In *Multipliers*, author Liz Wiseman and researcher Greg McKeown tackle the question: How do leaders perceive and use intelligence? For two years, they studied 150 leaders in four continents by interviewing them, assessing them quantitatively (using a survey that addressed 48 leadership practices), and talking to their team members.

### Two Types of Leaders

Wiseman and McKeown concluded that there are two types of leaders: Multipliers and Diminishers. Below are descriptions of each type, as well as outlines of their behaviors for you to emulate (in the case of Multipliers) or avoid (in the case of Diminishers):

#### Type #1: Multipliers

**Multipliers** use their intelligence to bring out the intelligence and ability of everyone else. They do this by assuming that everyone is:

- **Talented.** Multipliers assume that if they can figure out what someone is naturally good at, they can guide this person towards projects and roles in which they can contribute their fullest. Multipliers remove obstacles (such as Diminishers) that are getting in the way of people using their genius.
  
  For example, camp director Marguerite runs a girls’ camp in California. All of the camp counselors are volunteers and Marguerite studies all 59 of them to figure out their genius. Once she figures it out, she tells the counselors what their talent is and how it will make the camp better. Likewise, when she introduces counselors to each other, she mentions their genius, and she publicly praises people when they do good work.

- **Full of ideas.** Multipliers assume that people have to choose to do their best work and come up with good ideas—performance can’t be forcibly squeezed out of them. They encourage people to willingly give their all by creating a safe yet intense atmosphere, expecting the best of people, addressing mistakes (especially their own), and demanding people learn from failures.

  For example, pharmacy manager Quynh Vu once made a small mistake with medication and told her team about it. She also runs a daily meeting in which everyone on duty is invited to share their mistakes or near misses. The meeting serves two purposes: Everyone can learn from the mistakes, and everyone can suggest ways to troubleshoot so they don’t happen again.

- **Knowledgeable.** Multipliers assume everyone can improve if encouraged and challenged. As a result, Multipliers can pursue any project because they believe their team can do anything anyone knows (or learns) how to do, not just things the Multiplier personally knows how to do. Multipliers challenge people to learn and create execution plans, and they convince people that they can achieve what seems impossible.

  For example, the CEO of an electronics company told his management team that he wanted to become the top company in the market. Then, he asked them, as well as founding family members, key executives, and consultants, to figure out how to do that.

- **Capable of making decisions.** Multipliers assume that two (and more) heads are better than one and consult as many voices as possible when making important decisions. They explain the debate’s question and why it’s important, prepare debaters, monitor the debate, and are clear about the decision-making workflow.

  For example, Allison tells her team exactly who will make a decision and by when. This lets people know that their work in the debate will be used.

- **Independent.** Multipliers assume people are intelligent enough to figure things out without them. They coach, help people learn, and provide resources and support, but they leave accountability with the team and never take over.

  For example, when Stacey and Jim were working with students to organize a theology showcase, they outlined the task and available resources. The students had ideas but kept turning to Stacey and Jim for approval. Stacey and Jim left the room to emphasize that the students were in charge. When they returned, the students had taken ownership and come up with great ideas.

**Multipliers access 70-100% of their team members’ capabilities** because their assumptions push and inspire their team members to contribute as much as they possibly can, including their discretionary energy and effort (energy and effort beyond what’s strictly required to do their job). (In comparison, on average, managers access 66% of their people’s capability.)
Additionally, Multipliers can actually grow people's intelligence. In surveys, some people reported giving more than 100%—which they had to increase their intelligence to do—when working with Multipliers.

**Type #2: Diminishers**

**Diminishers rely on their own intelligence.** They assume that most people aren't very smart or capable and need a leader's help to get anything done. They assume that most people are:

- **Untalented.** Because Diminishers assume people need their direction to get anything done, they don't use or develop talent. Instead, they collect it, slot it into an organizational chart, and use it to make themselves look good.
  - For example, an Intel Diminisher divisional manager hired intelligent people to make his department appear strong, but he ignored everyone else's opinion and didn't let anyone use their intelligence.

