



Practical Intelligence

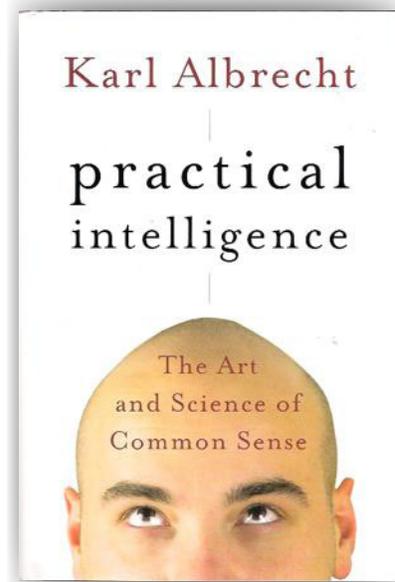
*The Art and Science
of Common Sense*

Karl Albrecht

©2007 Karl Albrecht

Adapted by permission of John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

ISBN: 978-0-7879-9565-2



Reviewed by Lydia Morris Brown

INTRODUCTION

Determining that IQ, as a singular measure of competence, could no longer be supported, Harvard professor, Howard Gardner, proposed (in *Frames of Mind*, 1985) a range of key competencies, which he calls *multiple intelligence* (MI). Daniel Goleman's *Emotional Intelligence* (1995) popularized Gardner's notion and instigated widespread interest in the developmental possibilities of the MI model.

In 2005's *Social Intelligence*, Karl Albrecht explored "Social Intelligence" (SI), a dimension of MI, which he defined as both the ability to get along with others and a set of practical skills for interacting successfully in any setting. A year later, Goleman followed suit with his own treatment of the subject.

With the steadily growing acceptance of the idea of MI, and the popularity of *Emotional Intelligence* and *Social Intelligence*, Albrecht believes the next category to explore would seem to be "Practical Intelligence" — the art and science of common sense. His **Practical Intelligence** explains how PI qualifies as one of the essential life skills, offers a conceptual framework for defining and describing it, and outlines how to develop the skills to think more clearly and effectively while helping others upgrade their own mental abilities.

PART I: WHAT IS PRACTICAL INTELLIGENCE?

Albrecht defines practical intelligence (common sense or wisdom) as "*the mental ability to cope with the*

challenges and opportunities of life." Perhaps more so than any of the other intelligences in the MI framework, this ability incorporates a wide range of mental processes, skills, and habits.

The first principle of PI is that *people think with their whole bodies, not with some individual circuit in the brain's cortex.* In fact, the brain is not really a whole computer. It is one essential part of an extended computer—the *biocomputer*, which includes: the entire nervous system; various information-processing subsystems, located in organs and muscles; and chemical messenger formations such as the hormone and immune systems.

Mental activity of any kind is, thus, expressed throughout the body, down to the level of individual cells. It can even be said that cells and individual organs, themselves, have intelligence (i.e., they "think" at a microscopic level). Thus, any thought, which might arise from within an organ, is a *whole-body* event.

Given this reality, Albrecht defines thinking as "*a never-ending multi-level process of information flow, which involves or affects every cell in the human body.*" And, thought is "*a whole-body information event that re-patterns the bio-informational structure of the body.*" Individuals are continuously "thinking"—even while they sleep.

Another essential principle of PI is that *people have more than one "mind."* The customary division of the mind into the "conscious" and "unconscious" cannot do justice to the rich constellation of *simultaneous mental processes*, and its many levels of consciousness and unconsciousness, which make human beings what they are. Thus, the word "mind" can be defined as a *collection* of mental functions.

The fact that *these multiple minds are always at work all the time*, doing their jobs simultaneously, is a third principle. While people are thinking "consciously"—usually verbally or logically—their nonconscious thought processes are feeding information from all levels into their awareness.

An example of this precept is the creative thinking concept of "incubation," which depends on this kind of behind the scenes mental activity. Studies suggest that, because a great deal of thinking goes on at *precognitive* and *non-conscious* levels, the conscious is merely

KEY CONCEPTS

Practical Intelligence—the art and science of common sense—qualifies as one of the essential life skills, incorporating a wide range of mental processes, skills, and habits for coping with life's challenges and opportunities.

