

# Six Keys to Effective Leadership Insight

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**A Management Learning Box Book**

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## Insight training and learning resources included in this E-book:

- ➔ *Insight in management, leadership and the team* – a 5-page synthesis exploring the what, why and how of insight as an essential and empowering quality in managers and leaders today.
- ➔ 5 self-assessments enabling you or your learners to pinpoint levels of insight and areas in which to focus on.
- ➔ 6 insight games and teasers making learning both challenging and fun.
- ➔ 3 hands-on insight activities for the individual and team
- ➔ 3 insight role plays to put the practice into effective learning
- ➔ 11 high-impact coaching and self-coaching tools
- ➔ An interactive insight case study including self-study questions, discussion topics, additional approaches and answers.
- ➔ Quotes, tips, suggestions and video links



# Six Keys to Effective Leadership

**INSIGHT**

Tom Gamble



**The Management Learning Box**

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### **The author**

Tom Gamble is British and has been living and working in France for twenty years. He has a MA in human resource management and is accredited in TMS, NLP and 360° appraisals. He has wide experience of teaching at all levels and has been a freelance trainer-coach for many companies including the Thales Group, Groupe Spie, Sagem, BP, Renault and Alexander Proudfoot Consulting. At Crossknowledge, he notably wrote and developed a twelve-module Vision and Leadership e-learning programme with Robert Dilts and an eight-module intercultural programme with experts Nigel Ewington and David Tricky. His passion for writing spans advertising, learning content, scripts, poetry and novels and he has published a short collection of poetry and two books. His innovative new business venture, The Management Learning Box, provides the training community with multi-format, ready-to-integrate, ready-to-adapt management and leadership learning content. He has three children and his pastimes include writing, desert trekking and mountain biking.

### **The publisher**

The vision of The Management Learning Box is to provide a quality, time-saving and flexible source of raw learning content for all those connected to the management and leadership training fields. Centred around a series of qualities featuring in many corporate leadership frameworks, The Management Learning Box learning content can be copied, adapted, immediately deployed in the training room or integrated into any final training format including coaching sessions, e-learning modules, videocast add ons, e-books, books, training manuals, self-coaching media or training programmes. The Management Learning Box also provides bespoke learning content development services and has provided many leading companies and organisations with e-learning and film scripts, book content, training programmes and case studies. A second major aim is to act as a platform for training professionals and academics to market and sell their learning content on The Management Learning Box website. Part of Management Learning Box yearly profits are donated to learning projects throughout the world, specifically aimed at improving the knowledge of young people in developing countries.

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*There is nothing so terrible as activity without insight.*

*Goethe*

# Introduction and acknowledgements

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## The topic

Outcomes depend on insight and many of us have experienced both heady success and terrible regret because of it. For a manager-leader, insight is essential. It can lead to understanding the inner nature of people, systems, ideas and processes in order to take action or make decision. People management, projects, product development and business acumen all require their fair share of insight - the capacity to dig beneath the layers and filters surrounding an issue to hit the truth of the matter. But insight is not only about the power of penetration and discernment. It can also be active, much like the footballer who, using acute observation, rapidly makes an assessment of the possibilities before him, calculates the probable outcomes, understands the best option and then makes the important pass or the winning shot. It's all about connecting to your environment, using sight, sound, analysis, perception and gut-feeling and like the sportsman, the nature of the manager-leader's context today means that insight most definitely has to be one of his or her key competences.

## How to use this book

The *Six Keys* series of downloadable books in PDF and Word formats contain a condensed essential best of the four hundred or more available learning formats featured on The Management Learning Box website.

*Six Keys* has been tailored to both the individual manager and leader seeking soft skills development, the trainer-coach wanting to explore and include essential leadership framework themes in his/her training offer, and training providers developing training material in traditional, blended, mobile, distance or e-learning format.

