

Spirituality in the boardroom: the highest intelligence?

Spiritual Intelligence (SQ21) coaches **Louise Leadbetter**, **Liz Oliver** and **Paul Wielgus** describe the challenges of bringing spirituality into the workplace and explore the potential benefits of specialist SQ training for therapists, coaches – and our clients.

As human beings, it is our intelligence that makes us successful as a species, and the more successful we are, the more we realise that our intelligence is multifaceted. Studies on stages of human development over recent decades suggest that, far from declining as we get older, we open up to new ways of thinking and being. The work of Carl Jung, Abraham Maslow and Clare Graves, among others, points towards the existence of an intelligence that we begin to tap into as we progress further along the path of self-discovery. Building on the knowledge they have uncovered, it is now possible to begin exploring and developing this 'higher intelligence' earlier in our lives and open up to a much greater understanding of ourselves, our life experience and our place in the world.

This higher intelligence has been referred to as 'SQ' or spiritual quotient, as featured in Stephen Covey's *The 8th Habit*¹ and *SQ - The Ultimate Intelligence*, by Dana Zohar and Ian Marshall.² Spiritual intelligence, although ancient and fundamental to our existence, is an emergent field in personal development and leadership programmes. The apparent increased interest in spiritual intelligence seems to reflect an inherent need to connect to 'something bigger than us', and provide a deeper level of meaning. For coaches and therapists, having a deeper understanding of SQ can help translate this fundamental aspect of our humanity into the world of behaviours, beliefs and attitudes.

For most people working in a business or corporate setting, SQ is a tough sell. If the 'S' word (spiritual) is mentioned when pertaining to business, people often roll their eyes and look embarrassed. Business leaders want to know, 'How will it affect my bottom line?', 'How will it make me a better professional?', or 'What's in it for me?' Typically they're in the business of making money and driving markets, not helping people. However, there are a growing number of business leaders, owners and especially younger companies who understand the benefits and have the philosophical drive to 'add something to the world' while also making money. Whoever said these should be mutually exclusive anyway?

The spiritual territory has never been as clearly defined, accurately reconstructed or presented in such a practical way before. Who would have thought that the notion of 'emotional intelligence' could ever have had such a global impact? It did because we could all see exactly why and how to apply it to work and to life. Perhaps now is the moment for spiritual intelligence to take the stage, providing a transformation tool that addresses this vital and fundamental aspect of our lives.

The 21 skills of spiritual intelligence

Years of rigorous research has been carried out by Cindy Wigglesworth, author and creator of *SQ21 - the 21 skills of Spiritual Intelligence*.³ She observed world-renowned leaders and exemplars such as Mother Theresa, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and the Dalai Lama. These global icons are admired and greatly respected, but what is it that they possess that sets them apart? What have they figured out that the rest of us have not? Their simple yet powerful actions have had a profound impact in many corners of the world. Through very challenging times, they have honoured their deeply held principles and have been inspired to see and serve the greater good. Their common traits include: courage, humility, wisdom, compassion, love, integrity, authenticity, respect, empathy, commitment and trustworthiness. Sound familiar for therapists?

These characteristics conveniently mirror and reflect BACP's values and principles as defined within its *Ethical Framework*.⁴ If these are considered higher intelligence traits, then many BACP accredited coaching therapists already have a guiding framework, which requires similar standards, attitudes and behaviours. What we don't all have however, are the practical tools and support systems to assess whether or not we are meeting these standards, and to then ensure we can develop and grow to sustain them.

As coaches, counsellors or therapists, it could be said that we are all ultimately on a quest to find our 'best selves' – and to help our clients do the same. Wigglesworth's SQ21 model and assessment tool is an inclusive, secular, faith-neutral process, which allows us to review,



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challenge, choose and re-boot our human 'software'. When applied within workplace coaching, it can help counter some of the resistance of clients and business owners to the word 'spiritual' and its connotations. Moreover, it instigates a complex, deeper, fascinating conversation, which assists us in questioning where we are in our quest.

Why does it matter?

