Develop your connectional intelligence
Point of View: Get big things done: The power of connectional intelligence

Based on Get Big Things Done: The Power of Connectional Intelligence, by Erica DHAWAN and Saj-Nicole JONI (Palgrave Macmillan, February 2015).

Interview: Deloitte: authenticity and connectional intelligence

Interview with Christie SMITH, Managing Director, West Region, Deloitte Consulting LLP, February 2015.

It's up to you: How to make smart connections

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In brief

Connectional intelligence is an aptitude that anyone can develop, thanks to digital technologies. Today’s unprecedented possibilities for connecting ideas, people, and resources is facilitating problem solving, disruptive innovation, and process optimization.

Deloitte’s culture fosters connectional intelligence. The strong conclusion that its leaders have reached is that this powerful aptitude is rooted in emotional maturity and personal authenticity of individual employees and leaders. Hence Christie Smith’s work to design programs that encourage the development of these characteristics throughout the company’s ranks.

How can you make smart connections? The first step is to clearly define your objective and vision and then examine your networks, whether internal or external, to discover who will connect and share their brainpower with you to achieve it.
The concept of emotional intelligence became widely established as an important component of leadership success with the publication in 1995 of Daniel Goleman’s *Emotional Intelligence – Why it can matter more than IQ*. Now, in response to the challenges and opportunities of the connected age, Erica Dhawan and Saj-nicole Joni promote a new concept of intelligence: connectional intelligence. As digital technologies continue to profoundly change the way we live, work, and solve problems, the authors argue that this form of intelligence is a more powerful driver of innovation and value creation than ever before.

**WHAT IS CONNECTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?**

Digital technologies are enabling people to make breakthrough connections between ideas, information, people, and resources on an unprecedented scale.

- **Beyond networking**
  Connectional intelligence is about more than just expanding your number of professional and personal contacts, or increasing your reach and influence on social media networks. Rather, it is about realizing the big opportunities that digital technologies make pos-

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**MEMO**

- **Connectional intelligence** is the set of traits, skills, and abilities that enable you to make breakthrough connections.
- **Solutions and ideas formed through connection** have the possibility to create more value than those formed by isolated individuals.
- **Forging strong, productive connections** between a disparate array of ideas, people, and resources requires you to have a clear idea of your objective(s).
Connective intelligence is about the ability to design problems in such a way that many people will want to pitch in to solve them.

Possible. “Never before have so many people had access, through mobile, social, and digital technology, to so much data, knowledge and collective brainpower,” write the authors. “We believe that this connectedness gives us power to solve big problems, turn dreams into realities, create amazing products, upgrade survival to prosperity (…) and much, much more.”

Connecting to create value
People who excel at making strong, productive connections share multiple attributes in common, what the authors call “the 5-C’s of connectional intelligence”:

- **Curiosity**: the ability to ask questions from different contexts to gain new perspectives
- **Combination**: the ability to take different ideas, resources, or products and combine them to create new ways of thinking
- **Community**: the ability to bring people together to create, spark new ideas, and develop care and understanding
- **Courage**: the ability to venture, persevere, and withstand uncertainty, fear or even danger when connecting ideas or initiating difficult conversations
- **Combustion**: the ability to mobilize and curate diverse networks in pursuit of a goal

By building an organizational culture that supports and encourages this particular form of intelligence, your company will become more agile at problem solving and innovation. Consider Colgate-Palmolive. After a successful trial run on the crowdsourcing platform InnoCentive enabled them to save money and time in the resolution of an R&D problem, the consumer products giant redesigned its internal work processes in order to promote greater connectional intelligence (See the box “Colgate connects with external brainpower”).

WHY CONNECTION IS CRITICAL
The first step towards developing this form of intelligence is to understand and embrace the value of connection.