- The notion of PI is based on the principle that thinking is a *bodily* function.
- With an understanding that thinking is a whole-body event, people can begin to upgrade the four essential aspects of the ways they process information:
 1. mental flexibility
 2. affirmative thinking
 3. semantic sanity
 4. valuing ideas.
- Once individuals begin to realize the need to improve these upgrades, continually, they can understand better how to make good use of the four "mega-skills":
 1. "bivergent" thinking
 2. "helicopter" thinking
 3. "intulogical" thinking
 4. "viscerational" thinking.
- Each contributes in its own way to one's total capability to cope with the environment.



Information about the author and subject:

www.KarlAlbrecht.com

Information about this book and other business titles:

www.josseybass.com

Related summaries in the BBR Library:

Social Intelligence

The New Science of Success

By Karl Albrecht, Foreword by Warren Bennis

Emotional Intelligence

Why It Can Matter More Than IQ

By Daniel Goleman

a projection screen whose function is merely to display the results of what the other minds are doing.

Finally, Albrecht notes that human beings carry around their own portable versions of reality in their heads. It is a huge inventory of *models*, which represent the parts of the world they have experienced to the present—their memories—without which they could not function.

The ability to think and to cope with experience depends on the size and richness of the inventory of mental models an individual has accumulated and can put to use as needed. Thus, much of what is recognized as human maladjustment, ranging from mild eccentricity to insanity, is caused by “mangled models”—distorted versions of reality from which people think and react.

PART II: UPGRADING AND ACTIVATING PRACTICAL INTELLIGENCE

Albrecht believes that with an understanding of the above inventory of basic PI concepts, individuals can begin to tune up the four essential aspects of the way they process information: (1) mental flexibility, (2) affirmative thinking, (3) semantic sanity, and (4) valuing ideas. He maintains that these four mental habits—features of the mind’s mental “software”—profoundly influence almost all the other mental processes and enable people to put their natural, inbuilt range of mental skills to effective use.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Karl Albrecht, chairman of Karl Albrecht International is a management consultant, executive advisor, futurist, and speaker. He is also the author of the bestselling *Service America!*, *The Northbound Train*, *Brain Power*, *The Power of Minds At Work*, and *Social Intelligence*.

Once individuals start working on these four upgrades, and begin realizing the need to improve them continually, they can then understand much more clearly how to make good use of the four “mega-skills”: (1) divergent and convergent thinking, (2) abstract and concrete thinking, (3) logical and intuitive thinking, and (4) rational and emotive thinking.

... if we once start thinking, no one can guarantee where we shall come out. ... Every thinker puts some portion of an apparently stable world in peril, and no one can wholly predict what will emerge in its place.

--John Dewey

Each of these “sub-smarts” can be thought of as polarities—contrasting mental processes that go together—with both alternatives to be used to the fullest rather than as an either-or choice. Each contributes in its own unique way to a person’s total capability to cope with the environment.

Mental Software Upgrade One: Developing Mental Flexibility: Mental flexibility is at the very foundation of the ability to perceive and think clearly, solve problems, persuade others, and learn. It is the willingness to be changed by new ideas, points of view, opinions, beliefs, and the situations and experiences that remove one from familiar patterns and invite growth.

Albrecht believes that perhaps the clearest expression of the difference between people who have developed mental flexibility and those who have not lies in the distinction between *archaic thinking* and *dynamic thinking*.

It is the difference between mental processes that are automatic, reflexive, controlled by preconceptions, and habitually judgmental, and those that are original, reflective, and responsive to current reality, information, and possibilities.

Creativity and conformity, two other aspects of mental flexibility, do not usually go well together, yet human beings crave both. At one level, the human biocomputer cherishes routine, structure, order, and predictability. At the same time, within all individuals (at varying levels of depth and accessibility) is an appetite for something new, different, and unfamiliar—something that is uniquely theirs.

Because conformist pressures keep them bottled up, most of these creative energies never get released. Albrecht believes that people need to learn to respect and cherish their “craziness” and let go of the illusion that they are always sensible and logical creatures who think the right things, and do the right things, without fail.

Thinking like a beginner is also fundamental to mental flexibility. Zen practitioners speak of the “beginner’s mind,” which is a state of awareness that is open to learning, understanding, and perceiving ideas and situations in new ways. Although many individuals are experts in various aspects of what they *do*, “the most important thing every expert needs to learn is how to *think* [our emphasis] like a beginner.”