- **Full of bad ideas.** Diminishers assume that they're the only ones with good ideas and as a result, they're disinterested in other people's ideas and demand people follow theirs. They're judgemental and assume they can increase performance and generate good ideas in their team by creating stressful, critical, high-pressure environments. (In fact, this kind of environment stifles performance—team members spend all their energy trying to avoid upsetting them, instead of directing this energy towards their work.)
  - For example, when chief marketing officer Garth is in a meeting, he dominates. When new staff start, everyone warns them that the first thing they have to learn is how to tiptoe around...

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Here's a preview of the rest of Shortform's Multipliers summary:

**Multipliers Summary Part 1: Multipliers and Diminishers | Chapter 1: Backgrounder**

In *Multipliers*, author Liz Wiseman and researcher Greg McKeown tackle the question: How do leaders perceive and use intelligence? For two years, they studied 150 leaders in four continents by interviewing them, assessing them quantitatively (using a survey that addressed 48 leadership practices), and talking to their team members.

Wiseman and McKeown concluded that there are two types of leaders:

1. **Multipliers**, who access and grow the intelligence of everyone around them
2. **Diminishers**, who discourage people from using their intelligence and drain them

In this summary we'll cover:

- The assumptions of Multipliers and Diminishers
- The five disciplines that Multipliers and Diminishers approach differently
- How to survive working with a Diminisher
- How to create a Multiplier culture

**Shortform Note**

*Multipliers* was first published in 2010. This summary is of the 2017 revised and updated edition, which includes new examples, an expanded FAQ, and workouts.

*Multipliers* was originally organized in nine chapters and five appendices. We've reorganized the chapter order to be more coherent and logical. As a reference, here's a mapping of our...

Try Shortform for free
There are some key differences between Multipliers and Diminishers.

Who do you know who might be a Multiplier? Why would you characterize them as such? (Consider their assumptions, traits, whether they subscribe to addition or multiplication, and how much they get out of their people.)

What Our Readers Say

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Multipliers Summary Chapter 2: Moving Towards Multiplication

Now that you've learned about all the advantages of multiplication and the disadvantages of diminishment, the question is: Can you become a Multiplier? The answer is a resounding yes. Multiplier and Diminisher aren't either-or identities; they're two extremes on a continuum. Most leaders fall somewhere in between and can move in either direction, and even the strongest Diminisher can change.

To become a Multiplier, you'll have to adopt certain behaviors, which we'll discuss in the next part. However, before discussing these behaviors, it's important to note that you'll learn them much faster if you make a conscious effort to change and employ the following five accelerators:

Accelerator #1: Change Your Assumptions

To become a Multiplier, you can't just find a Multiplier and copy what they do. Instead, you have to start thinking like a Multiplier and adopt the assumptions that people are intelligent, capable, and have the potential to improve. This is for two reasons:

1. Behavior stems from assumptions. Conscious assumptions are stored in the same part of the brain that stores unconscious habits.
2. Assumptions are self-fulfilling prophecies. If you...

Multipliers Summary Part 2: Multiplier Disciplines | Chapter 3: Discipline A—Talent

In Part 1, we learned that it's both possible and desirable to become a Multiplier. In Part 2, we'll learn how to do this by studying and learning the practices of Multipliers and Diminishers.

Interestingly, Multipliers and Diminishers do many of the same things—both hire intelligent people, are customer-driven, and are business-savvy. However, there are five key areas in which they differ. We'll cover the first—talent—in this chapter, and the others in subsequent chapters.

(Many of the practices in this and subsequent chapters have workouts associated with them. While doing the workouts, consider:

- **Opportune moments.** When and where could you try the workout?
- **Effect.** In what situation would the workout have the most impact?
- **Analysis.** What are the results and what factors caused them?
- **Application.** How and where can you use the skills you developed?)

Multipliers and Diminishers initially handle talent in the same way—both of them try to attract the best and brightest. After hiring people, however, their approaches differ significantly.

Talent Multipliers
**Talent Multipliers assume that if they can figure out what someone is naturally...

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Multipliers Summary Chapter 4: Discipline B—Ideas

Like their handling of talent, Multipliers and Diminishers have some common ground when it comes to ideas—both of them expect people to make mistakes. However, they respond to these mistakes very differently. Diminishers come down hard on whoever fails and shut down their ideas.

