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Success Intelligence



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Note: Every case history in this book appears with the consent of those
involved. Names have been altered where requested.



To my father



There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired, as a child in school memorises facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says, collecting information from the traditional sciences as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world. You get ranked ahead or behind others in regard to your competence in retaining information. You stroll with this intelligence in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one already completed and preserved inside you. A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness in the centre of the chest. This other intelligence does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid, and it doesn't move from outside to inside through the conduits of plumbing-learning.

This second knowing is a fountainhead from within you moving out.

– Rumi¹

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Prologue

From the unreal lead me to the real.

– Ancient Hindu prayer²

Life is full of moments. One moment after another. Some moments pass by with you barely noticing. Other moments stay with you forever. They change the way you think, you see, you live.

I had a life-changing moment when I was 16 years old. It was a Saturday afternoon, and I was half-walking and half-running down a very busy street in Winchester – the city I grew up in. I was late and was on my way to meet friends outside a record shop. At 4 o'clock. As I hurried along, I noticed a man lying facedown on the pavement. He could have been dead or dying. Everyone saw him. He was in plain view. We all pretended not to see him.

I was going to pass him by. I was late. I was only 16. But something made me stop. I moved cautiously towards him. He was wearing an old, dishevelled coat. His glasses lay next to his head. Tortoiseshell frames. The lenses were smashed. His hair was long and wild. He stank of alcohol. I guessed he was homeless. I pulled at his arm and turned him over. His face was a mass of cuts and bruises. He was barely conscious. He smiled at me.

'Hello, Dad,' I said.

My dad suffered from alcoholism. Which he denied, of course. He had hidden his drinking for years. We didn't see it. One psychiatrist showed us some brain scans. 'Your father has been an alcoholic for most of his adult life,' he said. With hindsight, I remember Dad liked to drink. I also remember he was often very tired. Sometimes he would suddenly look very old. But we were happy, or so I thought. Mum; Dad; my brother, David; and I – 'the Holdens' – all loved each other. Everyone knew that. But none of

us knew that Dad was in so much pain. Silent pain.

My dad's alcoholism became obvious just before my 16th birthday. We started to find empty vodka bottles everywhere – under the car seat, in his sock drawer, and behind the garage. His drinking accelerated and his denial increased. Mum tried to get through to Dad. We all did, but we were on the outside and could not get in. Confrontations, ultimatums, and more denials followed. Eventually Dad moved out. For the last nine years of his life he lived homeless. He slept on park benches, under bridges, in cemeteries, and in low-budget accommodation.

The pain I felt was beyond words. I woke up every day for ten years with a sharp, stabbing ache in my belly. I was having a midlife crisis inside a teenager's body. Most weekends my brother David and I would meet up with Dad. He would phone us on a Thursday or Friday to arrange a time and place. Sometimes he looked dishevelled and beaten up. At other times he was clean-shaven and sharply dressed. Amazingly, even as Dad's alcoholism worsened, he still held senior management positions for investment banks and stock-market companies. The drinking never stopped, though.

My dad's fast demise shocked everyone. Alex Holden was a successful man in most people's eyes. He had enjoyed a rich and varied career with multinational companies such as Hertz and TWA. He had held executive posts in Canada, Africa, Europe, and Britain. He had a family who loved him. He lived in a beautiful village in Hampshire in England. Certainly there had been difficult times, too. He made money and he lost money. He got promoted and he got fired, several times. Some ventures grew and some folded. But he was always well respected and held in high esteem.

So what had happened to my dad? The doctors said it was all due to alcoholism. I think it was something worse than that. The more time I spent with Dad – and also with his new homeless and alcoholic friends who shared their stories with me – the more I understood that he was not ill; he was lost. Somewhere along the road to success he had got lost. He had lost sight of what is real. He had also lost sight of himself. And then the meaninglessness and valuelessness set in, slowly killing him. It can happen to anyone. It happens.

