



Cindy Crawford



Hillary Clinton



Andy Warhol

Who's the most 'intelligent'?

IQ is only one way of thinking about how smart we are.
But for too many businesses, it's still the only game in town

WORDS TIM SMEDLEY



Answer: If we measure intelligence solely by IQ, the results are Cindy Crawford (154), Hillary Clinton (140), Madonna (140), Andy Warhol (86)

Should you need any convincing of the discrepancy between conventional intelligence and workplace performance, consider the cases of Frank Lampard and John F Kennedy. The former Chelsea footballer has reported his IQ as being higher than 150, which makes him at least 50 per cent brainier than the average member of the British public. JFK, meanwhile, scored a relatively mediocre 115.

Yet while one of the pair is eminently qualified to run the Manchester City midfield (and author the *Frankie's Magic Football* series of children's books), there's little doubt who'd make the more convincing leader of the free world.

A century ago, psychologists had already posited that people's ability to understand others was a distinct form of intelligence. Various studies have since supported this – most recently and persuasively, a 2012 international survey of more than 100,000 people showed that intellectual ability consists of short-term memory, reasoning and verbal agility, each controlled by three distinct nerve circuits in the brain. An individual could be good enough in one to ace an IQ test. "But they are just as likely to be bad in the other two," a co-author of the study said. "We have shown that IQ is meaningless."

The business world has been alarmingly slow to acknowledge such developments. Why are L&D, recruitment and selection for talent programmes still largely based on academic accomplishment? And if not IQ, what does science think should take its place?

Compared to IQ, emotional intelligence (EQ) is a relative new kid on the block. It was originally defined by US psychologists Salovey and Mayer in 1990 as: "The ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action". Daniel Goleman brought the idea to popular attention in 1995, claiming

that "IQ contributes about 20 per cent to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80 per cent to other sources".

This makes intuitive sense to a lot of HR and L&D professionals. "A lot of our guys may not be what you would describe as academically intelligent or high IQ," says Karen Bailey, head of competence development for Volvo Group UK and Ireland. "But when it comes to mechanical skill, lateral thinking, problem-solving, they are off the scale. In my view, the economic crisis was caused by some phenomenally intelligent people, so relying on that one measure of personality can be quite dangerous."

Ross Bartlett, group head of L&D at advertising firm Ogilvy & Mather Group, says he has never applied or used IQ in 20 years, but employs emotional intelligence measures on a daily basis. "You can be exceptionally intelligent cognitively, but if you can't get on with people then you are not going to make it," he says. Everyone at Ogilvy undergoes an emotional intelligence assessment, receiving a score and an in-depth profile with learning points and discussion areas to work through with their coach or manager.

Some, however, see EQ as more intuitive than a grade or number would suggest. "I think you know when you've met someone who's emotionally intelligent," says Bailey. "Whether you can then define it and examine it, and whether that's right, I'm not sure."

Whether EQ is measured or simply encouraged, is in some ways by-the-by. It is the ability to understand and engage others that is most important in business – an idea backed by neuroscience.

Mirror neurons have been identified in our brains that, when we see someone else experience something,

react as if we had experienced it ourselves. This is better known as empathy – and rather than being born with a set amount of it, we can work to increase it.

If you want to be more empathetic, keep trying and the neurons in your brain will get better at it. Bartlett did exactly that after taking an assessment

"The world is moving on and we need some new approaches to learning"

which scored him low in empathy. "I have been working on that very consciously for the last six or seven years," he says. "Principally, empathy is about listening, and I have actively on many occasions listened better than I perhaps would in my more natural state."

It works because neuroscience shows us that by focusing on desired actions

and behaviours, and constantly repeating them, we not only improve them but they can become ingrained. This is known as neuroplasticity. "It is your brain's ability to rewire itself," says Gary Luffman, an occupational psychologist with Think Change Consulting. "Whatever you expose yourself to regularly enough, your brain will configure itself to help you. By the end, you don't even have to think about it – it becomes automated."

The most famous example comes from London cabbies. Required to memorise the entire city road network in order to pass 'The Knowledge', they have been found to have an overdeveloped hippocampus (related to memory and navigation) compared with bus drivers, who follow set routes. This comes through learning and repetition, not pre-existing skill. There is even evidence that just thinking about a task, not even doing it, can fire the relevant neurons and expand brain capacity accordingly.

The applications for L&D and talent management are huge. "Now we know the brain remains plastic and changes until the day we die," writes Samuel Malone in his recent book *Awaken the Genius Within*. "It's excellent news for those of us who want to go on learning throughout our lives."

Raj Chopra, a business psychologist for the learning and development consultancy JSB, says: "Neurons that fire together, wire together... In L&D, one of the most important things, therefore, is having repetition in key learning points

Which of these habits will boost your brain power?



