

FROM CREATIVITY TO SOLIDARITY, HOW COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE HELPS US GO THE EXTRA MILE?

**Excerpt of “Mastermind Groups Accelerators of success”,
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Introduction

“I got there all by myself, Papa! You saw me, didn’t you?” My son is five years old and I am always amazed to see how much getting there, *“all by himself”*, counts, as far as he is concerned. You will say that at five years old that’s only normal! Before it was something that he expressed in a way that was more succinct and to the point, he used to say, *“all by myself”*, when he wanted me to allow him to *“get there”*, without any intercession from me. When I heard him exclaim such a thing with so much satisfaction, and with what seemed like a falsely indifferent expression, standing straight up, looking like an “i”, to the top of his barely 3 and a half feet or so, I then realize to what extent our vision of success, even if we are an adult, is always the same as that of a five-year-old child. We want to ‘get to that point’... all on our own. The myth of the self-made woman/man will still be accepted for a great many years to come.

This desire to do things on our own is also expressed in various ways, even when success depends on the assistance of others, and not solely on us. In sports, we always remember the one who scored the goal, but not the one who made the decisive pass, nor the defender who intercepted the ball. Seriously, what is or on whom does collective success depend? No name, no face. No face, no trace.

The myth of the stand-alone hero will continue to exist for a great many years: “I’m a poor, lonesome cowboy who’s far from home,” and I’m going to get there all on my own. There is the famous proverb that says: “One advances more quickly in life if they do things on their own...” So long as the path is difficult, that is to say, full of pitfalls, and because merit is on the same scale as the effort that is made, satisfaction will be equal to the suffering endured, and glory, proportional to the number of scars that form. However, modern myths demonstrate that heroes who get to their destination never do so alone. Solitary heroes always meet, as they move along their path, allies who will help head toward their goal.

Just look at Frodo, in the *Lord of Rings* movie who gets all the way to Mordor because of the support of Sam, Pippin, Merry, Legolas, Gandalf, and Aragorn. One forgets, for example, that it’s Sam, who with his unfailing faith and friendship for Frodo, will take him up to the abyss where the ring will be destroyed when

Frodo is no longer able to lift himself. The outside skills of some, and the inner qualities of others are put of service to the hero.

And then look at Princess Leia in *Star Wars series*, who surrounds herself with Luke Skywalker, R2D2, Hans Solo, and Chewbacca to carry out the rebellion. They are carried along, all at the same time, by the same quest, during which all of them acknowledge the contributions of everyone else, and each one of them offer what they can so it can be put to good use by the group; without that, the hero would not be able to get through her ordeal and undertake the next step.

What if these kinds of mythological tales reflected reality, and not only the framework of stories that we would have forgotten to interpret at the appropriate level?

In the same way, when one takes an interest in modern “heroes”, that is to say, the Bill Gates’s, the Elon Musk’s, the Mark Zuckerberg’s, the Richard Branson’s, and others, who have changed our lives so profoundly because of their inventions, one easily forgets that they are heroes who reached the top because a group of people supported them in their quest.

Here you have Steve Jobs describing just one aspect of his creative process: “...*So when a good idea comes, you know, part of my job is to move it around, just see what different people think, get people talking about it, argue with people about it, get ideas moving among that group of 100 people, get different people together to explore different aspects of it quietly, and, you know – just explore things.*”

So what does a person’s idea turn into once it benefits from the insight of 100 other people? And then who among us get beyond their own opinion or perspective, or that of two or three people who are close to them? It has been said that “extraordinary people do ordinary kinds of things that others don’t”. That doesn’t necessarily mean that those things are complicated; they can be as simple as asking for the opinion of several people who are in your midst.

But where does one find these multiple perspectives? What kinds of spaces offer, to business leaders (and we are all the leaders when it comes to our own lives) and senior executives, the chance to be on the receiving end of such help? A lot of you will say that the top of the hierarchy is a lonely place to be, especially when you are confronted by huge decisions. Yes, one often feels alone in the business world. The collective presence grows smaller, the quality of relationships becomes downgraded, and not everyone has the chance to have a supportive executive board at their disposal...

