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Positive Intelligence

Why only 20% of Teams and Individuals Achieve
Their True Potential and How You Can Achieve Yours

Shirzad Chamine • Greenleaf Book Group © 2012 • 221 pages

Management / Management Concepts
Personal Development / Positive Thinking

Take-Aways

- Your mind can work for you or against you. You can learn to make it work for you.
- A high “Positive Intelligence Quotient” (PQ) leads to better performance, greater achievement, less stress and more happiness.
- Invisible “Saboteurs” and your inner “Sage” fight for supremacy in your brain.
- Your various Saboteurs, like the “Controller” and the “Stickler,” use different tactics to achieve the same goal: preventing you from taking action.
- Your Sage uses five powers to overcome the Saboteurs: “empathy, exploration, innovation, navigation and decisive action.”
- To build PQ, strengthen your Sage and “PQ Brain muscles” by doing “PQ reps” – spend 10-second intervals being aware of your body and the input of your five senses.
- Weaken your Saboteurs by doing a PQ rep each time you sense their presence.
- Hug your pet or loved one while being “fully present for 10 seconds.”
- Heeding your Sage instead of your Saboteurs can increase your PQ score.
- When individuals strengthen their PQ scores, they can raise their team’s collective PQ.

Recommendation

Merging theories from science, positive psychology and coaching, neuroscientist Shirzad Chamine defines your “Positive Intelligence Quotient” (PQ) as “the percentage of time your mind acts as your friend rather than as your enemy.” He explains how to increase your PQ to achieve higher performance, greater happiness and less stress. Your PQ score depends on which mental forces dominate – your “Saboteurs” or your “Sage.” Although many self-help books advocate the power of positive thinking, Chamine repackages the idea for practical application, even if he indulges in special jargon. *getAbstract* recommends his insights and guidance to those who wish to think more optimistically and to managers who need to turn around underperforming teams.

Summary

Introducing the “Saboteurs and the Sage”

In Greek mythology, King Sisyphus “fell from grace” and, as punishment, had to push a heavy boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down, again and again for all eternity. Like Sisyphus, individuals and teams secretly sabotage themselves by getting stuck in repetitive behavior and never achieving their true potential. Your brain is locked in a battle between your Saboteurs and your inner Sage. Saboteurs are leftover remnants of primitive urges and instincts, such as your “flight or fight” response mechanism. Saboteurs’ negativity can destroy your happiness and performance; conversely, your Sage works to build positivity. Building “Positive Intelligence” helps individuals and teams harness the power of positive thinking and overcome their Saboteurs.

“The reason so many of our attempts at improving our success or happiness fizzle is that we sabotage ourselves. More precisely, our minds sabotage us.”

A high “Positive Intelligence Quotient” (PQ) score correlates to higher performance and happiness. For example, if your score is 70%, your mind works for you 70% of the time and against you 30% of the time. Individuals with high PQ live longer, healthier lives.

Saboteurs

Everyone has her or his own unique mix of the following 10 Saboteurs:

1. **“Avoider”** – This inner force focuses only on positive experiences, avoids conflict and unpleasant situations, worries about others’ feelings, wants to be a peacemaker, and suppresses anger, which eventually festers and boils over.
2. **“Controller”** – This Saboteur must be in charge, control others and win competitions, jobs and challenges. Controllers are prone to high anxiety and impatience. They push to get tasks done no matter what and may upset other people.
3. **“Hyper-Achiever”** – This inner workaholic needs constant validation, is competitive and goal-oriented, and avoids emotion. Any self-acceptance is temporary.

4. **“Hyper-Rational”** – This cold logistician analyzes problems from a distance, wants to master knowledge, disdains emotion, can be cynical and has limited flexibility.
5. **“Hyper-Vigilant”** – This anxious, suspicious, intense Saboteur is constantly vigilant and sensitive to danger, suffers burnout, and drives other people away.
6. **“Pleaser”** – This negative force does want to help other people, but yearns for their acceptance, needs frequent encouragement and affection, becomes easily offended by lack of recognition, and eventually becomes resentful of the burdens of being helpful. Pleasers make the people they depend upon feel manipulated or guilty about saying no to them.
7. **“Restless”** – This sabotaging aspect of a personality needs to stay busy, can’t sit still, seeks new experiences, quickly gets bored and frustrated when new experiences grow stale, thinks “life is too short,” and resists long-lasting relationships.
8. **“Stickler”** – The self-critical perfectionist is highly organized, thinks in black-and-white terms, believes others are lazy, criticizes everybody, and makes others resent his or her impossible standards.
9. **“Victim”** – This “martyr” seeks attention based on painful experiences and has both a mentality and a “poor-me,” “no-one-understands-me” self-image. Victims swim in negative feelings and make others feel helpless for not alleviating their pain.
10. **“Judge”** – This is the universal “master” Saboteur; the other nine are accomplices who help the Judge keep you mired in negative thoughts. Your Judge is responsible for most of your disappointment, regret, anger, guilt, shame and anxiety.