What happened to Dad felt so unreal. It somersaulted me forward into an intense search and enquiry. I still kicked footballs, played guitars, and kissed girls (I tried, at least), but I was mostly preoccupied. I had questions, big questions like ‘What is life for?’ ‘What is success?’ and ‘What is happiness?’ I soon realised that these questions scared the shit out of most people. They did me, too. No wonder we keep so busy. I couldn’t find anyone who was prepared to talk honestly with me. All I really wanted to know was: ‘What’s real?’ No bullshit, just the truth.

One day shortly after finding my dad on the pavement, something strange happened at school. Without any warning we were given a one-hour session of career advice. There was a lot of talk about banking and catering, nursing and journalism, and also training to be a teacher. We soon realised we had been strong-armed into choosing a career – in under one hour. The truth was, I didn’t want a career. My dad had had a career, and look what had happened to him. *Surely there is more to life than just having a career*, I thought.

So at the grand old age of 16 I became a philosopher. Very uncool. But I couldn’t ignore what was happening to my dad. I don’t know if you have ever tried to be a philosopher, but in my experience you don’t get much encouragement. Especially if you’re a shy, confused teenager. My big questions about the purpose of life had no place in a school curriculum stuffed with algebra and chemistry. My questioning probably seemed precocious, but it was sincere. My one refuge was English literature classes, where people like Harold Pinter, George Orwell, and J.D. Salinger were asking the same questions.

For the next nine years, I prayed each night that my dad was safe and sleeping under a roof. My dad’s pain taught me that in a world full of front-page news, fast-tracked careers, designer clothing, and tragic sports results, you have to remember what is real. Success is about seeing the truth in all things. It is about living wisely and knowing what you love. It is being able to discern between true values and neurotic cravings. Most goals that we pursue so feverishly lose all value and meaning when, for exam-

ple, we are diagnosed with cancer or we experience the break-up of a relationship.

My dad's pain, and my own, motivated me to take a highly personal curriculum of learning in psychology and philosophy. I have met so many wonderful teachers along the way. I have received many gifts. This rich journey continues to unfold; it inspires the work I do today in psychology, coaching, and education. I can't help but feel I owe it all to my dad. In this book, I will share with you some of the most relevant parts of this journey and also the most important lessons I have learned about success.

Introducing Success Intelligence

Success Intelligence is, in essence, a collection of stories, insights, and conclusions from my work over the last 20 years. I am probably best known as the director of The Happiness Project, which has pioneered the use of positive psychology in work and life. The Project is based on a model that teaches people how to use their innate intelligence to be more happy and successful. My work on Success Intelligence grew out of my corporate work with The Happiness Project, and it is now a project in its own right.

I've spent thousands of hours coaching people on the psychology of success. As a coach, I often work with business leaders, passionate entrepreneurs, writers and artists, sports professionals, and talented people from all walks of life. These people like to think deeply about success. They are visionaries who want to realise their potential and contribute fully to life. Without breaking any confidences, I will share some of the experience and techniques I use to coach success with these people.

I gave my first talk on Success Intelligence in 1996, which was five years after my father's death. Since then, I have given master classes on Success Intelligence at conferences all over the world. I have also taught Success Intelligence workshops to businesses, governments, schools, hospitals, and charities. Some of my major clients include the BBC, BT, Dove, Marriott Hotels, Sony Corpora-

tion, The Body Shop, Unilever, Virgin Media, and London's Royal National Theatre. In this book I will present the key principles and exercises I teach in my Success Intelligence presentations.

What is Success Intelligence? Simply put, it is about applying wisdom to success. When I first started to study success, I was struck by what I called the 'insanity of success'. I witnessed so many apparently intelligent people chasing after success in the most foolhardy and bird-brained manner. They seemed willing to pay for their cockeyed success with peptic ulcers, broken marriages, and crazy lifestyles. They were manic, hyper, and busy – to the point of distraction. They might have gotten A's for effort, but not for intelligence.

