

# Case Incident 1

## The Flynn Effect

Given that a substantial amount of intellectual ability (up to 80 percent) is inherited, it might surprise you to learn that intelligence test scores are rising. In fact, scores have risen so dramatically that today's great-grandparents seem mentally deficient by comparison.

First, let's review the evidence for rising test scores. Then, we'll review explanations for the results. On an IQ scale where 100 is the average, scores have been rising about 3 points per decade, meaning if your grandparent scored 100, the average score for your generation would be around 115. That's a pretty big difference—about a standard deviation, meaning someone from your grandparent's generation whose score was at the 84th percentile would be only average (50th percentile) by today's norms.

James Flynn is a New Zealand researcher credited with first documenting the rising scores. He reported the results in 1984, when he found that almost everyone who took a well-validated IQ test in the 1970s did better than those who took one in the 1940s. The results appear to hold up across cultures. Test scores are rising not only in the United States but in most other countries in which the effect has been tested, too.

What explains the Flynn Effect? Researchers are not entirely sure, but some of the explanations offered are these:

1. **Education.** Students today are better educated than their ancestors, and education leads to higher test scores.
2. **Smaller families.** In 1900, the average couple had four children; today the number is less than two. We know firstborns tend to have higher IQs than other children, probably because they receive more attention than their later-born siblings.
3. **Test-taking savvy.** Today's children have been tested so often that they are test savvy: they know how to take tests and how to do well on them.
4. **Genes.** Although smart couples tend to have fewer, not more, children (which might lead us to expect intelligence in the population to drop over time), it's possible that due to better education, tracking, and testing, those who do have the right genes are better able to exploit those advantages. Some genetics researchers also have argued that if genes for intelligence carried by both parents are dominant, they win out, meaning the child's IQ will be as high as or higher than those of the parents.

### Questions

1. Do you believe people are really getting smarter? Why or why not?  
**Answer:** Yes, based on test scores, people are getting smarter. There is more of a focus on education today. Generations ago, many people did not complete high school and many worked in farming versus the service sector.
2. Which of the factors explaining the Flynn Effect do you buy?  
**Answer:** All of the potential explanations have merit. Education has progressed and would directly attribute to higher test scores. Smaller families with more parental influence and many educational and learning toys, books, DVDs, etc. also improves the learning process. Test-taking abilities and techniques can lead to better scores and genetic composition measured in the form of IQ scores has clearly improved, resulting in increased intellectual capital.

3. Are there any societal advantages or disadvantages to the Flynn Effect?

**Answer:** The societal advantages of increased intelligence are obvious in terms of potential gains in every area such as the economy, government, business, medical, science field, etc. where intellectual capital can be applied. Disadvantages may be limited to those who use their intellect in unsavory situations or for unethical gains.

Source: F. Greve, "Rise in Average IQ Scores Makes Kids Today Exceptional by Earlier Standards," *Jewish World Review*, February 14, 2006, pp. 1–3; and M. A. Mingroni, "Resolving the IQ Paradox: Heterosis as a Cause of the Flynn Effect and Other Trends," *Psychological Review*, July 2007, pp. 806–829.

## Case Incident 2

### What Does Diversity Training Teach?

We noted in the chapter that some researchers have provided evidence that diversity training programs may not be delivering the expected outcomes. The authors interpret this evidence as a sign that corporate efforts to improve diversity are more effective when the focus is on concrete measurable goals with accountability. It may be that entrenched attitudes related to race, ethnicity, and gender are just too hard to change in short-term classroom settings.

Others argue that diversity training isn't really designed to increase the number of women and minorities in top management positions but rather to improve relationships among workers.

Reviews of the historical development of diversity programs demonstrate some significant changes in the ways diversity trainers conceptualize their role. Early diversity training efforts focused primarily on legal compliance and the regulatory framework. This may have created an attitude that diversity was a problem to be solved and avoided when possible, rather than an opportunity. Demographic diversity was also the only focus of these programs, meaning other forms of workforce diversity, like differences in abilities or attitudes, were ignored.

There were also features that led to unintended consequences. Some diversity programs encouraged participants to describe stereotypical language regarding different groups in an effort to expose the content of people's assumptions. Unfortunately, follow-up discussions with participants showed the discussions may have reinforced the very stereotypes the programs were supposed to undermine. These practices also could be very embarrassing for participants. Because the training focused primarily on portraying historically underrepresented minorities and women in White male-dominated environments, White males (who make up a significant portion of the workforce) felt excluded and stigmatized.

Contemporary diversity management programs have changed their focus considerably in response to these concerns. Diversity training sessions are now designed to minimize public shame or embarrassment. Legal compliance is still a major part of diversity training, but the business case for effective diversity management is a much more central component of training sessions.

#### Questions

1. Do you think representation in top management is a fair indicator of the effects of diversity training programs? Why or why not?

**Answer:** The student's answer to this question will be based on opinions held.

Although diversity programs have worked toward creating a level playing field for all categorizations of diversity, no evidence is given that the programs focus specifically on seeking promotions to the advantage of specific groups. However, the sensitivity to diversification issues and their adoption as basic workplace tenets may permit easier recognition of high levels of skills among any employee that results in promotion or other recognition of skill and ability application.

