

INTRODUCTION

Did you ever have that one class in school where no matter how hard you tried you just never seemed to get it? No matter how hard you studied, no matter how hard you worked, results just never seemed to come easily, if at all. Even if you did do well, was it always a struggle? If you're like most people, there was also another class where the exact opposite was true and things just came to you almost effortlessly. The whole concept just made sense, and you achieved greater success more naturally with less effort.

One reason for this is that each of us has certain innate talents for thinking and making decisions. These natural thinking talents allow us to see some things very clearly while filtering out others almost completely. For example, some people naturally see the big picture very easily (the talent for strategic thinking) or intuitively understand how various parts work together (the talent for integrative ability), while for others understanding complex problems is like second nature (the problem-solving talent).

Our thinking talents and decision-making styles comprise the very core of who we are. They make us the unique individuals that we see in the mirror each morning, and they hold the greatest potential for delivering our greatest levels of performance and success.

The most recent scientific evidence would argue that these decision-making styles are engrained in who we are by both our genetics and

early life experiences. As a result, while these thinking talents may change and develop slightly over the course of our lives, these are not things that you can develop through training exercises or sheer effort in adulthood. If your job (or class) depends heavily on a thinking talent that you don't possess, or if it doesn't align well with what thinking talents you do possess, you are in trouble. You will always be that student sitting in the difficult class, working harder than anyone else yet still achieving less success.

Conventional wisdom, however, would argue that you should do just that. The traditional view of self-improvement says that it is good to place yourself in that difficult class, to become well rounded in a wide variety of areas and to identify your weaknesses so you can *fix* them and turn them into strengths. Unfortunately, conventional wisdom, which this book will challenge, is based on time-honored principles, and the problem with such principles is that they can become subject to less and less consideration over time. Eventually, such "wisdom" becomes such a part of the norm that it fails to be questioned at all, becoming accepted without question—even when it is wrong.

What's Your Genius is the result of seven years of research into what drives individual performance and excellence. As part of this research, we looked at over 197,000 people—including some of the most successful people in a wide variety of fields—to see if we could identify common factors present among the top performers. The study separated performance into five levels with the fifth level being the peak of performance or what we called "Genius." So this isn't a book about how to increase your intelligence; it's a book about how to help anyone reach peak levels of performance by being true to their own natural thinking talents—their own "best way" (i.e. their genius).

What the study revealed is that the most successful people don't follow conventional wisdom. They understand that their natural talents are fixed and therefore they don't spend their lives trying in vain to change their natural thinking talents. They understand that they are who they are, and instead of wasting vast amounts of energy trying

to become something they are not, they invest that energy in trying to better apply the natural talents they already possess. To quote an expert in the field, Dr. Robert Hartman, today's best performers, "stop trying to put in what God left out and instead work with what He put in."

The message isn't that you don't have to work hard to be successful. It isn't that you shouldn't continually attempt to expand and grow either. Learning what your natural thinking talents are, and learning how to utilize them for maximum effect is plenty hard enough. The message of this book is that there is a difference between working hard in the dark and working hard in the light—the full light of awareness for what and who you are and how best to leverage that for optimal success.

Dr. Marshall Goldsmith, one of the Geniuses interviewed in the research, says that when it comes to continuing to develop and refine himself, "I constantly try to refine the strengths I have, but that doesn't mean I try to develop things I don't already have. One danger in the message of only focusing on strengths is that people may perceive this to mean that they don't have to improve at all. Rather, within their natural talents they must always improve. The key is to find a role that depends primarily on what you do well, then continue to get even better at it through practice, awareness, acquired knowledge and experience." Marshall goes on to say, "There are a whole lot of things I stink at. I just make sure I don't have to do them to be successful."

To succeed today you must find your own best way to do things, because when we really know ourselves, when we are completely authentic to our natural thinking talents, when we create goals and objectives that feed off those talents, an almost mystical energy seems to show up in what we are doing. The stars seem to align, and, as Basil King put it, "mighty forces come to our aid."

In the end it's not about fixing who we are, it is about *trusting* who we are and letting our natural talents do their thing. In that moment—where all of our talents are optimally aligned with what we are doing—anyone really can become a genius.

Some of the successful people studied who helped teach us this truth include:

- Anthony Robbins—Personal Life Coach and Peak Performance expert;
- Dan Lyons—CEO of Team Concepts Inc., seven-time National Team member, World Champion and Olympian in rowing;
- Frances Hesselbein—Founding Director of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation and former CEO of Girl Scouts of America;
- Laurence Higgins, M.D.—Chief of Sports Medicine and Shoulder at Harvard;
- Dr. Marshall Goldsmith—*NY Times* best-selling business author & executive coach to Fortune 500 CEOs;
- Michael Lorelli—former Chief Marketing Officer and President of PepsiCo East and Pizza Hut International;
- Mickey Rogers—World Authority Demolitions Expert;
- Randy Haykin—Founding Vice President Sales/Marketing Yahoo Inc.; and
- Rosemary Hygate—Executive Assistant to the stars

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Sir Frances Bacon once said, “Knowledge is power.” Unfortunately, he was only half correct, because only *applied* knowledge is power; otherwise it remains only potential power. While this book will indeed give you new knowledge about yourself and your natural thinking talents, the great challenge is not to understand the practice of being successful, it is learning how to practice that understanding.

As Benjamin Franklin once said, “Tell me and I will forget, show me and I might remember, involve me and I will understand.” Throughout this book you will be given a lot of new knowledge, but to help you really understand that knowledge, you will also be asked to complete certain activities. These are called Genius Action Steps, and they reside in an online suite of tools developed specifically for this book. You now have free access to all of these tools.

Go to: www.whatsyourgenius.com/workbook to create your own free account and access your private workbook. It only takes a few seconds, the system is a secure, password-encrypted site, and you will be the only one who has access to it.

Throughout the book whenever you see the symbol below you will know it is time to go to your WYG online workbook to complete a short exercise or activity to help you apply some new bit of knowledge.