Letting go of the myth of the lone genius
“The romantic myth of the lone-genius fails because it obscures the social, connected qualities of innovation,” write the authors, who explain that we can multiply our own knowledge, drive, and insight “by the power” of others. Embracing this insight is a key aspect of connectional intelligence. A case in point is the recent shift towards greater collaboration at the New York City law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. In 2012, the CFO noticed a decline in billing among Skadden’s incoming associates. He discovered that they had created a network, a modified version of Twitter, to share information and advice about their cases. When someone had a problem or question, he or she would pose it on the forum and often immediately receive the answer from a peer. By collaborating with each other in this way, they were able to work better and far more quickly. Their gains in efficiency, however, meant fewer billing hours. “The old-school solution would have been for the firm to declare that billing was Skadden’s first priority — and to shut down the Twitter consultations,” write Dhawan and Joni. “That’s not what happened. As much as the partners at the top of Skadden may not have liked the change, they understood that this is the future — a better, more powerful system — and that it is natural to the new generation.” In the short term, working in this new, more connectionally intelligent way is reducing billing hours, but the firm’s leaders’ trust that the ability to provide faster, better, and more affordable services to its clients will have the highest payout in the long term. Accordingly, they created a program to raise awareness among all employees about connecting on the network and set up a reverse mentoring program to increase the social networking skills of older associates.

Connection is within everyone’s reach
Connectional intelligence is nothing new. There have always been individuals able “to make breakthroughs by combining ideas, people, and information.” The authors call Leonardo da Vinci, “painter and architect, mathematician and inventor, botanist and renowned polymath (…) the godfather of connectional intelligence.” But what is new are digital technologies, which have placed the tools for connection in everyone’s hands. What’s more, your connec-
tions have a greater chance of resulting in breakthroughs when characterized by a diverse mix of skills, talents, and personalities. The authors thus warn against misunderstanding connectional intelligence as something that comes most naturally to one specific personality type, namely extroverts. “When it comes to getting big things done in organizations, we urge managers and senior leaders to fully encourage the connectional intelligence of introverts and remember to avoid situations in which over-collaboration and over-connection kill creativity and allow groupthink to take over.”

**WHAT MAKES OTHERS WANT TO CONNECT WITH YOU?**

How can you cut through all the noise of the connected age and inspire others to share their brainpower with you?

**Identify problems that others want to solve**

“Connectional intelligence isn’t only about sharing ideas, data and problems with lots of other people,” write Dhawan and Joni. “It’s also about the ability to design problems in such a way that many people will want to pitch in to solve them.” According to the authors, this process begins with the art of questioning. They cite Warren Berger’s book *A More Beautiful Question*, in which he explains that questioning “with direction and purpose” is a crucial skill for navigating the “rabbit hole of information that makes Google such a powerful, but also limited, tool.” They suggest asking the sometimes obvious but crucial questions, such as: What is the problem and why does it matter to me? To others? To the future? And, finally, they emphasize the value of negative questions (i.e., what do we *not* have? What do we *not* know?). After you have established a basic sense of the problem that you want to solve, you can start conversations by asking others questions such as the following: Have you noticed this? What have you noticed about it in your work / research / experience? Do you know someone who might be able to help me?

![Colgate connects with external brainpower](image)

Colgate connects with external brainpower

In 2006, when over 200 scientists and researchers at Colgate Palmolive could not figure out how to keep a new, more effective formulation of fluoride paste intact while injecting it into toothpaste tubes, one executive convinced the company’s top R&D team try crowdsourcing. They posted their problem on InnoCentive, an open-source problem-solving site launched in 2001 with funding from the pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly. After it was posted, freelance inventor and physicist Ed Melcarek quickly identified the solution, which had to do with the electrical charge of atoms. When asked why the researchers at Colgate hadn’t thought of what he describes as, “a very simple solution,” Melcarek says: “They’re probably test tube guys without any training in physics.” This confirms what MIT’s Karim Lakhani observed in his study of InnoCentive: “The strength of (this network) is the diversity of intellectual background.” For Colgate, connecting to Melcarek was a transformational experience. “(Colgate) opened themselves up to other people, ideas and resources, it transformed what they thought was possible.” She offers three closing pieces of advice: 1) open yourself up to new people and ideas; 2) Make connections and partnerships that truly matter; 3) Leverage what’s been done before. “You don’t have to reinvent the wheel or be the boss right away to be successful,” she notes. “Think about where your passion lies and then look at what already exists. Be open to the various ways people are already taking action around your dream and learn to work with them in new ways.”

**Demonstrate authentic commitment**

Your ability to inspire others to share their brainpower with you depends more on the authenticity of your motivations than either personal charisma or professional prestige. Only people who are open and sincere (and thereby inspire openness and sincerity in others) will be able to rally others around their vision and build strong, productive connections. At the same time, however, covering— or downplaying the disfavored aspects of our identity to fit into the mainstream— continues to pervade corporate culture, which undermines the kind of open, full engagement that connectional intelligence demands. Indeed, according to a 2013 study, covering decreases engagement in 49% of professionals. Refusing to cover and, instead, bringing your fullest, truest self to your work goes a long way towards inspiring others to want to share their brainpower with you.