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## Acknowledgements

Thanks to Robert Dilts, leading coach, consultant and author in leadership, vision and change management, who provided the motivation and inspiration for much of the learning content featured in the *Six Keys* series. Thanks, too, to Rahul Patel and his team who from the outset have provided the backstage technical work involved in the website, e-books and learning platforms. Steve Flinders, managing associate, author and consultant at York Associates, UK, contributed enthusiasm, interest and encouragement and Daphne Chisholm-Elie of BCLS sparked off the original idea. Learning sources such as TED, Wikipedia and others must also be thanked. And finally, Ashoka, the cat, who provided much companionship and a listening ear during the many hours (and many of them early!), that went into developing the *Six Keys to Effective Leadership* series.



# 1 A summary of **insight**

**Training uses:** Analysis, Discussion trigger, Example, Introduction to topic/theme, Marketing document, Stand-alone exercise, Summary/synthesis

**Associated words:** Perception, Intuition, deduction, discernment, penetration, introspection, Shrewdness, Perspicacity, 2 steps ahead, Reading the game, Acumen, Inner understanding, Noesis, Probability

**Recommended public:** Project managers, Managers, Directors, Leaders, Entrepreneurs, Masters+ students

Insight in management,  
leadership and the team



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**R**emember the contract we lost? Remember the guy in development who left us for a competitor? Remember the time we missed out on that new market? And the time we didn't understand how the supplier ticked and the conflict that followed?

The initial conclusion to these statements that we've all heard or experienced at some time or another during our working lives is: *what a waste!* Moreover, these missed opportunities or limiting events at one point all concern insight.

One of the key factors separating excellent managers, leaders and team members from passable ones, insight is a quality and skill that adds shine to performance and inestimable value to the organisation. Inner understanding is born from it. Futures are won through it.

*What is insight?*

At a first glance, insight is hard to pin down. It is a word often used in the business context, on a superficial level, to mean a detailed picture, angle or

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description of something: *he gave inside insight on how recruitment is carried out in the company*; or as a simple piece of information: *the R&D director provided us with an insight into current research developments*. However, going deeper, we discover that insight branches into two distinct and powerful qualities or aptitudes: firstly that of apprehending the inner nature of things or of seeing intuitively; and secondly, that of the capacity of acute observation and deduction. Related words are *discernment*, *perspicacity*, *penetration* and *perception* to name but a few. For the purpose of simplicity, the two insight qualities or aptitudes can be divided into *passive* and *active* insight.

In the first case, *passive insight*, we attempt to understand the inner nature of an issue or subject and in many ways we are seeking an answer to something – *what does it mean? How is it linked to me and my team? Could it be a solution for better results? How is it connected to my purpose?* This type of insight involves caring about the subject matter, gathering knowledge about it and then freeing the mind of logical thought (and indeed forceful, concentrated thinking at the same time) in order to deeply connect with it. It represents a very intimate relationship with the subject at hand and requires, on the part of the seeker, much openness, humility, trust and a willingness to make oneself vulnerable before the subject. Feelings and emotions play an important part, both in the preparation for insight and the way insight finally comes to us.

In the second case, *active insight*, we attempt to understand the probable outcomes to an issue, event, situation or action – *what will happen? How will it affect us? Who else will it affect? What outcome will it have? What if I do this? How will he react when I do that? When is the right moment to do it?* By observing the issue or event, using our knowledge, experience and perceptions for analysis, and discarding possibilities for probabilities, we are able to hone in on a probable future outcome scenario which triggers us to decision or action.

