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***Leadership Development:  
A Coaching Approach to Growing Sustainable  
Leadership Capabilities***

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# Integral Intelligence™ : Unleashing Potential in Leaders and Organizations

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*In this article, the authors describe a novel approach to coaching and leadership development that uses a holistic model, Integral Intelligence™, to generate significant expansion of the capacity and capability of leaders and their teams. Examples from their experience working with thirty leaders from the West Division of Comcast Communications, a Fortune 100 company, illustrate the Integral Intelligence™ approach to leadership development. Interested readers will be coaches, individuals with leadership development responsibility in organizations, and leaders interested in exploring a unique approach that is generating powerful results. A significant distinction in this leadership development process is the authors' focus in supporting leaders in developing a powerful "leadership presence" by becoming more conscious of the impact of their behaviors, attitudes, and actions on their effectiveness. This is what they call Way-of-Being, which is cultivated through the development of Integral Intelligence™.*

***When both Way-of-Doing and Way-of-Being provide the foundation for a learning experience, the impact deepens for developing each leader and for producing optimum results for the business.***

## WHO AM I BECOMING AS A LEADER?

This question is the focal point for beginning the *Integral Intelligence™* leadership journey. Although leadership journeys are personal, they also have an enormous impact on others. For this reason, we designed our leadership program as a group experience. This article recounts the personal stories of two groups of leaders who completed our *Integral Intelligence* leadership program at Comcast Communications' West Division. Brad and Linda, members of one of these groups, worked together on a four member cross-functional team to develop a high-level business case over the course of four months. The purpose of this program was to deliver a tangible business result at the end of the program while, at the same time, developing Way-of-Being and Way-of-Doing for a group of high potential leaders. Way-of-Being was supported by learning a set of practices that cultivate and expand the dimensions of *Integral Intelligence*. Way-of-Doing was supported through learning a set of tools and practices that develop leadership in collaborative teams. In designing this learning experience, we wanted to fill a void left by leadership programs that focus only on what is often regarded as the "hard stuff" of leadership development. Typically these approaches focus exclusively on Way-of-Doing, the tasks leaders perform in doing their work. It is our premise that a sharp focus on Way-of-Being, which is often dismissed as the "soft stuff," leads to more sustainable transformation in leadership development.

In asking the question, "Who am I becoming as a leader?" we are really asking leaders to focus not only on what they do as leaders, but also on who they are as leaders. This distinction often remains unexamined until it is called out and made explicit as a focus for learning. A new leadership journey began for one participant in our program, whom we will call Brad, who found himself on the first day of a four-month intensive program in a room full of hand picked high potential leaders. Teams formed, and as the group dived into projects sponsored by members of the senior leadership team, Brad felt a distinctive lack of self-confidence. As he looked around the room and heard the other leaders speak and contribute, his confidence continued to ebb. One of his peers on his project team was a particularly hard-driving, results-oriented financial professional, Linda. The teams worked in an action learning model on real-world projects between group sessions. The teams were self-directed as they worked between sessions, with intermittent support from Executive Coaches who sat in on some work sessions and offered coaching and feedback. Due largely to his lack of self-confidence, Brad began to withdraw and let Linda carry much of the workload. Not surprisingly, he soon found himself criticized by her for his failure to hold up his end of delivering on the work product.

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Brad and Linda quickly exposed their leadership development “edges” as the project team floundered, and the deadline for presenting their project to the senior leadership team rapidly approached. Linda continued with her “results only” focus and Brad spiraled further into self-doubt, assuming he had failed. While working with their coaches and drawing support from their project team and other peers in the program, Brad and Linda continued to learn more about their *Integral Intelligence* as leaders. Linda’s coach encouraged her to be direct in offering feedback to Brad and to take responsibility for helping create a new, positive direction for the team. Brad’s coach worked with him on showing up in an authentic and courageous way by admitting what he didn’t know while bringing his distinctive strengths to the table. Brad focused on the Emotional and Somatic (physical) dimensions of *Integral Intelligence* in order to cultivate authenticity, courage and presence so he could step more assertively into his leadership, while Linda’s focus was primarily on the Relational dimension, seeking to balance her drive for results with the necessary relationship work required to produce them. Brad shared his leadership story at the end of the program as he reflected on what he had learned.

When I was first contacted about the program, I was drawn in because I wanted to learn more about Emotional Intelligence. I thought I would just breeze through it. What I thought I would learn was nothing like what I came out with! The example I’ll use of my experience in this program is how, if you tap a ball of mercury, it shatters into a million pieces and scatters all over the table. That’s what my life was like. My coach pointed out how compartmentalized I was. In our first meeting, I recognized what a powerful group of leaders we had in the program. They were not afraid to be 3-D people. I was more like a cardboard cutout. My goal now is to become more of a 3-D person, to get all my little bubbles of mercury into one whole person and to integrate all the different aspects of my life.

Brad experienced a significant personal transformation through this program. An integral approach to coaching and learning resulted in integration in Brad’s life. Rather than approaching leadership as something separate to be performed at work, or as one of our Executive Coaching client’s said, “your work self and your other self,” the experience provided support for Brad’s learning and growth as a whole human being. Brad, like many other corporate leaders, used to speak about “who I am at home, and who I am at work; they’re separate people.” He has now found an authentic space, where he is much freer to show up as the unique person he is. In this authentic presence he is able to step further into his power as a leader.

