

## **Relational Intelligence** by Steve Saccone

Book review by Daryl Watts

Steve Saccone is a campus pastor with Mosaic [church] in Los Angeles and professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. He holds an M.A. in Transformational Leadership. Like many of the books that have come from Mosaic staff, this is a series of sermons by Saccone, McManus, and others at Mosaic. One can easily feel the Mosaic “vibe” in the writing.

The first section of the book lays out the concept of relational intelligence and the first chapter is an introduction to the idea of human economy. Relationships and the influence that accompanies them are what make the world move. The author also states that relationships prove the existence of God. Throughout the chapter, Saccone uses several well-fitting personal illustrations, and it is apparent early on that the intended target is leaders, most likely leaders in the religious community.

In the second half of the first chapter the author gets around to actually defining relational intelligence: *Relational intelligence is the ability to learn, understand, and comprehend knowledge as it relates to interpersonal dynamics.* [p. 20]

He likens it to one’s IQ and even provides a link to his online relational intelligence assessment . The assessment is free and provides a reference point for the reader as he or she delves into the descriptions of the six relational geniuses described in the second section. Since the author believes relational intelligence can develop as one improves decision-making, personal interactions, and team building, the assessment can also provide a tool for measuring growth.

The bulk of the book, describes six types of relational geniuses. The author states that this list is not exhaustive and he doesn’t cite any empirical studies he used to determine them. One must assume that his taxonomy is anecdotal; however, this does not assume that it is inaccurate. The book devotes one chapter, about 20 pages, to each genius.

### **The Story Collector**

The Story Collector is good at showing real interest in people and in asking great discussion-starting questions. They seek to know people through conversation and draw people out through learning about their dreams, life history, and personhood. The Story Collector looks for ways to connect his or her own interests to the other person’s interests (or to what makes the other person interesting). Story collectors see everyone’s life as a walking novel waiting to be read with anticipation.

At certain points, the author does a great job of helping the reader see the benefits of relational intelligence. For a leader in a faith community, this is one of those reasons:

*Leaders who take time to get to know what is most sacred about people will also be invited to have the most sacred kind of influence in people’s life.* [p. 77]

### **The Energy Carrier**

The Energy Carrier is the person who can change the vibe of the room. Energy Carriers know how to assess the tone of a group of people and how to adjust that tone to create energy and benefit the group. The author believes anyone can be an Energy Carrier because everyone carries their own energy. What sets Energy Carriers apart is their ability to avoid two energy killers and access two energy catalysts.

The first energy killer is *the appearance of alertness*. This manifests itself as forgetfulness. A person can appear to be alert on the outside and give coworkers, supervisors, and those they lead the idea that they are paying attention, but on the inside they are tuned out.

The second energy killer is *distraction*. This killer deals with being “all there” or wholeheartedly invested in the other person or situation. The author appeals to the Great Commandment in Mark 12 and has a brief set of questions to help the reader determine if one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength are fully tuned in.

The first energy catalyst is *externalizing one’s internal energy*. This is how an Energy Carrier changes the tone of a group or conversation.

The second is *capitalizing on the moment*. The Energy Carrier knows how to see pregnant or important moments and use them to energize the group.

### **The Compelling Relator**

The Compelling Relator is the cure for boredom in the world. Compelling Relators interest people. The author believes anyone can become more interesting by following four strategies:

- Dare to Be Controversial When the Moment Calls for It
- Refuse to Be Irrelevant
- Change the Way You Communicate
- Activate Your Passion

Some of the salient points from this chapter include:

- The more interesting we are as people, the more compelling we become as leaders.
- We have all the power to ensure our relevance to others.
- Passionless people are boring people.
- The more passionate you are about your mission, the more interesting you’ll become in your leadership.

### **The Conversational Futurist**

Conversational Futurists see where conversations are heading. They perceive the streams, patterns, and courses. They are not afraid to move the conversation forward. They don’t let it circle around the same old subjects and ideas. They formulate their thoughts before they speak. This helps them control the conversation and help it rather than be controlled by it. They are also in conversation with God at the same time, praying for discernment.

Futurists are not afraid to take risks in conversations. They are unwilling to simply tell people what they want to hear or let the conversation go where the other person wants it to go. They lead it to a helpful place.

Futurists look for signs and patterns in a person’s life and direct conversation to address it. This can happen with good signs (like an emerging leader) or bad signs (like addictive habits or poor choices). Finally, they listen for the assumptions people make and address them or event-reverse them where needed.

## **The Likeable Hero**

The author is a little cautious here, as he is quick to point out that likeability is a means, not an end. He also warns that likeability is not just manipulation, nor is it really necessary to be a successful leader, but it does help.

He describes five signs of likeability:

1. Approachability – being relationally inviting, accessible, and approachable.
2. Stickiness – maintaining consistent, long-standing, loyal relationships.
3. Rapid trust formation – creating relational space where rapid trust can be formed.
4. Friendliness – exuding relational warmth and kindness, not necessarily being extroverted or charismatic.
5. Flexible optimism – embodying a high, yet realistic, level of optimism about work, life, and relationships.

## **The Disproportionate Investor**

This chapter takes on a double role. The author describes the Disproportionate Investor as one who is willing to invest in others more than take from them. Investors can be identified as those who energize others.

The chapter morphs into a description of the *kind of person who is worthy of investment*. This is really more of the focus of the chapter. The assumed idea is that the Disproportionate Investor is very careful in choosing those in whom he will invest. The author refers to his own work in developing the Protégé Program at Mosaic. He lists six characteristics he looks for in protégés.

1. Generative – they must generate good in themselves and others.
2. Grateful – they must value people’s resources and express it.
3. Teachable – they must desire growth and be humble to learn new things.
4. Missional – they must have a calling and believe in it.
5. Strategic – they must be wise in the use of resources.
6. Resilient – they must be able to push through when the work is tough.

## **Summary Observations**

After taking the online assessment, one might expect a little more practical application in the book. While there were many practical points and tips, they were often difficult to find. Consistent with the Mosaic vibe, the work relies heavily on story and on the experience of the journey rather than on the end product of becoming a relational genius. This is neither good nor bad; it will simply speak to certain personalities more than others.

The lack of research listed in the book is disappointing. One cannot tell if the information was collected from original data, gleaned from other research, or simply a distillation of the author’s observations. If it is the latter, the author may still have an intuitive grasp on relational intelligence.

In the end, the book is worth the read if for no other reason than to help interpret the online assessment.