Multipliers, on the other hand, know that the best ideas come from learning, and the only way to learn is to make mistakes and fail. Therefore, they encourage people to come up with new ideas and avenues by creating an intense atmosphere, and they encourage people to explore these ideas by creating a safe atmosphere in which it's okay to fail.

Idea Multipliers

Idea Multipliers assume that people have to choose to do their best work and come up with good ideas—performance can't be forcibly squeezed out of them. They encourage people to willingly give their all by creating a safe yet intense atmosphere using the practices below. (Safety and intensity may seem contradictory, but in fact, it's possible and necessary to implement both to create an environment in which ideas multiply.)

Three Practices of Idea Multipliers

Practice #1: Give People Space and Maintain That...

Multipliers Summary Chapter 5: Discipline C—Knowledge

Unlike their handling of talent and ideas, there's no overlap between Multipliers and Diminishers when it comes to knowledge—their assumptions and approaches are opposites.

Knowledge Multipliers

Knowledge Multipliers set challenges to encourage people to increase their intelligence and ability. Multipliers can set any challenge they like because they believe their team can do anything anyone knows (or can learn) how to do, not just things the Multiplier personally knows how to do.

Three Practices of Knowledge Multipliers

Practice #1: Spark Direction

Even if a Multiplier knows exactly what an organization's direction should be, they don't tell their team. Instead, they point them in the right direction and let them develop this knowledge for themselves. They:

1. Offer people the chance to pinpoint the problem or challenge. When people identify a problem on their own, they understand it better and are more motivated to solve it.

   - For example, Irene of the Bennion Center, which encourages college students to do community service, takes her students into the inner city so they can see what the community might need. The students talk to...
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Multipliers Summary Chapter 6: Discipline D—Decision-Making

Like their approach to knowledge, Multipliers and Diminishers have opposing approaches to decision-making.

Decision-Making Multipliers

Decision-making Multipliers assume that two (and more) heads are better than one and consult as many voices as possible when making important decisions. (They know that not everything needs to be debated, but the highest-stakes issues do.)

In addition to leveraging intelligence, encouraging debate has additional advantages:

- **The shift from decision to execution moves smoothly.** Because everyone was involved in the making of a decision, they understand the plan, the reasoning behind it, and the next steps, so there’s no confusion.
- **Debates reinforce the other disciplines.** Debates encourage people to come up with ideas, learn from others, and use their genius by finding a way to apply it to a particular question.

Three Practices of Decision-Making Multipliers

**Practice #1: Prepare in Advance for the Debate**

To facilitate a productive debate on a pressing issue, the leader must establish parameters. They:

1. **Articulate the question.** Multipliers choose a question, not a topic (questions produce more...)

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Multipliers Summary Chapter 7: Discipline E—Independence

Like their approaches to knowledge and decision-making, Multipliers and Diminishers don’t have much in common when it comes to giving people independence.

Independence Multipliers

Independence Multipliers assume people are intelligent enough to figure things out without them. They coach, help people learn, and provide resources and support, but they leave the accountability for outcomes with the team and never take over.

As a result, people in their organizations learn to rely on themselves and each other rather than Multipliers. They become competent and confident and get on just fine when the Multiplier is absent. After a certain point, people are so self-sufficient the Multiplier can leave the organization.

- For example, one of the founders of Infosys Technologies, Narayana, stepped down as CEO when he turned sixty. He continued to mentor, but the company does just fine without him because the leadership he trained is self-sufficient.

Three Practices of Independence Multipliers

**Practice #1: Assign Ownership**

Independence Multipliers assign ownership of projects to their people in three ways. They:

**1. Put other people in charge and clearly...**

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Shortform Exercise: Improve at a Discipline

Each of the five Multiplier disciplines includes practices and workouts.

Which of the five disciplines would you like to improve at most? Why? (Remember that you can most increase your overall effectiveness by strengthening a strength or neutralizing a weakness.)

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Multipliers Summary Part 3: Dealing With Diminishers | Chapter 8: Reducing Your Diminishing Qualities

Now that you know the differences between Multipliers and Diminishers in five key areas, it's time to consider which practices you use and if you have any diminishing behaviors. No matter how good your intentions, or how good of a job you think you're doing, you might inadvertently have a diminishing effect. This is very common.