Two fundamental principles of PI address truth and fact. Albrecht notes that “truth is multiple” and local to the brain in which it resides; moreover, not all facts are created equal. People who stay stuck at simplex thinking (i.e., thinking that fears multiple explanations of reality), or at the duplex level (“two-valued” either-or thinking”), do not clearly grasp that some facts are less “factual” than others and that some truths are less “true” than others.

Train yourself ... so that whenever you hear, say, read, or write the word truth, you get an immediate and vivid mental image of the word in quotations. ... If you train yourself to think of truth as ‘truth,’ you will have taken out an important insurance policy on your sanity.

In order to build a bigger window on the world, and to see it as is really is—a world of many dimensions, these kinds of thinkers must overcome their fear of paradox and free themselves from the “god of consistency.” “Once they let go of your need to feel certain about everything, they liberate their natural intelligence, at all levels.”

Perception of cause and effect is another peculiar aspect of mental flexibility. In their compulsive search for “reasons” for what they observe, human beings tend to fall prey to the temptation to perceive only those cause and effect relationships they can easily understand and ask “Why did such-and-such

happen?”

Not wanting to overload their brains with complex relationships, they often look for—and find—simple “A causes B” relationships. They fail to see that, in this multi-causal world, A affects B, which affects C, which affects J, which affects A, and so forth.

Finally, Albrecht notes that at the root of most forms of craziness is the unwillingness of people to acknowledge and accept, that what they call *reality* is in a constant state of evolution. Despite the fact that all things in the universe, from subatomic particles, all the way out to the stars and galaxies, are constantly reforming, many people seem to feel their opinions must be fixed, permanent, and final.

“Arriving” at an opinion tends to turn off an individual’s curiosity switch and to send a signal that he or she has stopped thinking. On *another* hand (as opposed to “on *the* other hand,” as duplex thinkers often say), keeping opinions on perpetual probation tends to keep the channels of curiosity open.

It is an approach that means: (1) letting go of the need to be right, (2) detaching the ego from one’s ideas, (3) allowing ideas to stand or fall on their merits rather than emotionally owning and defending them, and (4) having enough confidence in one’s thought processes to live with ambiguity and complexity.

Albrecht recommends that the words “opinion” and “position” be replaced with such terms as “my viewpoint,” “my take,” “my current understanding,” and/or “my impression.” He is not saying that people need not have opinions; he is advocating that they treat opinions as works in progress so as to not be owned by them.

Viewing language as one form of mental software, the author believes that when people change their language they can change the way they think. Thus, he suggests three simple but powerful verbal strategies that support and reinforce the essential mental habit of Mental Flexibility: (1) “I don’t know.” (2) “I made a mistake.” (3) “I’ve changed my mind.”

The point of these mentally flexible statements is not to invite people to see those using them as incompe-

tent. Rather, they are a reminder of humanity's mental "civil right" — the right to learn, adapt, grow, and continually update one's thinking.

Mental Software Upgrade 2: Adopting Affirmative Thinking. Albrecht defines affirmative thinking as "*a pattern of selective attention and ideation [thinking] that supports a high level of mental health.*" By favoring information, images, sights, sounds, experiences, and people that support affirmative thinking, individuals can increase their chances of feeling better, becoming healthier, and living longer.

It is a matter of "*sensorship*—the practice of consciously and consistently choosing what you will allow into your mind." Individuals must remember that their emotional state and their unconscious processes can be colored by anything and everything they take in. Thus, it is essential to prefer positive, uplifting, and optimistic thought processes, and the inputs that tend to invite them, over negative thoughts and inputs.

Affirmative thinking is also a matter of what Albrecht calls *crap detecting*—"a non-gullible and non-cynical habit of considering the potential motives and purposes behind what people tell us." He believes that all people have a responsibility to themselves, and to their fellow human beings, to refuse to take what they see and hear at face value. Part of intellectual courage is knowing when to listen to the advice of others and when to trust your own judgment.

Affirmative thinking requires a reengineering of attitudes (the mental states that predispose a person to think, react, and behave in certain ways). Because human beings think with their entire body, what the culture calls an *attitude* is really a whole-body information pattern.

