

multipliers



By Jim Perry, Vice President Learning Design at BTS

Low-hanging fruit

A common maxim in business is that it is up to seven times more expensive to get a new customer than to retain and grow the ones you already have. The same principle is at work in the market for talent — the least costly, most accessible intelligence to accelerate your business is already present in your people. Advantage thought leader partner BTS has teamed up with Liz Wiseman, author of the bestselling book *Multipliers – How the Best Leaders Make Everyone Smarter*, to create a powerful simulation learning experience that helps leaders access all of the intelligence of their teams.

Are you getting all the intelligence of your employees?

Think about a leader with whom you have done the best work of your life. What did that leader do? Why did they get so much more of your intelligence than other leaders? Liz Wiseman set out to answer the question: “Why are we smarter and more capable around some leaders but not others?” In her research, Wiseman uncovered patterns of behaviors and underlying beliefs that differentiated multiplying leaders, who got the most intelligence from their teams, and diminishing leaders, who often got only half of the reported intelligence from their people.

It is important to distinguish here between intelligence contribution, the subject of the Multipliers research, and general engagement or effort. Many participants report working hard under diminishing leaders, but not in a way that fully leverages their intelligence. Diminishing leaders often engage the hearts and hands of those they lead, just not their head.



Multipliers

- Talent magnets
- Liberators
- Challengers
- Debate makers
- Investors

Diminishers

- Empire builders
- Tyrants
- Know-it-alls
- Decision makers
- Micromanagers

BTS has conducted our own research on the impact of multiplying and diminishing leaders, surveying hundreds of participants across multiple clients and industries, at levels from individual contributors to senior executives and CEOs.

Our results mirror Wiseman's:

- Regardless of industry, level, or role, **participants report an extraordinarily consistent set of behaviors** from the leaders who got the most intelligence from them, and a contrasting set of behaviors from the leaders who tended to inhibit their intelligence contribution. These behaviors are highly aligned to the Multiplier and Diminisher behaviors from Multipliers.
- Multiplying leader behaviors express a belief that **people are smart and can figure things out**. Diminishing leader behaviors express a belief that the team cannot succeed without strong oversight from the leader.
- Participants report that, **under diminishing leaders, they accessed about 45% of their potential intelligence**. Under multiplying leaders, they accessed 96%. An interesting note - many participants have insisted on a value above the 100% scale, as the multiplying leader accessed intelligence the participants were not even aware they possessed.
- Every participant was able to identify **both multiplying and diminishing leaders** in their past and present work environments.

The implications of the Multipliers research are profound. **Diminishing leaders realize less than half of their team's potential intelligence**, which reinforces their belief in the limited abilities of the team. The team picks up on their leader's belief, and the outcome is a vicious cycle of low expectations breeding low performance. Both the diminishing leader and their team thus contribute far less than their potential intelligence to the business.

Multiplying leaders, including those who were formerly diminishers, experience a virtuous cycle of high expectations and empowerment. This leads to team growth, and it reinforces both the leader's and the team's belief that the team members are smart and capable. Participants working under multiplying leaders report:

- High levels of innovation and experimentation.
- Agility and fluidity within the team, confidence and empowerment working across teams (especially in matrixed team environments).
- Small teams outperforming larger teams across a variety of metrics..

The Multipliers Simulation

The good news is that Wiseman's research shows that diminishing leaders can learn to become highly effective Multipliers. Now BTS has teamed up with the Wiseman Group to accelerate that learning through a powerful simulation experience. For 30 years, BTS has used the power of simulation-based learning to help leaders understand their company's strategy, make better



decisions, and create alignment across the organization. A powerful simulation accelerates learning by:

- Immersing participants in a realistic context in which they must solve challenging problems, rich with interdependencies and trade-offs.
- Accelerating and amplifying reality – bringing actions and consequences into sharp relief.
- Challenging participants to learn by doing, with the power of fun, humor, and light competition driving engagement.

The *Multipliers Simulation* reflects BTS' view that leadership is relentlessly contextual — it is more about wisdom than theory. It is about knowing people, knowing the business, and taking powerful actions in the dozens of moments that matter each day.

BTS worked in close collaboration with Liz Wiseman to develop leadership scenarios drawn from her research, rich with real-world challenges such as low performers, matrixed employees, Diminishing bosses, and uncovered genius within the team.



What makes *Multipliers* different?

In the strategy execution work we do at BTS, we are exposed to a lot of leadership solutions. What particularly attracted us to *Multipliers* was that, rather than focusing on an abstract theory of leadership, *Multipliers* is highly practical, leveraging what people reported about their experiences being multiplied and diminished by their leaders. **Wiseman's research has condensed what these employees described into six simple, memorable categories.** Leaders are challenged to start acting like a Multiplier, and at the same time examine their beliefs in key moments.

Consider a typical business moment — a project status meeting, for example. This is a moment where the business of the project must be attended to, but it can be much more. This can be a moment when the leader reinforces the company strategy, when a team member is liberated to try an idea, or when an average performer is challenged to be great. During the simulation, teams of 4-6 leaders work together to analyze the potential of moments like these, uncovering the possibilities in each moment to lead as a Multiplier. The ultimate goal is to drive Business Value, which involves getting the work done while at the same time increasing the intelligence of the team.

The simulation operates at two levels. Teams are competing with each other to produce the most Business Value in the simulated company. At the same time, their interaction as participants around their tables provides a powerful laboratory where they can try out new multiplier behaviors, in the midst of competitive stress and time pressure.

Using practical experiments, participants learn easy techniques to quash diminisher tendencies and create "Multiplier Moments." A full set of easy-to-use experiments is included in the



participant kit. The experiments are designed to help leaders alter their behavior and improve team dynamics.

Throughout the day, participants also work on their own real-world moments. Thinking about their upcoming weeks, they are challenged to “make over” an upcoming moment. In this process, they will:

- List the business imperatives that must happen in the moment — the critical work to be done.
- Anticipate any factors that might lead to diminishing behaviors.
- Identify opportunities for team members to be multiplied in the moment.

Participants leave the session with a plan to begin transforming the moments in their upcoming weeks into multiplying moments. A series of cohort calls using BTS-supplied templates helps participants build new habits and learn from the successes of their peers. Participants also receive the full set of eight Multipliers Experiments to implement back on the job.



Multipliers also uses a distinct and fun vocabulary to describe key concepts. Early in the day, participants are already using the language of becoming a “Multiplier,” avoiding “diminishing others,” becoming a “Liberator,” and catching themselves when they fall into “Accidental Diminisher” tendencies. The catchy language makes the key concepts memorable. **Once a critical mass of leaders has experienced Multipliers, the language becomes viral, establishing new expectations of what great leadership should look like.**

The *Multipliers Simulation*, available now, has proven to be successful for audiences ranging from first-level supervisors up to experienced mid-level leaders.

About BTS

BTS, an Advantage thought leader partner, is a global professional services firm headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden, with some 500 professionals in 32 offices located on six continents. We focus on the people side of strategy working with leaders at all levels to help them make better decisions, convert those decisions to actions and deliver results.

About Advantage Performance Group

Advantage Performance Group is a professional services firm dedicated to providing a continuous stream of creative learning and consulting solutions that equip individuals, teams, and organizations to be the best at what they do. We help leaders lead, sellers sell, and businesses flourish. For more information, please contact us at www.advantageperformance.com.