For example, when Sally, a high school principal, gave her colleague Marcus ownership of a data-compilation project, she knew that he was new to both the school and spreadsheets so she tried to be extra helpful. She was careful and clear about the hand-off and she offered to go over things again or provide extra training multiple times. Finally, Marcus told her that he needed less help—Sally wasn't giving him enough space to figure it out by himself.

This chapter will help you identify your vulnerabilities and replace diminishing behavior with multiplying behavior instead. There are three steps to uncovering your diminishing tendencies:

Step #1: Compare Yourself to Accidental Diminisher Profiles
There are several different types of Accidental Diminishers. If you see yourself in any of them, follow the strategies below to reduce these...

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Shortform Exercise: Discover Your Accidental Diminisher Tendencies
There are three steps to discovering your Accidental Diminisher tendencies.
Which of the Accidental Diminisher profiles do you most relate to, and why?

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Multipliers Summary Chapter 9: Surviving Diminishers

Even once you've gotten a handle on your accidental diminishing tendencies and worked at improving them, you'll still face challenges—most of us aren't the only leaders in our organizations and have to work with others who may be Diminishers. When you work for or with a Diminisher, you might feel underused, drained, and lifeless. This can spill into other areas of your life and lead to health problems such as low energy or depression.

The good news is, there are several strategies for surviving (or even transforming) Diminishers. First, we'll look at what doesn't work. Then, we'll look at what does.

Ineffective Ways to Handle Diminishers

When faced with Diminishers, none of us are at our best—Diminishers make us feel anxious and stressed. They trigger our emotional brains, which overpower our rational ones, and we act without thinking. As a result, the least effective ways to deal with Diminishers—confrontation, avoidance, and compliance—are also the options most people turn to. These reactions create a cycle of diminishment:

- The Diminisher exhibits some diminishing behavior, such as micromanaging.
- We feel unfairly judged or maligned.
- We avoid or...

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Shortform Exercise: Survive a Diminisher

There are three steps to surviving a Diminisher.

Describe a Diminisher you know. What makes them so diminishing? Why?

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Multipliers Summary Part 4: Large-Scale Multiplying | Chapter 10: Multiplier Culture

In Parts 2 and 3, we learned the practices and behaviors of Multipliers and Diminishers. Now, we can use this knowledge to do so much more than just get rid of Diminishers and become Multipliers ourselves. We can create a Multiplier culture in which every member of an organization holds Multiplier assumptions and engages in Multiplier behaviors.

First, we'll look at ineffective ways to create a Multiplier culture, and then we'll look at what does work.

How Not to Create a Multiplier Culture

Most companies try to change their culture by inspiring managers to encourage new behavior and often, the focus is on sharing new ideas—for example, via a keynote speech—rather than executing them. Not only is this ineffective, since nobody will actually adopt the new culture if they don't put it into practice, but aborted attempts to change culture can also make people resistant to change in the future.

- For example, a software company asked its managers to read Multipliers and start using the practices. They tried, but when the company hit a rough spot, many leaders reverted to their initial leadership style because it was easier.
Multiplier and Diminisher FAQs

Are these two types of leaders universal across cultures?
The author studied leaders from 35 countries and discovered that while individual Multiplier practices differed, and in hierarchical cultures, Multipliers had to work harder to create the safety to share ideas, the Multiplier approach itself—assuming people are smart—worked everywhere in the world.

However, Diminishing did vary across cultures. Hierarchical cultures tended to see higher levels of diminishment. Diminishers in these cultures got approximately 10-20% less out of people than the global average of 48%.

Can I be both?
It's possible to act as both a Diminisher and Multiplier, or to be one or the other towards different people. This is for three reasons:

1. There are situations in which everyone is more prone to Diminisher behavior, even the best Multipliers, notably situations that feature:
   - High stakes
   - Short deadlines
   - Moments of stress
   - Crises

Be aware that these situations tend to bring out diminishment and keep an eye on your behavior when they arise. Also keep in mind that sometimes, extreme situations are when a...