In almost all cases, negative emotions cause people to become "uncentered." Disconnected from the authentic source of their ideas and reactions, they begin to "orbit" the person or circumstance with which they are preoccupied.

Liberation from this negativity requires a letting go of negative emotional connections, which involves per-

ceiving experiences and other people in an emotionally neutral way (even when engaged in adversarial interactions with them).

With this letting go, individuals can return to a natural center point, and reclaim their energy so that it can be recycled and redirected toward positive ends. Essentially, then, an attitude is an *option*, and the difference between success and failure, happiness and unhappiness can be summed up in that one word—*attitude*.

An attitude of *gratitude* (a state of mind conducive to healing and to maintaining mental and physical health) is essential, as is an attitude of *abundance*.

Abundance-minded people tend to be less fearful and more optimistic, willing to believe that "things turn out for the best if you know how to make the best of the way things turn out." They can praise, appreciate, and affirm others without feeling that they are diminishing themselves. And, they can give of themselves generously without expecting any quid pro quo.

Albrecht believes that a good way to view the variety of life-affirming attitudes is to put them into the one "mega-attitude" package of *altruism*. The reality that everyone is not easy to love is not the issue—altruism is not about *others* but about *oneself*. It is about people owning their own emotional state, frame of mind, attitudes, and reactions; finding their own center; and employing a mentality of nonaggression, optimism, and even generosity to disconnect from the negative provocations of people, situations, and behaviors.

Totalitarian leaders know that their most dangerous enemies are the deep thinkers. Not only can they think clearly, but they can often encourage the sheep thinkers to turn on their crap detectors and rethink what they've been told.

Essentially, the attitude of gratitude is connected to the attitude of generosity, which is connected to the attitude of abundance, which is connected to the attitude of optimism, and so on. By reflecting on available positive attitudes, appreciating them, and letting go of the dysfunctional attitudes that do not serve them well, people can truly cleanse their minds.

Mental Software Upgrade 3: Adopting Sane Language Habits. Words are not just inanimate symbols but,

rather, they invoke meanings and emotional associations in those who use them and in those who hear them. As Alfred Korzybski argued in his 1933 *Science and Sanity*, “Meanings are not in the *words*; they are in the *people*.” No two brains contain exactly the same “meaning” for any word or concept; therefore no meaning is universally true.

Language both expresses thought and creates thought—human beings not only say what they think, they think what they say. The choice of words available to people predetermines how they can build the concepts they process in their minds and the concepts they use in communicating. A subtle change in the choice of language can make an important change in the meaning that arises in the speaker’s mind and in the meanings that are invoked in the mind of the listener.

Whenever people say anything, they are actually transmitting messages on four key channels at once: (1) facts, (2) feelings, (3) values, and (4) opinions. Albrecht notes that to the extent that messages come loaded with feeling, values, and opinions, it can reasonably be assumed that speakers choose their “facts” carefully to support the messages on the other three channels.

Men imagine that their minds have the command of language, but it often happens that language bears rule over their minds.

--Francis Bacon

By decoding what they hear in all forms of persuasive conversation, people can usually separate the messages into these four key channels. People can also contribute to greater clarity by training themselves to present their own views with less manipulation, clearly identifying their feelings, values, and opinions.

Cleaning up what the author calls *dirty* language (i.e., language that tends to contaminate, corrupt, and obscure understanding and cooperation) is another effective strategy for semantic sanity.

Dirty language is exemplified by the “Seven Semantic Sins”:

1. *blanketing*—declaring one’s opinion as universally true,
2. *aggression*—using demeaning language to describe others,
3. *directiveness*—using “should” language,
4. *attribution*—attaching a motivation (often ignoble) to a person’s behavior,
5. *all-ness*—generalizing so broadly as to obscure alternative interpretations or conclusions,
6. *dogmatism*—making unconditional declarations that do not acknowledge the validity of alternative views, and
7. *polarization*—framing an issue in terms of only two mutually exclusive possibilities.

An effective antidote is *clean language*: verbal cues, such as “so far as I know,” non-aggression, non-directiveness, non-attribution, non-allness, non-dogmatism, and non-polarization. This substitute pattern of discourse is psychologically neutral and honors the entitlement of others to think and speak for themselves.