And even if that is the case, another question arises: **“Are spaces, where there is enough of a feeling of trust between members, offered so they can be on the receiving end of those multiple perspectives? because it is not just a matter of being surrounded by just anybody but of being “well-surrounded”.** The quality of the people in their circle, and the quality of their relationship with them, is a greater determining factor, when it comes to group effectiveness, than just the number of people in the group. And senior executives, owing to their hierarchical relationship with their teams, are not able to take advantage of invaluable opportunities for receiving non-distorted, uncompromising mirror images of themselves.

The description “well-surrounded” also causes one to ask the following: **“The people who surround some of the senior executives—Are they the right ones to be around them?”** Several of these executives overcome their solitary position by calling on consultants. In spite of all the good qualities that those who take it upon themselves to intervene might show, they are really at a remove from what the senior executive manager tries to accomplish and can only offer one point of view about the situation that she/he is going through. At the moment when everything changes very quickly, the stakes, for the executive become higher, and her/his need to learn things becomes essential. Nowadays, one knows that when one is attempting to accomplish something without any support, just reading a book isn’t going to help (how many among us buy a book and don’t read it all the way through, or don’t apply what’s in it until we get to the end?) Just attending a seminar doesn’t work, either. Training... only gives you general answers. Without ongoing training and support so we can undertake some action, everything that happens forces us to re-do everything that we have already done, even though it hasn’t worked. Go after what seems natural...

Nowadays, some other things, which are of major importance, guide decision makers’ progress: One needs to learn quickly, find shortcuts, save time, and model her/his successes and those of others. Who would be better than another executive, who perhaps has gone through that same kinds of situations, and whose issues are the same, to advise another decision maker regarding these kinds of matters?

“A large group of peers can be better for solving a problem than a small group of experts...” - James Surowiecki

And finally, it is not just a matter of learning quickly, all at once, but also of achieving rapid results associated with the same. Unfortunately, the senior executive’s greatest distraction is everything that keeps her/him from taking action. Therefore, the following question, “What are the areas where they can learn quickly, in an ongoing manner, which require them to transform their

learning into action, and their actions into results for their business?”, is asked by someone who helps them to move forward from “I know it” to “I’m doing it”, and even to the realization of “that is what I am”. There is also a great gap, in the first place, because answers are lacking, or those that there are do require the right level of demandingness. Because of new knowledge and encouragement from others, one ends up with the courage to move out of her/his comfort zone and to take action, which is one of the great dividends that come from participation in a Mastermind group.

And then? What if there was a way to move forward more quickly (and in a way that is better), that is to say, in a collective kind of way? What if there were a path along which you could avoid pitfalls because others who have already gone through that could share the results of their experience, and lend you their support? What if there was a place where ideas could proliferate, which could be super-catalyst for learning, and which would really speed up results? That would, of course, be a method that runs counter to the principle of the hero who succeeds on her or his own; but it is one that is both modern and ages old, one of crossing through stages, when collective intelligence is used to facilitate an investigation.

We believe that such a tool exists: It is called a Mastermind group. Our intention, by writing this book, is to share, with you, our conviction that there is a great deal of interest in this kind of group, more than anything else, because it makes use of the principles of collective intelligence. The Mastermind group is a pertinent, powerful answer for the challenges that face today’s business leaders and senior executives. The Mastermind group is the kind of team that one has always fantasized about—it is a real Dream T.E.A.M. (Together Each Achieves More). Yes, one does advance more quickly when one does things on their own, but even farther when one has a group around them. That adage is fundamental to the sustainable development issues faced by business leaders and senior management.

Does that seem too good to be true? You can be sure that all those who haven’t yet experienced the power of a Mastermind group think that. For the record, Napoleon Hill, who invented the term “Mastermind Alliance”, and whom we will talk about later, went so far as to say that “*a Mastermind group allows one to accomplish in a year what one would otherwise not be able to accomplish during an entire lifetime*”.

“*Under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent.*” - James Surowiecki