Eating breakfast every day



Hanging around with smart people



Smoking



Consuming cod liver oil

Answer: Eating breakfast, having smart friends and smoking have all been proven to have positive effects on intelligence. Although smoking has obvious negative health implications, several studies published between 2008 and 2014 have demonstrated that nicotine administration temporarily improves visual attention and working memory. But despite the widespread assumption, fish oil has never been conclusively linked to improvements in intelligence.

and consistency in approach, as well as positive reinforcement."

There is some evidence to suggest that emotionally intelligent people are also better learners. According to Carol Dweck, professor of psychology at Stanford University, we can be largely divided up between fixed versus growth mindsets. Fixed mindsets believe they are born with a set level of intelligence, so are unwilling to try new things (or risk failing). A growth mindset sees talent and success as always available through hard work and learning. The latter displays a higher level of EQ. And both can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

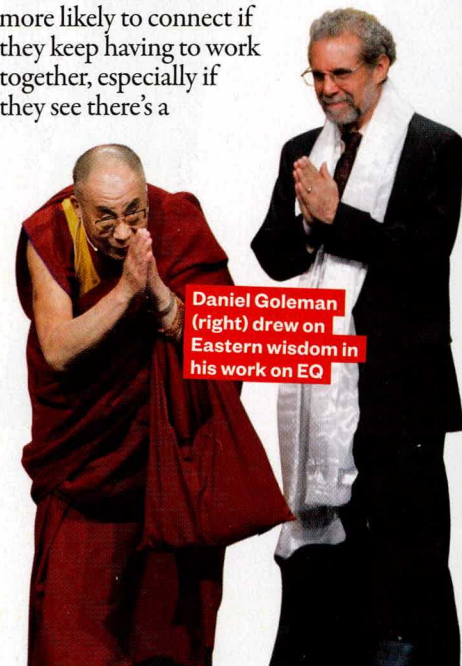
Volvo is attempting to combine these new approaches under the banner of 'brain-friendly learning'. Bailey says this came about after a troubling finding that following electrical diagnostics training, only 36 per cent of engineers were competent in the topic. "That started the quest to find out why, and neuroscience started to point out that the answers may well lie in the way we train people."

An engineer-designed, five-day training programme covering hundreds of painfully detailed slides was replaced with one-day sessions. "They tell you the things you need to know, why you are here, what you are struggling with, [and] then actually doing it. We get them to practice as much as we can while they are still in the room," says Bailey. "We then give them a clear process to embed this: we describe the jobs you need to do, the hours you need to cover to be competent;

this is the way we are going to come out and check, this is the support you have, like a mentor back in the workplace who also knows what it is you need to do. Then we stay in touch throughout."

It is, she admits, "much harder work" for the L&D team. "They are not measuring training days or bums on seats. What we measure is the change in levels of competence. And that has gone from 36 per cent to 96 per cent."

Luffman says such methods work by forcing people "to keep bumping into the information, keep reflecting on it. Then you start to affect people's brains – the neurons in the brain are more likely to connect if they keep having to work together, especially if they see there's a



Daniel Goleman (right) drew on Eastern wisdom in his work on EQ



How emotionally intelligent are you?

Award yourself points against core EQ workplace competencies

1 I am confident in my ability to perform in my role

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

2 I am always trying to better understand my strengths and development areas

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

3 I am sensitive to and care about the feelings of those I work with

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

4 Colleagues would describe me as calm and composed during times of stress

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

5 I am in control of the success of my career

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

6 I work purposefully towards the goals I have set and am not easily distracted

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

benefit.” He recommends segmenting L&D programmes down into smaller parts, such as online videos or apps. At Volvo, Bailey has introduced YouTube-style short videos on technical topics, which have so far received more than 9,000 hits. These are things you can call on to use when you need it, says Luffman, which can be complemented by facilitated sessions and on-the-job activities.

Combine emotional intelligence, fixed versus growth mindsets, and neuroscience, and you end up with a very different view of L&D and talent management. Is it better to focus programmes on those most willing to learn and put in the hard graft, rather than those with great grades who believe they are already the complete package?

Ruth Stuart, research adviser for learning and development at the CIPD, says: “People are beginning to question some of the more traditional talent management practices. Giving people a grade or rating according to their performance can actually be quite damaging. It can instigate a threat response in the brain, switch people off to feedback, and create an unwanted competitive edge.”

She admits that it’s rare to find firms “that have transformed the way they approach talent or performance management. Some of those things are quite ingrained”.

But she argues: “The world is moving on and we need to think of new approaches.”

The CIPD’s recent research report, *Our minds at work: developing the behavioural science of HR*, also argues for a more scientific approach to, among other things, selection and recruitment (understanding the strengths and weaknesses of intuition), pay and reward (highlighting the social nature of threat and reward, rather than simply the financial), performance management (how criticism and feedback are often unproductive) and personal effectiveness (we can’t really multi-task).