*Insight in management, leadership and the team*

Whatever the type of insight employed, is it a quality bestowed upon the lucky and intelligent few? While there are individuals who may shine in their seemingly unique capacity to “read the game” and successfully perceive future

developments or events, insight is something within everyone’s reach and, with good training, can be learnt as a skill. Moreover, insight is not something only reserved for managers or leaders. Everyone in the organisation, from assistant to team member should have it – for as in any wider team, it is often insight related to a succession of single actions and understandings that creates a subsequent series of successful outcomes that climax in great achievement. A simple analogy would be a football team. One player, in possession of the ball

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**Video:**

Jill Bolte-Taylor’s stroke of insight

(Visit TED at [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com))



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Notes:

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*Speed is often confused with insight. When I start running earlier than others, I appear faster.*

*Johan Crujff*



## 2 **Insight** assessments and self-assessments

Training uses: Activity, Analysis, Exercise, Profiler, Self-awareness exercise

Associated words: Perception, Intuition, deduction, discernment, penetration, introspection, Shrewdness, Perspicacity, 2 steps ahead, Reading the game, Acumen, Inner understanding, Noesis, Probability

Recommended public: Project managers, Managers, Directors, Leaders

### 1 Does your leadership/management/working approach show insight?



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Read the questions and assess yourself by giving a score from 1 – 5 (1 is lowest, 5 highest). All statements are positive-oriented. A low score would indicate improvement to be made in a given area.

1. When faced with an issue, do you gather as much knowledge of the issue as possible before making a decision? [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
2. How deeply do you know your team members' opinions, views, concerns and issues? [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
3. To what extent do you understand the bigger picture and the wider purpose of your role? [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
4. To what extent do you understand the bigger picture or wider purpose of your team and organisation? [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
5. Do you take time to step back and observe your and your team actions? [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
6. To what extent do you generally weigh up the benefits and limitations of an issue or action? [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]



## 2 An insight quality analysis and assessment

Insight involves a combination of a number of qualities. Give yourself a score for each of the following from 1 – 5 (5 being highest). All statements are positive-oriented. A low score would indicate improvement to be made in a given area.

1. **Observation:** I often observe in order to understand and am capable of seeing the small and big picture. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
2. **Penetration:** I am capable of digging deeper into an issue, seeing below the surface and analysing issues. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
3. **Listening:** I actively listen to colleagues and team members and frequently ask questions to obtain knowledge and viewpoints. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
4. **Purpose:** I am clear on what I am seeking when looking for answers and have a clear understanding of my own, my team's and my organisation's wider role and purpose. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
5. **Perception:** I am conscious that things are made up of various layers of values, concepts or behaviours and I attempt to look beyond them to reach a truth. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5]

**Intensity:** When studying or analysing an issue, I am deeply and sincerely concerned about it and devote myself to seeking

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## The Management Learning Box – Insight

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*Re-investing in one's own little moments of insight is very important.*

***Anish Kapoor***



## 4 Insight activities

**Training uses:** Activity, Analysis, Assessment/self-assessment, Discussion trigger, Exercise, Introduction to topic, Personal profiler data sheet, Self-awareness exercise, Team-building activity, Warm-up exercise

**Associated words:** Perception, Intuition, deduction, discernment, penetration, introspection, Shrewdness, Perspicacity, 2 steps ahead, Reading the game, Acumen, Inner understanding, Noesis, Probability

**Recommended public:** Project managers, Managers, Directors, Entrepreneurs, Leaders

### 1 Sharpen your insight by *reading the game*



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#### Instructions

- Select a film or video (related or unrelated to your field). View scene by scene, stopping the footage before any action occurs. “Read the game” by predicting what will happen next using the following question sequences. After each attempt at “reading the game”, compare with the actual footage and the outcome(s) of the scene in question.

#### Question sequence:

Stakeholder/player/actor/character 1:

- What will happen when...?
- What will happen if...?
- How will he/she/they react when...?
- What will happen “2 steps ahead”?

Stakeholder/player/actor/character 2:

- What will happen when...?
- What will happen if...?
- How will he/she/they react when...?
- What will happen “2 steps ahead”?

Stakeholder/player/actor/character 3:

- What will happen when...?
- What will happen if...?
- How will he/she/they react when...?
- What will happen “2 steps ahead”?



