have a short attention span, not to mention that they are bombarded with an immense amount of information as they move through life. Relational geniuses know if their ideas are going to survive, they must work diligently and intentionally to capture people's attention. (122)

One common denominator that I've observed with the most interesting people I know is this: they have passion! (122)

In whatever setting, whether you're a leader sharing you're your cause with a group of volunteers, a supervisor to establish new friendships, one thing remains true: the more passionately you care about what you're saying, the more people will desire to listen to you, be around you, and take part in your mission. (123)

4. The Conversational Futurist

Can we step into a time machine and peek into the future awaiting us to help pull others to that future through the vehicle of our words? The answer is a resounding yes. (128)

Conversational futurists realize that every conversation is alive with potential and has the capacity to move forward and create change. They're driven to evolve a dialogue with intention and progress and are able to use their words as a medium to do so. (128)

To become conversational futurists rather than conversational backtrackers, we must improve our ability to formulate our thoughts before we speak. (131)

The most significant way to get ahead of the conversation is to keep one ear to earth and one ear to heaven. By "one ear to earth," I mean listening to whom you're talking to and being engaged on a human- to- human level. And by "one ear to heaven," I mean listening to how and where God is guiding you. (133)

To become conversational futurists, we must learn to listen to the questions people are asking even if they aren't being spoken in question form. (136)

Conversational futurists resist the temptation to simply reaffirm what a person wants to hear. They maintain the courage and wisdom to press into any unhealthy thinking patterns. (138)

Seeing the relationship between cause and effect is like stepping into a time machine and transporting into another person's future. We see the trajectory of where their choices are taking them before they even get there. As we help others see these signs, we develop the ability to move people forward by offering them a perspective on their future. (139)

To become a conversational futurist doesn't require a certain amount of life experience, extraordinary intelligence, or personality type. It simply starts by helping people connect the dots of cause and effect in their lives. It will require courage to share our honest thoughts in a loving way with people whose path we cross. (143)

One final way to become a conversational futurist is to reverse the wrong assumptions of a conversation. (143)

5. The Likeable Hero

Likeability is a fundamental characteristic of relational intelligence, and we tend to underestimate its effect in our leadership endeavors and everyday. (150)

When functioning correctly, likeability is all about serving others and adding enjoyment to a moment or relationship. (152)

In Three signs of Miserable Job, Patrick Lencioni states that two- and- a- half million people quit their job every year; the number one reason for quitting is that the employee does not want to be around his or her manager. (159)

One guiding principle of RI is: the more likeable you are as a leader, the faster people trust you. (162)

Likeable people embody a high yet realistic level of optimism about work, life, and relationships. (165)

6. The Disproportionate Investor

Relationally intelligent leaders see the connection among success influence, and investing their time and relational energy wisely. (169)

Consumers always look for what they can take from others, while investors always look for what they can give to others. (174)

A sure sign of an investor is seen in the people who energize you practically every time you interact with them. They enter relationships looking to give more than they get and to make a positive contribution even if it's just a brief moment. (176)

The core of an investor revolves around their stance toward people, and even their stance toward God. Investors see themselves as stewards of what God has given them, remembering that every relationship is an undeserved gift from God. (179)