Bailey says: “A lot of ‘talent’ is defined by what you need to do today rather than what you need to do in the business tomorrow. And the people who are

“You can be exceptionally intelligent, but if you can’t get on with people, you will fail”

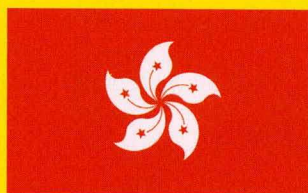
Rank these nations by average IQ score



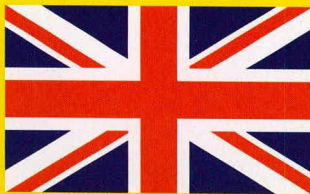
South Korea



United States



Hong Kong



United Kingdom



Italy



China

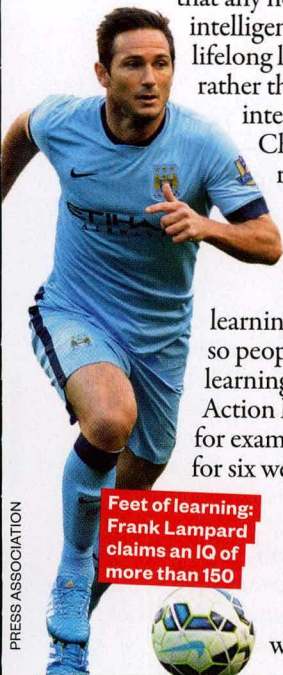
Answer: Hong Kong (107), South Korea (107), United Kingdom (100), United States (98)

defining talent are the people who it's worked for so far. For me, the whole thing comes under scrutiny."

Emotional intelligence alone, however, may not be the answer to identifying talent. For starters, cultural intelligence – defined by Singaporean academic Soon Ang as the ability to work across different contexts – is beginning to coexist alongside EQ, IQ and other forms of social intelligence as a broad measure of personality and how it is applied at work. And then there are those who question whether emotional intelligence is a viable concept worthy of discussion alongside traditional notions of intelligence. The social scientist Adam Grant, author of *Give and Take*, takes issue with many of Goleman's ideas and has argued: "Even in emotionally demanding work, when it comes to job performance, cognitive ability still proves more consequential than emotional intelligence."

One thing we can be certain about is that any non-conventional intelligence demands a lifelong learning approach, rather than disjointed interventions. Chopra recommends setting up "cross-business project teams after an initial learning intervention so people [form] social learning environments. Action learning groups, for example, might focus for six weeks on a project that adds value to the business. That grounds the learning back into the workplace."

Feet of learning: Frank Lampard claims an IQ of more than 150



How to boost your learning potential

Collaborate

Mental blocks or creative cul-de-sacs become less of a problem when we work as a team and share ideas. Collaboration means creative ideas flow more easily.

Do the opposite of what comes naturally

If you are particularly creative, try adopting a more logical approach to everyday problems, or vice versa. Do this repetitively and you can start to change your automatic responses to different, regularly occurring situations.

Space out learning sessions

Regular, short bursts of learning stimulate extra activity in the part of the brain used for verbal rehearsal, suggesting we do more unconscious practicing of what we are learning between sessions.

Sleep

A good night's kip helps us start the next day fresh, but it also ensures we remember what happened the day before.



Go running

Regular aerobic exercise improves the efficiency of networks important for learning, and increases blood flow and connectivity in the hippocampus – an important region for memory.

Cut out the coffee

Caffeine blocks the actions of adenosine, a neurotransmitter that increases in our brain with each hour of wakefulness until bedtime, in readiness for a restful night.

Read more

Reading is one of the best and most accessible tools for lifelong learning and expanding knowledge. Maintain a list of books, articles and papers that you want to read, and update it frequently.

Have a positive attitude

If you believe that your brain is capable of learning anything, it probably will be. This is also known as having a 'growth mindset' as opposed to a 'fixed mindset'.

Jan Hills, author of *Brain-Savvy HR: a neuroscience evidence base*, also describes embedding learning into the culture of an organisation: "It's about using social pressure to keep people on track. We create learning communities who make a commitment to each other. Back on the job, they then act as either supporters or exercise pressure. People don't want to let down their peers."

The idea that you don't need to be academically intelligent is liberating, no matter to what extent science eventually proves it accurate. Perhaps we may eventually conclude that a truer measure of intelligence is your willingness to try and never give up. If you do, the chances are you will succeed, changing the way your brain works in the process. And if your entire business is willing to do the same, maybe 'smart' could take on a whole new meaning. **PM**

* Learn more about innovative performance management techniques and alternatives to appraisals and rankings at the CIPD Performance Management Conference on 2-3 December cipd.co.uk/events/performancemanagement
* Read the *Our Minds at Work* report bit.ly/CIPDminds

7 I am easily able to flex and adapt my behaviour during times of organisational change

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

8 I have the social skills to connect with a diverse group of colleagues

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

9 I take advantage of opportunities while also managing risks

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

10 I bounce back easily after a stressful event

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

11 I remain both assertive and diplomatic in conflict situations

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

12 I emphasise the contributions of others in my team

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Undecided
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

Your score

..... /60

Turn over for the verdict

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