Notes:

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## 5 Insight role plays

**Training uses:** Activity, Discussion trigger, Endorser, Ice-breaker, Introduction to topic/theme, Relaxer

**Associated words:** Perception, Intuition, deduction, discernment, penetration, introspection, Shrewdness, Perspicacity, 2 steps ahead, Reading the game, Acumen, Inner understanding, Noesis, Probability

**Recommended public:** All

### 2 Crossing the river! Insight practice using knowledge, values and truths



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#### Instructions

- Form pairs.
- Distribute (or have learners blind-choose) cards containing the name of an animal. These can be lion, scorpion, dog, cat, snake, monkey, elephant, horse, magpie, crocodile, zebra, wolf, squirrel, and tarantula for example!
- Set the dilemma: the specific pair of animals must cross a river to escape a forest fire. One has to carry the other on its back to the other side and safety.
- Pairs discuss and negotiate which animal will ride on the back of the other. Take into account the various possibilities of the situation; the size/weight of each animal and the probabilities that will occur; the “values” each animal has (ex. Survive by attacking first, loyalty and sacrifice, etc.); the typical behaviours of each animal; the basic truths about each animal.
- Decide to accept/refuse the partnership, present your case and then choose another animal in the group whom you think would make the perfect partner to cross the river with.
- Justify this choice, emphasising what made you reach this analysis.

### 3 Merger speed-dating! Insight practice using knowledge, values and truths

#### Instructions

- Choose an appropriate number of companies/organisations related directly or indirectly to your field of activity (at least four if in one-to-one training) and write them down on individual cards.
- Distribute these among the learners/trainees.
- For the specific company/organisation attributed to them, learners/trainees note down the following information (research can be done through internet search if required):
  - Our size and activities
  - Our mission, role, vision and purpose
  - Our values
  - How we typically work and do business (behaviours)
  - Our strengths and weaknesses
  - Any “truths” about who we are, what we do and how we do it.
- As the leader of your company/organisation you wish to undertake a merger/partnership with another company in order to gain strength and presence.
- Set a time limit of 3 minutes and “speed date” potential merger partners in order to find the perfect partner.

Concentrate on the possibilities and probabilities that may occur from going into partnership with the other

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# 6 **Insight** coaching and self-coaching exercises

Training uses: Flashcard, flowchart, checklist, action card, tip, self-awareness exercise

Associated factors: Perception, Intuition, deduction, discernment, penetration, introspection, Shrewdness, Perspicacity, 2 steps ahead, Reading the game, Acumen, Inner understanding, Noesis, Probability

Recommended public: See individual coaching exercises

## 1 Insight into your team: gathering knowledge



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Recommended public: Managers, directors, entrepreneurs, leaders

- What is your team's main role and purpose?

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State your team members' names, their age and their gender:

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- What are their individual skills?

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- How does each team member contribute to the team?

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- What are their individual stakes in the team and organisation?  
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- What motivates them?  
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- What concerns or worries them?  
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- Take an issue, event or situation at work which *affects* your team:  
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- What are their individual opinions on the issue?  
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- What are their individual concerns?  
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- What is in it for them?  
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- What, if anything, will they lose by it?  
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## 2 Strengthening your insight by working on your perceptions

Recommended public: Managers, directors, entrepreneurs, leaders

- What initial insight of the issues you may encounter at work do you possess through training?

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- What initial insight into the issues you may encounter at work do you possess through your professional experience(s)?

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*Take an issue, event, topic or subject in relation to your role, team or organisation:*

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- How much knowledge do you have of the issue you want to understand?

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- If you need more knowledge/information what is it and how can you obtain it (talking to people, web search, reference material, training, etc.)?

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- Put this in a time frame and plan your knowledge/information gathering.

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- What is your job role and function? How do they affect how you perceive the issue?

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- What is your national, regional, occupational or educational culture and how do they influence how you perceive the issue?

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- What values do you cherish? How do they influence how you perceive the issue?

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- How is the issue connected to the wider picture of things (who else it affects, what else it is linked to, how it impacts on these, etc)?