In a February 2015 interview with *Forbes* magazine, Erica Dhawan emphasizes that higher connectional intelligence is within everyone’s reach: “All you need is the ability to make smart, interesting connections and build off of them. I saw many people who just had an idea or a passion, nothing else, and once they opened themselves up to other people, ideas and resources, it transformed what they thought was possible.”

Deloitte: authenticity and connectional intelligence

Interview with Christie Smith, Managing Director, West Region, Deloitte Consulting LLP, February 2015.

Christie Smith’s research into the concept of covering reveals a key component of connectional intelligence: authenticity. In the following interview, Christie explains how she and other top leaders at Deloitte Consulting are working to integrate uncovering and connectional intelligence into their culture.

In 2013, Christie Smith co-wrote a white paper called “Uncovering talent: a new model of inclusion.” That research is now being used at Deloitte to redefine company conversations around inclusion. In the following interview, Christie explains the concept of covering and how it relates to connectional intelligence.

Leaders accountable for the costs of covering

The concept of “covering” was first introduced in 1963 by sociologist Erving Goffman to describe how people downplay stigmatized aspects of their identities to fit into the mainstream. Struck by the pervasiveness of this problem in corporate culture and its significance to her role as the head of the Deloitte University Center for Inclusion, she decided to explore covering from a business and leadership standpoint. She asked the question, “What is the cost of covering to corporations?” To try to find the answer, Christie connected with Kenji Yoshino, lawyer and author of Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights (Random House 2006), and the two co-wrote a white paper on the subject published in July 2013. “Our sample group consisted of 200 employees from 7 different industries and 10 different countries. But there was so much interest in our initial study that, in December 2013, we published a second paper with a bigger sample group of 3,100 respondents,” says Christie. The study found that a high number of respondents — 75% — report having to cover at work. And, for half of those employees, covering results in a reduced sense of opportunity and engagement. In Christie words, “When you cover at work, you bring only half your brain, passion, and attention, and, ultimately, you will be open to walking out the door the first chance you get.” 61% of respondents report expectations from leaders to cover, and 59% report cultural expectations to cover. “These findings shift inclusion discussions from ...
... the individual’s experience — a focus that has unintentionally been blaming the victim — to leadership and culture,” says Christie. “It finally puts accountability and responsibility for inclusion efforts into the hands of leaders and organizations.” The other significant finding of her study was that 45% of straight white men report covering. “Covering is not something that ‘they’ do – it’s something ‘we’ do,” states the report. “With the concept of covering, companies finally have a language for inclusion efforts that speaks across difference to all employees.”

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Uncovering lays the foundations for connectional intelligence
Uncovering facilitates your ability to connect across difference, and this makes it a key aspect of connectional intelligence. “20 years ago, emotional intelligence focused our attention on understanding our own personal attributes, but now there is a demand to have emotional skills across a variety of modalities in person and remotely, which is about emotional maturity,” says Christie. “Activating emotional maturity through the narrative of uncovering and connectional intelligence creates the foundations for the kinds of connections that you need to make to be effective now.” For Christie, the importance of these skills to leadership success is clear. “Connectional intelligence is to this age what emotional intelligence was to the 1990s,” says Christie. “It’s a concept that is easy for me to understand, because it describes my leadership style perfectly. I have always tried to look at what tools I have at my disposal to connect with clients, peers, and employees, and asked myself how I can inject as much humanity as possible into these connections.”

Deloitte’s leaders promote uncovering
“We have a culture that encourages the expression of collective intelligence. We submit problems to our employees and ask them for solutions,” explains Christie. “When it came to the problem of covering, the number one response we kept receiving was that our leaders had to show up more authentically. Employees said they weren’t feeling connected; they needed to know who their leaders are, not what they’ve done.” In response to this perceived authenticity, in 2013 Deloitte Consulting launched an internal campaign called “Share Your Story.” 60 senior partners were videotaped speaking about personal aspects of their lives that they had hitherto felt compelled to cover. For example, one top leader shared her story about learning that she would never be able to conceive. Another discussed what it is like to have diabetes and the hardships of traveling for the company with this condition. “After we shared those videos with everyone in the company, there was a real shift. It strengthened the connections between Deloitte’s people. The campaign went viral. Today, out employees regularly video and share their own personal stories as part of this campaign. It has become a part of our culture,” says Christie.