The Sage

Your Sage steps in to defeat your Saboteurs. The Sage lets you explore and keep an open mind, show compassion and sympathy for others and yourself, innovate, and ignore the siren call of your Saboteurs.

“Most people have far more potential than they have tapped.”

With your Sage, you can “choose a path that best aligns with your deeper underlying values and mission.” To increase your PQ, you must “strengthen your Sage” and “weaken your Saboteurs” – and that you can do.

Silence Your Inner Critics

The Judge is so destructive because it causes you to criticize yourself, those around you and your life situation. After author Shirzad Chamine discovered his own Judge, he wrote a five-page letter that described his insecurities and self-doubt, and distributed it to 320 of his MBA classmates. He expected his peers to ostracize him, but instead they thanked him and said they felt relieved that they were not alone in their feelings.

“Unless you tackle and weaken your own internal enemies – we’ll call them Saboteurs – they will do their best to rob you of any improvements you make.”

His experiences leading a CEO retreat years later solidified his theory that the Judge is universal. Chamine asked the executives to write anonymously about something they had “never shared with others for fear of losing credibility, acceptance or respect.” They were relieved to discover common guilt, fear and shame.

“One minute of being fully present with a loved one has a deeper and more lasting impact on your relationship than spending a whole day together while you have a scattered mind.”

At work, team members either openly or secretly try to sabotage each other. A collective group of Judges is more damaging than a single Judge. Workplace Judges cause employees to lose time and productivity and to experience anxiety and stress. A Judge’s most dangerous and pernicious lie is “You will be happy when...” because “when” never arrives. Your inner Judge may say you will be happy when you make your first million or when your children go off to college, but, sadly, you will feel every bit as unfulfilled when the supposedly magical event occurs.

“The Judge is the universal Saboteur, the one we all have: a predisposition to exaggerating the negative and assuming the worst is actually good for survival.”

The Judge activates the other Saboteurs. Your unique motivations and style affect which Saboteurs come into play. Saboteurs work by convincing you that they’re helping you. Every time you notice your Saboteurs in action and you challenge their behavior, they lose power. You weaken them when you expose their lies.

Strengthen Your Inner Wisdom

Activating your Sage means accepting whatever happens as a gift or opportunity. Both the Sage and the Judge provide a “snowballing, self-reinforcing perspective” and “self-fulfilling prophecy.”

“The Sage perspective is about accepting what is, rather than denying, rejecting or resenting what is.”

Only you can choose between your positive Sage and your negative Judge. Listen to your Sage with the “Three-Gifts technique”: Think of three situations where your problem could actually be an opportunity to gain something better. The gains might not be immediate – they may take days, months or years to reach fruition.

“All stress is Saboteur generated. Under the Sage’s influence, you focus on doing what needs to get done, but you don’t sweat the outcome.”

Let the past go without sadness or regret. Use the Sage’s wisdom to activate five powers that will help you overcome Saboteurs and strengthen your positive emotions. Those powers are:

1. **“Empathy”** – This power lets you connect with your feelings and help others overcome their difficulties. To energize your empathy, “visualize the child.” Remember how excited and curious you were as a child? Everything was new and beguiling. Nourish that sense of childlike wonder and caring in your life.
2. **“Exploration”** – Pretend that you are a “fascinated anthropologist, a keen observer and discoverer of what simply is, without trying to judge, change or control the situation.”
3. **“Innovation”** – Saboteurs interfere with your ability to innovate. Generate as many new ideas as you can and don’t reject any of them. Let your ideas gain traction. Strengthen your power of innovation by

playing the “Yes...and...” power game, which involves saying yes to one idea and permitting another to immediately follow.