2. Why might one-shot diversity training programs be ineffective?

**Answer:** Short-term memory is just that: short-term. Many of the preconceived notions about diversity issues are the result of long-term exposure and are, therefore, difficult to change among people. In order to effect change in some beliefs and opinions, long-term, consistent message reinforcement, coupled with appropriate performance acceptability (behavior), must be experienced.

3. What significant obstacles must be overcome to make diversity programs effective?

**Answer:** To make diversity programs effective, managers must overcome the following obstacles:

- Mistrust among employees and managers.
- Predominance of preexisting stereotypes.
- Unacceptable behaviors among workers and managers.
- Failure to recognize differences among people and to utilize them appropriately.
- Lack of commitment to a diverse environment.
- Other ideas may be included.

4. How could you design more effective diversity programs?

**Answer:** To create more effective diversity programs we would:

- Evaluate to see if target groups are underutilized in our operations.
- Look for barriers that prevent target groups from equal and fair consideration in promotion or assignment.
- Improve recruiting and selection process to be more transparent.
- Provide training for employees who have not been exposed to diversity concepts.
- Clearly communicate policies to employees so they understand how and why certain practices are followed.

Sources: Based on A. Kalev, F. Dobbin, and E. Kelly, "Best Practices or Best Guesses? Assessing the Efficacy of Corporate Affirmative Action and Diversity Policies," *American Sociological Review* 71, no. 4 (2006), pp. 589–617; R. Anand and M. Winters, "A Retrospective View of Corporate Diversity Training from 1964 to the Present," *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 7, no. 3 (2008), pp. 356–372.

## Instructor's Choice

### Personality and Innovation at Apple-Application of Abilities Evaluation

"It's Showtime!" is now a phrase that can adequately describe the art and personality of Steve Jobs. At one time or another, Steve Jobs has been called brilliant, creative, demanding, domineering, eccentric, a predatory competitor, hard, unforgiving, or one of the best marketing minds alive today, quite an extensive array of abilities. Mr. Jobs' new passion is online music and digital entertainment. Just as Apple Computer revolutionized the character and style of computing, it now plans to do the same in the world of music. From iPods, iLife software, iTunes for downloads, Pixar Animated movies, and new Apple stores, Steve Jobs has Apple on everyone's lips once again. The up and down swings of Apple Computer are legendary; however, through it all Steve Jobs' vision has remained constant. He seems to really be able to envision the future before it happens.

Using a search engine of your own choosing, find an article about Steve Jobs that outlines his successes and failures as a corporate executive and entrepreneur. What do you think are the Dimensions of Intellectual Ability that are exemplified by Jobs? (page 52) Explain your rationale. Using a search engine of the Apple Web site, review the latest innovations from Apple in digital entertainment and music. Write a one- to two-paragraph synopsis of these innovations. Describe which of Mr. Jobs' Intellectual Abilities has helped him the most in putting together the deals that have propelled Apple to the forefront on digital entertainment and music via the Internet.

#### INSTRUCTOR DISCUSSION

To aid the student in this application project, suggest that they read "Show Time" by Peter Burrows found in *Business Week* (February 2, 2004, pp. 57–64). With respect to the Intellectual Abilities presented in the chapter, Mr. Jobs would certainly rate high on Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience. He would also have an internal locus of control approach, be self-monitoring, have high self-esteem, be a Type A personality, have a high need for achievement, and a high need for power. However, he is also very good at building partnerships. Note the differences between his ability to partner versus that of rival Microsoft. In fact even though the Apple vs. Microsoft rivalry is legendary, Steve Jobs long ago recognized the benefits of having his Apple (Mac) system be user friendly to the Windows world. His alliances in the entertainment field with Disney and various film producers have certainly given him a head start in the emerging digital entertainment field. Recent creative conflicts with Disney led to senior staff shakeups at Disney. Apple is certainly a force to be recognized. See [www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com) for additional information.

## Exploring OB On The World Wide Web

Search Engines are our navigational tool to explore the WWW. Some commonly used search engines are:

[www.excite.com](http://www.excite.com)

[www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)

[www.hotbot.com](http://www.hotbot.com)

[www.google.com](http://www.google.com)

[www.lycos.com](http://www.lycos.com)

[www.bing.com](http://www.bing.com)

Do a WWW search on age discrimination. Choose three sites that each deal with a different aspect of age discrimination. For example: discrimination in High-Tech industries, preventing discrimination, AARP's involvement with the issue, etc. Write a one-page paper outlining the key points of the information obtained and how it confirms or disconfirms what we learned about older workers in this chapter.

Find a current article of an organization that has been involved in an age discrimination suit. What were the specific issues involved? If resolved, what was the outcome? Bring a copy of the Web page to class and be prepared to discuss it. In addition to searching, here are some places to start digging:

[www.aarp.com](http://www.aarp.com)

[www.bizjournals.com](http://www.bizjournals.com) (there is a free registration process for this site)

[www.hrlawindex.com](http://www.hrlawindex.com) (there is a free registration process for this site)

Top executives and tough jobs. Learn more about the skills and abilities managers need, like intelligence, leadership, motivation, etc., to be successful. Visit the About.com site and learn more. Print and bring an article to class for discussion. Try these pages or do your own search on About.com. Be sure to select links that look interesting found in the left frame.

[www.learning.about.com](http://www.learning.about.com)

[www.psychology.about.com](http://www.psychology.about.com)