In 2014, Erica Dhawan, co-author of Get Big Things Done: The Power of Connectional Intelligence, presented the concept of connectional intelligence and its components as it relates to covering and inclusion overall to Deloitte Consulting’s executive committee. After her presentation, CEO Jim Moffatt announced that these issues are now the “number one strategic priority” for the influential professional services firm’s 2015 fiscal year. The plan is to begin formally building connectional intelligence at Deloitte in a pilot series of training sessions for its executive team, led by Erica, with plans to eventually scale up the program to the rest of the company.

FACT SHEET
DELOITTE CONSULTING LLP
Industry: Professional Services
Chairman and CEO: Jim Moffatt
Employees (2014): 180 000
Revenue (2014): $28.8 million

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By connecting people, ideas, resources, and information, you can get extraordinary results in terms of innovation, problem solving, and process optimization. First, identify your needs and objectives; then, connect with those likely to help you achieve them.

How to make smart connections

1 / DETERMINE AN ACTION PLAN

Define what your mission is and, importantly, what resources and skills you need to realize it. A clear vision of your objective will help you determine whom you should reach out to and partner with.

Define your big thing

Establish a very clear concept of what your objective is, why you want to attain it, and connect with others who can help.
- Decide exactly what you’re seeking to do: launch a major innovation, solve a problem, improve a process, and so on.
- Ask yourself why your objective matters to you, and how it might matter to other individuals, networks or groups? Are others working towards similar objectives?
- Identify what you’re missing. Ask yourself questions: what do we not have to achieve our objective? What do we not know?

Examine your networks

Look beyond your immediate relationships. Study other networks that inclusively link billions of people to each other, to the world’s knowledge, to different points of view, to instant news, scientific data and social issues.

- Search your networks for potential partners (internal or external colleagues and experts, who exhibit interests related to your objective). Then look still further afield for unexpectedly valuable partners and contacts that you hadn’t known about or previously considered. Prioritize individuals who demonstrate skills and knowledge that you lack.
- Question how you can leverage the strengths and connections of potential partners, and how your different strengths and weaknesses can raise your effectiveness through aggregation. Begin reaching out to people who are already actively engaged in tackling problems similar to your own, but who have different skills than you.

2 / EVALUATE YOUR CONNECTIONS

You now know what you are setting out to do, which you figured out partly through a preliminary search for the kinds of people, ideas, and resources that already exist to help you achieve your breakthrough. Now, it’s time to deepen and refine your connections with that wide array of individuals, groups, and associations.
Look for the right traits in your partners
Find collaborators who will bring the specific assets required for connectional intelligence.

- Are they curious? Do they regularly ask good questions? Do they bring an original perspective to discussions? Are they open to reflections from different perspectives?
- Do they know how to combine ideas and resources to create new ideas and ways of thinking?
- Do they contribute to a shared sense of community? Do they like to work with others? Do they know how to bring diverse individuals together to generate new ideas?
- Do they accept uncertainty? Are they capable of initiating difficult conversations? Do they dare to leave their comfort zone to cultivate new connections?
- Are they sufficiently open to others? Do they know how to mobilize individuals around a common goal? Do they encourage the cross-pollination of ideas?

Evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses
As the first link of your connectional network, evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to connectional intelligence.

- Take note of C5 attributes in which you scored yourself both strongest and weakest
- Identify ways to leverage those positive aspects and consider which of your partners could benefit most from those capabilities
- Analyze areas in which you scored yourself lower, and determine how those can be improved in conjunction with people boasting the very capacities you are lacking
- Begin that same process with people you chose for your project team, getting all members to evaluate themselves and how they appraise the strengths and weaknesses of the other partners

Ask your new partners questions
Discuss the project with your selected partners. Ask them:
- How can everyone play a role in effectively advancing the project?
- What resources and ideas seem like they will be the most effective?
- Which tools and technologies can be used to turn your ideas into action?
- How can the group connect with key influencers and authorities?
- How can you uncover improbable sources and unlikely connections that will advance your project?

3/ OPTIMIZE YOUR CONNECTIONS
Make sure partners have the duties that best correspond to their strengths and then mobilize them in pursuit of your shared goal.