As people become comfortable with the concept of semantic sanity, they may be ready to sort out their *entire* semantic tool kit and eliminate even more terms, expressions, and figures of speech. By employing *semantic filtering*, it is possible to minimize or eliminate the use of emotionally negative words to the greatest practical extent and allow emotionally positive terms to shape the way one thinks and expresses ideas.

Finally, Albrecht notes that creativity researchers report a close three-way relationship between a sense of humor, particularly the clever use of language; positive thinking; and the ability to think creatively.

Mental Software Upgrade 4: Valuing Ideas. Albrecht believes that anyone with a normal brain and nervous system has lots of good ideas, everyday. Ideas are, however, fleeting and often incompletely formed. Unless they are invited to stay, they tend to wander off. Thus, the primary reason many people do not appreciate their idea-having capacities is because

they seriously overrate their memories and allow their ideas to escape their minds.

The author calls “I made a mental note of it, but it slipped my mind” reasoning the *Short-Term Memory Delusion* that betrays a near-universal misunderstanding of the way the human biocomputer organizes its memories. In other words, there is no such thing as a mental note.

The ability to recall important things can be improved by various means, but Albrecht believes that the simplest and most powerful way to capture and value ideas is the index card—“the greatest thinking tool ever invented.”

Another true test of any thinker is the ability to see the potential in newborn ideas. The mental habit of valuing ideas means saying a tentative “yes” to every newly minted inspiration, with the confidence that giving it time to breathe many enable it to evolve into something truly valuable. Ultimately, faith in the value of ideas equates to faith in oneself, and one’s own thinking processes, as well as to *emotional* and *intellectual* courage.

Another aspect of valuing ideas concerns the “flashes of insight” that follow from hard work and diligent thinking (i.e., *incubation*). Not only do they happen more often than most people realize, it is also possible to invite these insights to happen even more frequently by noticing them when they occur, cherishing them, and expecting more of them to come.

People who have learned to see through, over, under, around, and beyond their own mental patterns, and the patterns that imprison others, in order to find different arrangements of the elements of a problem or situation, are “pattern independent.”

Albrecht calls this ability to think outside the various self-imposed boxes of knowledge and experience, *Metboxical Thinking*. It is the ability of individuals to first detect the unconscious boundaries imposed by their perceptions of a problem, and, second, to liberate themselves from such restrictions.

The strategy used to solve anagrams is a good example

of metaboxical thinking. It is a strategy that applies, in some form or another, to many problems people face in life, relationships, and business. The difficulty in solving anagrams is due to the fact that they are constructed so as to suggest an acceptable word, which matches a mental pattern that makes them seem already “correct.” Thus, it is first necessary to “de-construct” the current conception of the problem so as to identify its parts, and potential solutions, and rearrange them as one does with the letters of an anagram. This allows individuals to expand their divergent thinking skills and their ability to reframe situations or ideas.

Human beings are so constituted as to see what is wrong with a new thing, not what is right. ... They will obliterate 90 percent of rightness for the sake of 10 percent of wrongness. The possibilities a new idea opens up are not appreciated, because not one [person] in a thousand has imagination.

--Charles F. Kettering

Mega-Skill 1: “Bivergent” Thinking—the Divergent-Convergent Spectrum. Albrecht believes that in just about any situation, context, or culture, effective decision making or problem solving can be thought of as Bivergent Thinking—a combination of three key skills:

1. divergent thinking—a process that branches out from one idea to other associated ideas,
2. convergent thinking—a process that reduces a large set of ideas or options to a select few; and
3. the skill of managing the pivot point, or transition, between the two processes.

After years of studying many decisionmakers, the author is convinced that incompetent decision making can almost always be diagnosed as a failure of one or more of these three cardinal elements.

Divergent and convergent thinking, two essential, valuable, and complementary processes need to be integrated effectively, according to the demands of the situation. In the divergent stage, decision makers need to free their minds so as to explore an appropriate range of possibilities, relationships, and perspectives.

In the convergent stage, they need to apply logic skillfully, effectively narrow the range of potential solutions, and converge to one that can work. And, they must figure out how to guide the thinking process to get from divergence to convergence.

Part of the evolution and progress of so-called “advanced” societies—those that have figured out how to manipulate their environments in favor of their own self-interest—is the development of abstract conceptualization.