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- Take a step back and observe the issue/event/subject from another point of view (external consultant, colleague, boss, team member). What can you deduce?

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- Stepping back into your own point of view, what truths/perceptions can you conclude from the event/issue/subject?

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- What does your logic tell you about the issue?

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- What do your values and beliefs tell you about the issue?

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## 7 Insight case study

**Training uses:** Analysis, Discussion trigger, Example, Exercise, Introduction to topic/theme, Script, Team-building activity, Test

**Associated factors:** Perception, Intuition, deduction, discernment, penetration, introspection, Shrewdness, Perspicacity, 2 steps ahead, Reading the game, Acumen, Inner understanding, Noesis, Probability

**Recommended public:** Project managers, Managers, Directors, Entrepreneurs, Leaders, Masters+ students

### 1 William – it was really nothing



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Jeff Campbell headed a product development team in the learning solutions department of a small, niche-market company providing learning media for leading international training providers. The company had a record of R&D success stories and was something of a pioneer in bundling multimedia into single products.

Jeff had a team of six engineer-developer project managers. Typically, they worked on requests received from the training departments of large and prestigious organisations. The requests ranged from new software applications for already developed training media to full design of future training products including modules, programmes, DVDs and training interfaces.

One particular project was lately causing a few headaches for Jeff and his team. What started out as a simple design request for a training pack on safety had several times changed over the course of the project. The client, a well-known consulting company, was now facing tough competition from two other rivals in

the race to provide safety training solutions for a large multinational in the oil and gas sector. The problem for Jeff was that the project deadline had barely budged. And there were all the other projects to handle too. The pressure was on the client who in turn put even more pressure on the supplier – namely Jeff and his team.

Jeff had trouble keeping up with the various project add ons. The initial request had developed into one incorporating text and embedded internet links so that trainees could connect to the web during the training sessions to view additional information. Then, the product platform changed from DVD to computer programme and from that to video files small enough to be loaded into hand-held mobile phones. And lastly, that very Monday, the client contact had phoned Jeff to inform him of a further request for development: the training product must be 100% interactive. Trainees had to *live* the training experience and be able to respond to the software and receive feedback.

In his office, Jeff sat back from his screen and arched his back, hoping to soothe some of the ache at the bottom of his spine. He'd been scotched to the screen for almost five hours solid now, trying to figure out how to organise his resources so that the various projects slipped into synch. He'd had no time to reply to his mails and had even completely forgotten about one that had come through a week ago from Nadia James, an ex-colleague who now worked in the US and involved in something called *avatar interactivity*. Jeff had only glanced at the mail, but the words had struck him. For almost a week, the words, half-remembered now, had occasionally popped back into his mind like a worrying thought. He didn't know why and had given it no deeper reflection, promising himself he'd read the mail in detail later. An *avatar*, he heard himself think as he rubbed his spine...isn't that something to do with androids or human look-alikes or artificial voices? Sounds a bit sci-fi to me – I wonder why Nadia should mention it?

The next week saw the team wholly dedicated to the safety training project for the consulting firm. Interactive, they wanted, Jeff had told his team, and interactive they would get: video footage, exercises, questionnaires, tests,

quizzes and assessments. The whole works in a single bundle, transferable to several media formats and usable on the PC and mobile phone alike! It was to be their most comprehensive development product yet. A meeting with the client later that day gave Jeff and his team the go ahead to produce the prototype.

Returning to his office after seeing off his client, the word *avatar* suddenly popped to mind again. He shook his head and grinned, as though an old torment had just returned to haunt him. Nadia James – you always were one to pester people! Opening up his computer, he typed in a few conclusions on the meeting he'd just had and took a few moments to savour the satisfaction the deal had produced. It'd mean working like hell on it for the next three weeks, but it was worth it. It might even prove a first in the business and a nice shop window for future and potential clients. Instinctively, he

**Questions**

- Pick out the critical incidents in the case study – what were the crucial moments in which Jeff should have shown keen insight?

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**Full Insight case study included in**

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