Organize your connections
Organize the contrasting and complimenting strengths of your partners by making sure their potential is being optimized. The authors suggest structuring members under three main headings according to abilities:
- Thinkers who spark, generate and breathe life into the big ideas driving the project
- Enablers who create the structures, forces and platforms to get big things done
- Connection Executors who mobilize the people, resources and partners within the group and with outside networks to get big things moving, growing, and expanding

Refine and fill out the group
Once the group is working, identify the gaps (which tend to happen most frequently in groups with overlapping strengths and interests).
- Do you have more Thinkers than Connection Executors? Or is your team filled with Enablers? Might some members be willing and able to switch roles?
- Identify commonalities and opportunities for individuals with different CxQ role models, and partner them with one another to remedy weak spots and help get big things done.
- Continue looking for valuable new members to fill gaps — either as integral members of your group, or outside networking partners providing information, direction, organization or access help.

Adapt you advance
Regularly examine the evolution of the project and respond to changes, successes and failures by updating your processes.
- Write out an action list of every task that needs to be completed, assigning responsibility for fulfilling those and establishing deadlines for completion
- Re-analyze individual and group progress and gaps, and act to develop or compensate for them
- Continue searching for individuals, groups or audiences for new expertise, ideas, or resources that your group lacks. Scour industry associations, cross-disciplinary conferences, digital communities, crowdsourcing platforms, established companies, startups, and elsewhere
- Periodically identify three practical actions individuals and the entire group can undertake to strengthen the group’s internal and external connections...
WHAT KIND OF LEADERSHIP INSPIRES COLLECTIVE GENIUS?

At today’s most innovative companies, innovation is a “team sport,” not the domain of a few individual geniuses. Accordingly, leaders focus on creating the kind of environment that enables everyone’s individual “slices of genius” to come together into a single work of “collective genius.” Based on Collective Genius: The Art and Practice of Leading Innovation by Linda A. Hill, Greg Brandeau, Emily Truelove, and Kent Lineback (Harvard Business Review Press, June 2014), and the interview with Greg Brandeau, former senior vice president of technology at Pixar Animation Studios, current COO, Chromatik.

SIX VITAL SKILLS FOR 2.0 LEADERSHIP

Whether you’re the head of an IT startup or a 100-year-old industrial company, knowing how to mobilize social networks is a key individual and collective performance factor. Based on, among others, “Six social-media skills every leader needs” by Roland Deiser and Sylvain Newton (McKinsey Quarterly, February 2013) and “Les nouvelles technos ne détruisent pas le cerveau, elles s’y adaptent” by Hubert Guillaud (Le Monde, March 2013), The End of Leadership by Barbara Kellerman (HarperBusiness, April 2012) and the interview with Zachary Rosenberg, EVP Chief Growth Officer, Horizon Media, May 2013.

LEADING WITH SENSE: THE INTUITIVE POWER OF SAVOIR-RELIER

By Valérie Gauthier (Stanford University Press, August 2014). During Dr. Valérie Gauthier’s 2002-2010 tenure as dean of the HEC Paris MBA program, that program rose from a global ranking of 67 to 18. In her 2014 book Leading with Sense: The Intuitive Power of Savoir-Relier, Dr. Gauthier explains the theory of leadership she developed and used to transform the HEC MBA program from “a dramatically failing program with angry students and demoralized staff” to one of the best ranked MBA programs in the world. She calls her theory of leadership savoir-relier, which translates into “relational intelligence,” or “the capacity and will to build sensible, sustainable, and trustworthy relationships within complex systems and across boundaries.” Similar to Daniel Goleman’s concept of emotional intelligence and Erica Dhawan and Saj-nicole Joni’s concept of connectional intelligence, there is no numerical quotient for relational intelligence. Rather, savoir-relier is “an act, a capacity, a mind-set, and a process.”

RETURN ON IMPACT: LEADERSHIP STRATEGIES FOR THE AGE OF CONNECTED RELATIONSHIPS

By David Nour (Jossey-Bass, September 2013). “Almost everything we use and everyone we interact with is becoming increasingly connected; digital links and connected relationships are being built among people, groups with similar interests, data from multiple sources, objects, machines, and computers,” writes Nour, who argues that these changes call for a fundamental shift in leadership. “Leadership strategy for the age of connected relationships isn’t about putting up a Facebook fan page or the CEO’s tweeting three times a day. It’s about the unequivocal need to think and act differently as a leading organization.” This book is designed to show business leaders what will set their organizations apart in the connected age, providing insights into the issues of structure and governance, talent acquisition, listening practices, and business and revenue models.