Mega-Skill 2: “Helicopter” Thinking—the Abstract-Concrete Spectrum. Conceptual fluency is a fundamental dimension of PI, and it calls for the ability to freely shift the focus of one’s attention and thinking up and down the scale of abstraction. In the same way helicopters enable vertical movement between the ground and various altitudes, *Helicopter Thinking—a process that integrates both abstract and concrete patterns of ideation into a synergistic combination*—allows people to move up and down the abstract-concrete spectrum.

The higher people take their mental helicopters, the more territory they can see; however, this view from on high disallows the discernment of detail. Conversely, the view from ground level provides a very detailed experience of the terrain, but does not offer the perspective that is available on high.

People of vision can see, not only beyond their noses, but beyond their immediate circumstances, beyond the prevailing views of their contemporaries and their culture, and even beyond the times in which they live. Moreover, they can articulate and sell a proposition of achievement that others can sign on to.

Nonetheless, as the late Peter F. Drucker said, “Somebody has to turn the great ideas into crude deeds.” In order to make things happen, both *visionaries* and *actionaries* are needed. In fact, as with any PI polarity, the question can be asked: “Why not be skilled at both?”

A person who is challenged to fulfill the role of a visionary can still benefit by knowing how to think and perform like an actionary. Conversely, an actionary can still contribute his or her knowledge, experience,

and judgment to the big-picture process.

Another central element of helicopter thinking is *“relational thinking”* (i.e., connecting the dots). Skillful helicopter thinkers not only connect various bunches of “dots” more effectively than most other people, they also tend to notice more dots—the primary elements and connections in a situation—than most others. The fact that people can only connect the dots they know about means that *dot-finding* is a fundamental part of *dot-connecting* and a key element of big-picture thinking.

Albrecht suggests using actual big pictures to think about the big picture. It is a simple, useful method for organizing ideas that goes by various names, the most popular of which seems to be mindmapping. However, some users like to call it *radial thinking* as a means of emphasizing the characteristic outward-moving, divergent process as it unfolds.

Although many people believe that conceptual fluency is an inborn skill, probably determined by IQ, this is not the case. According to Albrecht, conceptual fluency is largely a matter of verbal fluency. People, who have large and diversified vocabularies, which they are willing to use appropriately, have a high level of conceptual skill.

Unfortunately, too many individuals handicap themselves by restricting their usage vocabulary to a “routine” inventory of necessity (a small number of words and figures of speech—amounting to only a few hundred words—used in everyday living). This self-censorship acts like a built-in brake on their intelligence, limiting their ability to speak and think conceptually.

Mega-Skill 3: “Intulogical” Thinking—the Logical-Intuitive Spectrum. Many people in Western cultures seem to regard logic and intuition as two antagonistic patterns of thought. They often characterize logic as somehow “better” than intuition, which they tend to see as feminine, weak, and inconsequential. The assumption seems to be that, if a person is good at one pattern, he or she cannot—or should not—be good at the other.

PI goes beyond “logic versus intuition” and embraces the idea of logic *and* intuition. In fact, Albrecht proposes integrating the two concepts so closely together that they get the new name of *“Intulogical Thinking—a process that integrates both logical and intuitive patterns of ideation into a synergistic combination.”*

Learning to think intulogically means valuing both ways of knowing, deliberately calling on both patterns in a balanced way, and perhaps re-owning whichever pattern one has disowned. Some kinds of mental processes (e.g., the process of design) not only invite intulogical thinking but actually require it.

Mega-Skill 4: “Viscerational” Thinking—the Rational-Emotive Spectrum. According to Albrecht, the interplay between what is called rational thought and what is thought of as emotion threads throughout almost all of human life. People are, after all, emotional creatures first and rational creatures second.

Both visceral and rational forms of mental processing have importance and value in the interactions of individuals with their world. Indeed, it seems that every mental process has a conscious or rational component, which is intertwined with a non-conscious or visceral element.

The author believes that this way of thinking about thinking makes a case for a new concept, based on the fusion of both patterns: *“Viscerational Thinking—a thinking process that integrates both rational and visceral patterns of ideation into a synergistic combination.”*

Human beings must face the proposition that what is rational to one may be irrational to another. Rational and irrational thinking, like “truth,” is local to the individual mind where it occurs.