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with growing rates of anxiety, depression and fear. In addition to the disconnection, many of us are being asked to do more with less, and even our best efforts can leave us feeling depleted and unfulfilled. Developing SQ helps us find ways to reconnect with ourselves and with the wider world in a way that helps us grow individually and collectively. It helps us re-examine the way we perceive the world around us and expand our worldview. Whether we embark on a spiritual intelligence journey for ourselves as therapists and coaches or we offer it to our coachees and clients, the good news is that there are now clear, pragmatic routes for development.

For therapists, counsellors and change agents who want to be a force for good or make a positive contribution to our world, the ability to assess our own potential for spiritual intelligence can be a powerful tool. As we face the best and the worst of life every day at work, developing a greater awareness of our own spiritual intelligence offers us a way to not just cope with both ends of life's spectrum, but to have the ability to step back, see things through a new lens and flourish, no matter what.

Developing the 21 skills is not a linear process; it is a lifelong and largely experiential path, which is different for each of us. By taking the SQ21 assessment our clients can find out where their starting point is and then work with an SQ accredited coach to interpret the results, gain new insights, ask challenging questions and discover a new perspective on their world.

Equipped with an entirely new map with a different set of navigation tools, it is the client who decides where it takes them and how to apply any chosen aspects to their lives. It will however, inevitably take them somewhere that matters to them, in a way that enables them to live life in a calmer, more peaceful way, with a highly conscious and meaningful set of skills, attitudes and behaviours.

The model below is in a four-quadrant format, building on the one created for Emotional Intelligence, and shows an outline of the SQ21 skills:⁵

One challenge that we UK coaches have experienced is that of language. Despite careful and sensitive development by Cindy Wigglesworth and her team at Deep Change Inc, there are still a few initial, linguistic hurdles, which have the potential to engage defences or be misinterpreted, especially for non faith-based individuals. The inclusion of a glossary, both in the assessment and the report, prompts an ongoing discussion, and proves to be a valuable, insightful aspect to review all by itself. No matter what the client's personal interpretation, it is the subsequent conversations, post assessment, with an SQ coach that provides a highly personalised and relevant context for each individual to consider.

The authors of this article have collaborated to create a guide to accompany the SQ21 assessment report for clients in order to promote greater personal understanding of

the valuable content and unique insights behind the words and glossary of SQ21. The guide details some tangible benefits of each skill, the implications of not developing the skills and some practical recommendations for progression.

What are the benefits?

Receiving an SQ21 assessment raises many new, thought-provoking questions most of us have rarely, if ever, asked ourselves before. Some of the key benefits, according to its creator Cindy Wigglesworth,⁶ are that:

- The reduction in ego or 'small self' perspectives creates a huge increase in innovation for clients and their teams, and new ideas flourish.
- The reduced need to defend the old way of doing things makes change much easier.
- The magnetic vision generated from the higher perspective of SQ mobilises people into action. It is energising and taps into people's desire for meaning and purpose in both their work and personal lives.
- The higher vantage point of SQ provides a less noisy, less fearful, less drama-prone way of working.
- The calm of a high-SQ perspective on problems gives clients the energy to work on complex problems they may face. They are not wasting adrenaline on the situation - they focus their energy appropriately and can accomplish more.

Benefits for therapists, counsellors and coaches

- Embracing a new level of 'being' by learning conscious skills to behave with wisdom and compassion. It combines the best of 'the head and the heart' to sustain the wellbeing of both our clients and ourselves.
- Continuing personal growth and development - SQ21 offers a clear tangible framework for progression on your terms, using your own definitions, for use in your own life and in practice. It is not a prescriptive process; it is personal, professional and practical.
- Reviewing and reaffirming our essence, moral qualities and values. Who you are is strengthened - integrity, resilience and decision making become simpler and inner conflict is minimised. Your ego gets shifted out of the driving seat and your higher self gets put in charge.
- Integrating multiple intelligences - all intelligences become interdependent, with SQ as the cornerstone that amplifies the others (EQ, IQ and PQ - emotional, intellectual and physical).

