

Taking Advantage When Intuition Strikes

Joyce Anderson

Leadership can be very demanding. It fills your life with day-to-day decisions, meetings, travel, and many other complexities. Amid all these details it's easy to lose sight of the fundamentals, especially the personal, core sources of knowledge and energy that I call the 1-2-3s of the soul—*imagination*, which is the home of creativity and new ideas; *unique talent and calling*; and *emotions*, which are the Global Positioning System for your heart and passions.

Why do the 1-2-3s so frequently get buried at work? Perhaps it's because they are not about facts or statistics. They can't be seen, held, measured, compared, or proved. It takes courage to speak personally in a culture that focuses almost exclusively on facts. Or maybe it's because leaders don't value or schedule the quiet, reflective time in which the 1-2-3s can be cultivated. Or it could be that not knowing how the 1-2-3s will turn out makes using them seem risky.

Without the 1-2-3s, though, leaders can feel like machines. And worse, they will have to meet the

challenges that they and their organizations face with limited resources.

So how can leaders stay in touch or reconnect with the 1-2-3s? The answer is intuition.

IN A FLASH

Intuition is a leader's signal that the 1-2-3s are ready to surface. It is not a replacement for logical thinking and

**Everyone has intuition,
but we all have to develop
our ability to use it.**

the five senses, although it can work in harmony with them. Everyone has intuition, but we all have to develop our ability to use it.

Intuition comes in an instant—I call this event the *intuitive hit*—and it makes you pause; it gets your attention. When intuition hits, it is telling you that something needs assessing and that your talent is being called on. The flash could involve an image, a thought, a phrase, a person, or a feeling, and it can strike when you are awake, daydreaming, or asleep. It can come when you are sitting quietly and encouraging it, or when you least expect it.

Once you get an intuitive hit, it is critical that you not allow your con-

scious, logical mind to talk you out of it. You might negate an intuitive hit because it doesn't seem possible, you don't know how it will turn out, you're not clear how you can see it through, or it's going to result in change. Nevertheless, start working with it.

Intuitive hits can come in many forms. Think back to the last time you worked from gut instinct, from the seat of your pants, or from a hunch—and it worked! You'll probably recall features like these, features that are common to all intuitive hits:

- The intuitive hit came in a flash and made you pause, looking for new thoughts. You didn't have to make room for the intuitive hit in your appointment book.
- Acting on the intuitive hit took courage; you worked from the unknown.
- After the intuitive hit, your logical mind hit a dead end and got out of the way.
- The intuitive hit probably occurred when you were alone—in the shower, for instance, or on a walk or listening to music.
- After the intuitive hit, you felt energized, and your creative juices started flowing.
- The intuitive hit felt obvious to you if not to others. It involved your particular talents and purpose.
- The intuitive hit spoke to positive rather than negative aims. It served a greater good.

Editor's note: Reader Forum is an opportunity for subscribers to Leadership in Action to offer ideas and opinions about LiA articles or any issues of practical importance to leaders. Submissions can be e-mailed to lia@ccl.org.

• After the intuitive hit, you found that your mind, body, and soul were working in concert.

After an intuitive hit occurs, begin a conversation about it. At first you might do this just with yourself, through doodling, writing, or day-dreaming. Eventually, however, you must talk to someone else—conversation is what gives ideas momentum.

THREE SIGNALS

Intuition can give leaders a sense of how to proceed. It may offer one of three signals: *yes*, *no*, or *do nothing yet*.

Yes. You feel open, alive, and expanded; your blood flows and your eyes are aware. You are stirred by a burst of energy. For a brief moment you are not aware of time or worries.

No. You feel closed, dull, and heavy. You have less energy, little creativity, and time drags. You may procrastinate or overschedule yourself.

Do nothing yet. Ironically, doing nothing is doing something. We live and work in a society that wants instant results, but often you must have patience. Many times you will get an intuitive hit, act on it, and then nothing seems to be happening. Intuitive hits involve more than you, so have patience for the synchronistic

events to show up. It's likely that the right people, places, and events are still lining up. Keep the intuitive hit alive with your attention and words—let it keep fueling you. You'll know when it's time to act further.

EXERCISE TIME

To encourage an intuitive hit, try the following exercise, which I tweaked for intuition based on a model developed by Robert B. Dilts, a consultant in the field of neuro-linguistic programming, a construct of human behavior, learning, and communication.

When you need a new idea and you're stumped, employ the wildest side of your imagination and get as crazy and silly as you can, as if the impossible were possible and you were being paid to not make sense.

Come up with at least three scenarios. There will be gold in all three. But don't think about workability yet. Let your intuition tell you *yes*, *no*, or *do nothing yet* through the following exercise:

1. Close the door to your office, or find a room where you can be alone.
2. Write each scenario on a separate sheet of paper, and spread these sheets out on the floor.
3. Clear your thoughts. There are various ways to do this: for instance,

in your head, try to list all your former schoolteachers or count backward by odd numbers.

4. Now, step on one sheet and pantomime how that idea feels in your body. Don't use your head or voice; this is not the time for logic. Thinking logically will cause you to step out of the present and miss the intuitive signals. Your logic can join up later, when it's time to work out the implementation of the idea.

5. Repeat steps 3 and 4 for each idea.

6. Choose the pantomime that feels most like *yes* in your body, and work with that idea. You might combine parts of all three ideas into a fourth.

7. Keep the *yes* idea alive, and give it attention every day.

To create an atmosphere where new ideas can arise and be nurtured, allow time in your day for conversations with people who are willing to listen without bringing their own agendas. Take a few moments each day to be still, to daydream, and to be patient, so you will notice when synchronicity arrives.

In these ways leaders can make the greatest use of their intuitive hits. &

Joyce Anderson offers workshops and coaching on intuition. She holds a B.A. degree from Florida International University. For more information visit www.intuitionbyjoyce.com.