Albrecht proposes that the best avenue for understanding the rational-emotive dimension of PI is to consider them as part of the same process—“first we decide, then we justify.” Irrational behavior is an expression of several competing impulses that arise from unconscious levels, mixed with the influence of the conscious “reasoning” process. Both are forms of reason; however, people can articulate one and cannot

easily articulate the other.

When a contradiction exists between one’s beliefs and one’s action, a feeling of anxiety emerges, which Stanford professor and psychologist Leon Festinger called *cognitive dissonance*. Human beings will usually act to resolve cognitive dissonance by *restating* the belief that’s dissonant with the behavior, or by *explaining* the behavior in a way that makes it less dissonant. According to Albrecht, “we tend to rationalize our behavior when we disapprove of the real motive that’s causing it.”

Another key aspect of viscerational thinking is the fact, that *“we’re all neurotic, and that’s ok”*—unless, of course, the issue is dysfunctional neurosis. Nobody escapes neurosis—“a pattern of impaired thinking, accompanied by anxiety, which is caused by the repression of an unacceptable emotion.”

You know, I’ve never put much stock in this subliminal advertising thing. But the other day I had a funny experience. I was watching TV at home, and I suddenly got up, and I went out and bought a tractor.

--Comedian, Johnny Carson

Neurosis is a characteristic of the interaction between conscious and non-conscious thinking. Nonetheless, human beings tend to repress emotion because of one of the most disabling emotions that they can experience—*fear* of emotions.

The critical lesson here is that emotions will not destroy an individual—quite the contrary. From the bio-informational standpoint, emotions exist to help. **Emotions are information**—cues and clues—providing evidence of non-conscious thinking that may be important to an individual’s needs and purposes at the conscious level.

Psychologist Albert Ellis, pioneer of rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT), maintained that people can achieve a high level of mental health by:

1. becoming aware of, and understanding, their emotional processes;
2. reframing their rational processes to make them more sane; and then

3. integrating both rational and emotional dimensions into a unified pattern of reacting to their experiences.

When people overcome the self-alienation that leads them to disown and repress their natural emotions, they become more primitive *and* more evolved. They learn to integrate their primal, visceral processes of thinking with their conscious, learned patterns of conscious thinking. Albrecht believes that is one of the best definitions of sanity he has encountered. It is also an excellent definition of physical health, for “if it’s on your mind, it’s on your body.”



FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Reading Time: 27-29 hours, 413 pp.

As in his previous work, Albrecht doesn’t belabor the “IQ debate,” in that it has already been widely accepted that “IQ doesn’t tell the whole story.” In 1983, Howard Gardner’s *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* dealt a blow to the established notion that IQ defines or controls the ability to think. This groundbreaking idea set a new way of looking at human competence in motion.

In 1995, Daniel Goleman presented *Emotional Intelligence: Why It May Be More Important than IQ*, which crystallized the idea of an “intelligence” as a useful focus of attention in the popular culture. The book became a bestseller and quickly gained a substantial following in the business sector.

Albrecht’s *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Success* arrived in 2005. It was an attempt to clarify the body of SI knowledge that had, for years, been growing in the academic community; help people assess their own SI status; and prescribe some methods to help individuals increase this category of intelligence. Because his objective was to bridge the gap between the academic world and the worlds of business and private life, Albrecht found it useful to re-code rather scientific sounding labels into “street” language. Thus, he renamed Gardner’s “multiple smarts” abstract, social, practical, emotional, aesthetic, and kinesthetic intelligence, and simplified them conceptually.

A year later Goleman released *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships* in which he reversed his earlier position that SI is included in EI and explored the possibility of SI being a separate dimension. Albrecht believes that this development of EI and SI as separate but related bodies of knowledge provides the necessary guidelines for this “build-out” of PI.

Practical Intelligence presents a *practical* framework for describing, teaching, and learning common sense. It is a framework that details accessible methods and habits of thought, some of which are presented in visual models that assemble various fundamental concepts and ideas into useful PI “toolkits”: the “neck-check,” the “media fast,” meditations, memory bookmarks, thinking pictures, mindmapping, Mind-movies, the Mindex Model, the High Speed Problem Solving Model, the Life Wheel, Mindzones, the Tree of Knowledge, etc.