4. **“Navigation”** – If you find yourself in a rut, use this fourth power to follow your internal compass, which always guides you in the right direction. Choose a path that is meaningful for you.
5. **“Decisive action”** – To prevent Saboteurs from thwarting your plans, reflect back on your life choices. What changes would you make? When you have a calm attitude and a quiet, focused mind, you’re ready to use the Sage’s fifth power: take action.

“Saboteurs do far greater damage when they do their work while hiding under the radar, pretending they are your friend or pretending they are you.”

Your Saboteurs will use different tactics to achieve the same goal: to prevent you from taking action. The Avoider and Restless Saboteurs will try to get you to duck any pressing issue. Hyper-Vigilant will waste your time and energy on needless side tasks. The Controller and Stickler will slow you down by unleashing your inner perfectionist. Anticipate the Saboteurs’ power plays before they strike.

“Build Up Your PQ Brain Muscles”

Your Saboteurs feed your “Survivor Brain,” while your Sage feeds your “PQ Brain.” The Judge and Saboteur accomplices helped humanity’s primitive ancestors survive danger from predators and natural disasters. But exercising the same survivalist instincts today can trap you in a negative cycle of stress and anxiety.

“Empathizing is about feeling and showing appreciation, compassion and forgiveness. Empathy has two targets: yourself and others. Both are important.”

To strengthen your PQ Brain muscles, do 100 mental “PQ reps” a day. A PQ rep is an exercise that calls for repeatedly devoting 10 seconds to awareness of the physical sensations in your body and your five senses. Think about your physical reactions. Slow down and smell the food you eat, notice the sensation of touch as you brush your hair, and listen closely to the sounds of nature as you walk outside. Be “fully present for 10 seconds” when hugging a loved one or pet.

“The set of beliefs and assumptions that we operate under form the walls of your own box.”

When you first start a new routine, staying on track can be difficult. Your Saboteurs will berate you for forgetting or will claim you don’t have time to exercise instead of work. Don’t let them deter you from your mental and physical goals. Do not let them interfere. You can easily accomplish your PQ reps by incorporating them into your normal daily routine or executing a PQ rep for 10 seconds each time you sense a Saboteur’s presence.

“Your PQ Brain muscles have remained underdeveloped over the years while your Survivor Brain muscles have been on steroids.”

Breaking old habits and forming new ones takes three weeks. After studying patients with amputated limbs, plastic surgeon Dr. Maxwell Maltz concluded that it took 21 consecutive days to develop new brain pathways and replace old ones. To achieve lasting results, do 100 PQ reps each day for 21 consecutive days.

Measuring PQ

Your PQ ranges from zero to 100 percent and represents the percentage of time you think positively versus negatively. When you think positively, your Sage holds the power. The opposite is true when you think negatively – that empowers your Saboteurs. Learn your PQ score by taking a short test at PositiveIntelligence.com. Take the test on different days to ensure accuracy.

“The fastest and most efficient way to increase achievement and performance is to increase PQ, not potential.”

Researchers who investigated the power of positive thinking – Marcial Losada, Barbara Fredrickson, John Gottman and Robert Schwartz, among others – found that a “tipping point” occurs when your ratio of positive to negative thinking is 3:1. To reach this point, you will need a PQ score of 75. The tipping point applies to both individuals and teams. Bosses and strong team members can pull their teams up or down. Negative thinking is often more powerful due to the brain’s hardwired survivalist tendencies.

Applying PQ to Life

Balance work and life issues by using your PQ with yourself, and with your children, mate, supervisors and co-workers. In the office, your PQ will affect your team. When individuals strengthen their PQ scores, they can raise their collective team PQ.

“Your mind is your best friend. But it is also your worst enemy.”

When you spend time with your spouse and children, pay attention to them and not your smartphone. Spending an hour or two of quality time together often is better than taking a week’s vacation together and incessantly checking your email. When your Sage is in control, you won’t need as much time off as you do when Saboteurs are zapping your energy. Teach your children how to label their own Sage and Saboteurs so they, too, can increase their PQ and be happier. Instead of focusing on your children’s outer accomplishments, help them turn inward to identify their feelings.

Individuals with high PQ enjoy lower stress and healthier lifestyles. Obesity is common because many people overeat for psychological reasons, including boredom, sadness, anxiety or restlessness. You will eat less once you employ your PQ Brain, because you will slow down and savor every bite. You can also use PQ to improve in sports. Athletes who are “in the zone” are able to focus precisely, because they take time to notice the sensations around them.