We live in a 'Success Culture', Many people pursue success as a primary goal in life and are often obsessed with it. They judge their entire lives on whether or not they're a success. They secretly attack themselves for not being successful *enough*. But how much success is enough? People crave success because they hope it will deliver salvation from the ego's self-attack. They hope that being able to say 'I've made it' will silence the inner taunts. William James, a modern father of psychology, once referred to 'the moral flabbiness of the bitch-goddess success'. He described the egocentric craving for success as a 'national disease'.³

I decided to use the name 'Success Intelligence' to emphasize the need to think wisely about success. I also chose the name because I wanted to contribute to the important dialogue on intelligence currently taking place in our society. In 1995, Daniel Goleman wrote *Emotional Intelligence*, in which he collated research on a new model of intelligence that included logic and emotions, thoughts and feelings. In 2000, Danah Zohar and Ian Marshall wrote *Spiritual Intelligence*, in which they explored the importance of vision and meaning.

The major challenges we face today require not more effort, but more wisdom. More than ever, we have to rethink the way we work. In business, the new economy is called a 'knowledge economy'. Books like *Intelligent Leadership* by Alan Hooper and John Potter call for more vision and inspiration. We're also being called

to rethink how we relate to each other. Richard Panzer, author of *Relationship Intelligence*, asserts that your 'RQ' influences your success and happiness much more than your IQ. Overall, there is a call for greater wisdom and intelligence.

Success Intelligence challenges you to apply your best thinking to success. The book is divided into seven parts. Part I is called 'Vision' and it asks the question 'What is success?' Common definitions of success include achieving goals, making money, finding love, knowing God, and being happy. What do you say? Part I examines four major blocks to success, which are: the lack of vision in our Manic Society, the chronic busyness of the Busy Generation, the over-efforting in the Hyperactive Workplace, and the inner poverty of our Joyless Economy.

Part II is called 'Potential' and it addresses the psychology of success. Here I explore how self-knowledge can help you discover your strengths, liberate your talent, and enable authentic success. In the chapter entitled 'The Success Contract', I introduce a unique model for releasing inner blocks to success.

Part III is entitled 'Wisdom' and it concentrates on the goals of success. Here I introduce an 'Intelligent Goals System,' which clarifies and strengthens your spiritual and material goals in life. I focus on the power of goals, your criteria for success, the wisdom of happiness, the psychology of money, and the purpose of love.

Part IV is 'Relationships' and it examines the heart of success. Too often our most important relationships are sacrificed in the manic dash for success. In a chapter called 'The Broken Community', I count the cost of the rapid rise of excessive individualism in recent decades. I also unravel four blocks to success: dysfunctional independence, the competition block, thin conversations, and a poor work/life balance.

Part V is entitled 'Courage' and it explores the shadow of success. Here I cover key themes of emotional intelligence, such as handling the fear of failure, recovering from mistakes, and responding positively to setbacks. *Success Intelligence* challenges us to translate the so-called negative experiences of life into lessons for greater success.

Part VI is called ‘Grace’ and it focuses on the spirit of success. Here I introduce the idea of universal intelligence and the ability to be inspired. I examine more blocks to success, such as Destination Addiction, psychological absenteeism, chronic impatience, and personal burnout.

Part VII is called ‘Renaissance’ and it addresses the purpose of success. For me, the true purpose of success is not to gain advantage over others; it is to serve and inspire people. I examine here the spirit of leadership and the challenge ‘to be the difference’. I also introduce FOSI – the Fear of Success Indicator – which explores the most hidden block to success. In the chapter called “A Ph.D. in Happiness”, I highlight the difference between the pursuit of happiness and following your joy. I finish the book on the power of commitment and knowing what to say “Yes” to in life.

I have written *Success Intelligence* in the hope that it will help you be more successful and happy. I’ve met many so-called successful people who have not learned how to enjoy their success. True success should not have to cost you your joy, your health, or your relationships. On the contrary, true success is about enjoying these things. I’m also convinced that practising Success Intelligence helps to make any true personal success into a valuable gift for others. May your success inspire and help us all.

– Robert Holden, Ph.D.