Albrecht’s extensive explanations of the scientific aspects of common sense are made accessible to the widest possible audience with concrete examples, stories, and cases that detail everyday situations. And, he provides provocative and surprisingly engrossing exercises: the “Inference” Problem, the “Bookworm” Problem, the Famous Nine-Dot Problem, the “teral-bay” Anagram, the “Boat” Problem, and the Water Glass Problem. Not only do these exercises present learning opportunities, they are also mind-stimulating fun.

The immediate objectives of this work can be found in the last two chapters—“How to Become an Expert Problem Solver” and “Success Programming: Causing the Outcomes You Want.” **Practical Intelligence** speaks to Albert Einstein’s observation: “No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We must learn to see the world anew.” And, it demonstrates that “human beings, by changing the inner attitudes of their minds, can change the outer aspects of their lives” (William James, pioneer of modern psychology).

Ultimately, however, Albrecht has an even loftier motive—that PI, as he defines and explores it, could serve as a unifying concept around which to structure the discussion of what some are calling the American

restoration agenda. This agenda is a set of priorities for bringing back some key values, traditions, and institutions that many feel have been lost in the “dumbing-down” of the American culture.

Thus, **Practical Intelligence** is offered to those who can promote the teaching, application, and appreciation of common sense in our culture. Thus, its explanation of how PI qualifies as one of the central life skills can help:

- parents teach their children how to use their minds more effectively everyday;
- teachers change the focus of education from teaching students *what* to think to teaching them *how* to think;
- educators, who train teachers, to begin to understand how to encourage them to play a more active role in encouraging schools to implement the teaching of PI concepts and skills;
- mental health professionals learn to view human adjustment through the prism of practical mental competence;
- executives and managers learn the importance of making organizational intelligence, both individual and collective, a high priority;
- business consultants introduce the methods of effective thinking and problem solving to executives and teams;
- legislators and political leaders raise the level of discourse needed to encourage schools to implement the teaching of common sense concepts and skills;
- celebrities and media thinkers provide the leadership needed to raise the level of discourse in the popular media, renouncing the practices that pander to fear, ignorance, and bigotry.

And, of course, the book can help these influencers educate *themselves* about PI and upgrade their own PI skills.

No matter which of these categories you fall into, **Practical Intelligence** is best approached as a comprehensive whole, in the order presented, so that you do not lose the sense of “continuity that leads [you] from one level of understanding to another.”

Be prepared to read only one or two chapters at a sitting, as Albrecht provides a lot of detail, and none of it is superfluous. The treasure trove of quotations, alone, will absorb hours of your time, as you stop to ponder and take note. You will also need to factor in time to do the exercises, which we highly recommend you complete as you read, carefully following the instructions provided. Of course, this approach will add considerably to our estimated reading time.

CONTENTS

Chapter 1: A Problem and an Opportunity

Chapter 2: Multiple Intelligences

Chapter 3: What Is Practical Intelligence?

Chapter 4: Developing Mental Flexibility

Chapter 5: Adopting Affirmative Thinking

Chapter 6: Adopting Sane Language Habits

Chapter 7: Valuing Ideas

Chapter 8: “Bivergent” Thinking

Chapter 9: “Helicopter” Thinking

Chapter 10: “Intulogical” Thinking

Chapter 11: “Viscerational” Thinking

Chapter 12: How to Become an Expert Problem Solver

Chapter 13: Causing the Outcomes You Want

Appendix A: Answers to Thinking Exercises

Appendix B: 50 Tips for Better Thinking

Appendix C: A Vocabulary for Practical Intelligence

Appendix D: A Code of Intelligent Discourse

Appendix E: The Harvard Mantra

Subject Index

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

We at BBR encourage our readers to purchase the business books we review. BBR Reviews are intended as a service to busy professionals, as we recommend only those books that are worth your time to read in their entirety. We apply stringent criteria in selecting only the best business books, and in that selection process, strive to help you make informed book-purchasing decisions.

[Click to Buy This Book](#)

This book is available at bookstores and online booksellers.

Business Book Review® is a service of EBSCO Publishing, Inc.

For more information about BBR, to subscribe to BBR,
or to provide us feedback, visit our Web site.

www.businessbookreview.com

EBSCO Publishing Inc.
10 Estes Street
Ipswich, MA 01938 USA

Copyright of Business Book Review Library is property of EBSCO Publishing Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download or email articles for individual use.