Case study 1 - 'The sceptic'

Feedback from 'Robert', a leadership and management director in education, following an SQ21 assessment, illustrates one area of resistance and its paradoxical benefits:

Robert was sceptical, looking for scientific evidence, not unsubstantiated concepts. After much discussion and some resistance, we translated the language to interpret the SQ tool and find personal meaning for Robert, resulting in some interesting conversations surrounding his belief systems and what these meant for him. Robert had this to say:

'I liked the overt nature of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks utilised. Even when I wished to contest them, I found they helped to focus my thinking and responses. The most problematic areas were those linked to "spiritual intelligence" language, which created a degree of intellectual "interference" as I considered my responses. However, this didn't create long-term problems once translated and I felt able to respond freely and openly. I would wish the language to be reviewed, given the cross-cultural use of the approach. I am familiar with the general assumptions but I think this might well be off-putting to some and, therefore, impede the effectiveness of the work.'

'The conversations were clearly structured and purposeful, allowing ample room for consideration and for my contributions, and provided numerous opportunities for my sense-making to inform and change things. Careful questioning and open responses led me to be challenged in a considered and fascinating way. Overall, it was clear that my learning and development was placed at the centre of everything. I felt challenged, but in a most appropriate way, and was able to reflect in some depth to identify aspects of my own beliefs and performance that are worth reviewing. I found the process to be thought provoking and valuable.'

Case study 2 - 'The cynic'

A deep cynicism regarding the religion of her upbringing and perceived hypocritical behaviour of her religious teacher and parents, had led to an inhibition in 'Nancy's' personal and spiritual development.

Exacerbated by their overreliance on her as a young teenager to manage the 'grown-up' tasks in the household, she experienced difficulty in her sense of connection with her parents.

Working with the SQ21 assessment, Nancy was able to begin to realise that she had put a blanket of condemnation on the religion of her upbringing, and this was tainting her views not only of that faith but also of the idea of any spiritual development overall.

Through the use of the SQ21 instrument she gradually discovered her own prejudices, and found a renewed sense of trust in her own spiritual development that led to greater empathy and eventually forgiveness of her parents. This has led to a deeper sense of connection with them, positively impacting significantly on Nancy's own sense of peace and wellbeing.

Creator of SQ21, Cindy Wigglesworth, comments, 'Therapists can be crucial for helping people develop spiritual intelligence (SQ) skills. With assistance, clients can begin to more objectively observe their ego and its defences and habits. They can more intentionally choose the purpose and values they wish to embody. And with guidance, they can develop the courage to live from their best selves - embodying both emotional and spiritual intelligence skills.'

As constant busy-ness reaches epidemic proportions for many therapists, coaches and clients alike, our mental, emotional and physical capacities continue to be stretched beyond their limit. If we keep looking 'out there' for guidance and spiritual solace, we're going to have a tough job to spot it among the myriad other stimulæ. With SQ21 as a catalyst, we have a helpful framework to look inwards, to explore how to subdue the incessant demands and discover a more peaceful, fulfilling and sustainable way to live and work. ■

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The authors are accredited spiritual intelligence coaches and offer SQ21 assessments, coaching and workshops for individuals and teams - in both private and corporate settings. SQ21 regional workshops are planned for 2017 by the authors - please register your interest or contact Louise Leadbetter for further information by email at louise@honeycoaching.com

References

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SQ21™- 21 Skills of spiritual intelligence	
<p>1. Self/self awareness</p> <p>1. Awareness of own worldview 2. Awareness of life purpose 3. Awareness of values hierarchy 4. Complexity of inner thought 5. Awareness of ego self/higher self</p>	<p>2. Universal awareness</p> <p>6. Awareness of interconnectedness 7. Awareness of worldviews of others 8. Breadth of time perception 9. Awareness of limitations/power of human perception 10. Awareness of spiritual laws 11. Experience of transcendent oneness</p>
<p>3. Self/Self mastery</p> <p>12. Commitment to spiritual growth 13. Keeping higher self in charge 14. Living your purpose and values 15. Sustaining in faith in tough times 16. Seeking guidance from higher power/spirit/higher self</p>	<p>3. Social mastery, spiritual presence</p> <p>17. Wise and effective teacher 18. Wise and effective change agent 19. Makes compassionate and wise decisions 20. Being a calming, healing presence 21. Align with the ebb and flow of life</p>