Through coaching and her interactions with Brad and her team, Linda has discovered an appreciation for cultivating relationships as a critical part of getting the work done.

I came into the program only thinking about process and results. I was good at that. What I've come out with is a sense of self, with the relationship piece. Some of the tools I am taking away are breathing, centering myself and being able to speak when I'm in a conflict situation and not run away from that. I've learned how to be in inquiry, when before, I was always advocating for what I wanted. I'm now listening to others' points of view. I've learned to summarize so I can try to better understand what others are saying. I now ask myself everyday, "What kind of leader am I becoming and what steps do I need to take to become the kind of leader I want to be?"

Through team and individual coaching following the second session of the program, the team began to coalesce. Brad began to assert his authority as a leader and share more of the workload and Linda began to be more aware of the impact of her behaviors in facilitating Brad's withdrawal. By the last session of the program when they presented their project to the senior leadership team, they had gelled, were seamless in their hand-offs in the presentation and received a positive reception for their work.

***Many leadership development processes that remain focused only on external behaviors and outcomes fall short in helping leaders make deep, sustainable changes in their leadership.***

This integral process of discovery for leaders differs from many other leadership development approaches because it focuses on Way-of-Being, in addition to Way-of-Doing. When approached as a Way-of-Doing, leadership is often measured or judged on how leaders perform their jobs, their actions and approaches, the tasks they perform, their behaviors, and the outcomes they achieve. This is appropriate since business and organizations are outcome focused, usually in financial terms, but as a singular focus, it is not sufficient for creating transformational changes in overall leadership. Many leadership development processes that remain focused only on external behaviors and outcomes fall short in helping leaders make deep, sustainable changes in their leadership.

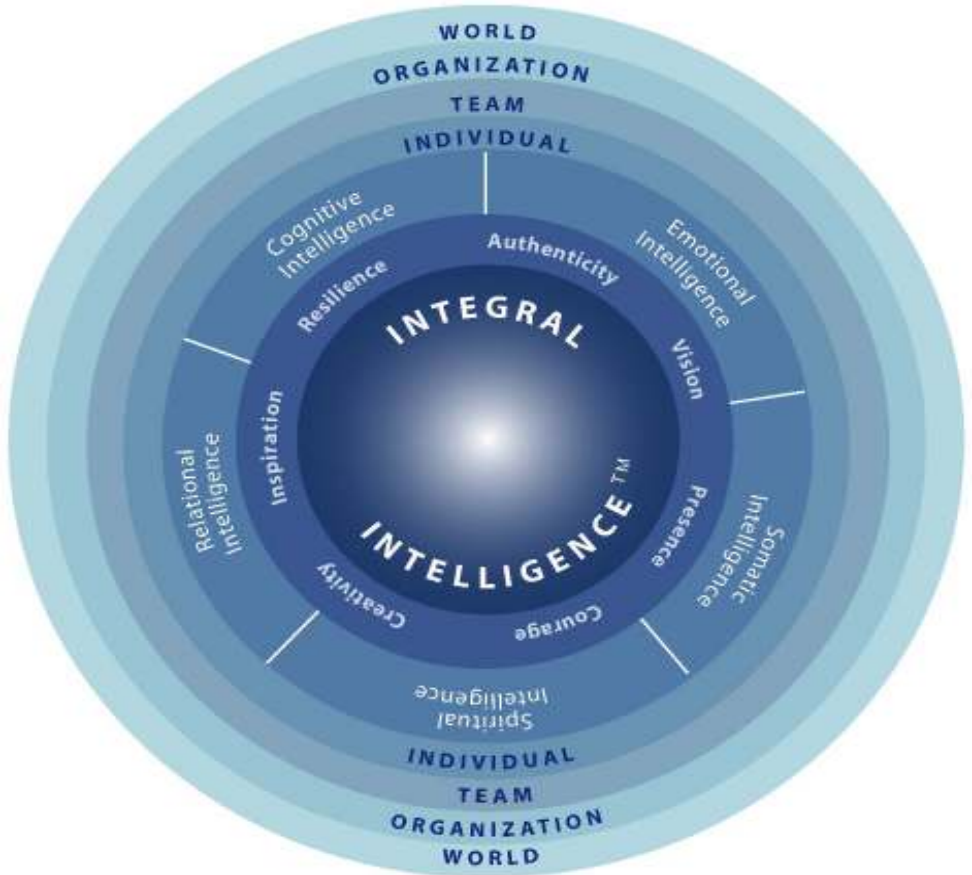
In the case of Brad and Linda, Way-of-Being, the development of *Integral Intelligence*, was combined with Way-of-Doing, the application of tools for collaborative team work. This dual focus contributes not only to immediate business results, but also to deeper, transformational growth in how the participants now show up as leaders. Way-of-Being work takes leaders deeply into reflection on their own patterns of behavior and world view, initially invisible to them, and provides new practices, which create transformational shifts as they focus on, "Who am I becoming as a leader?"

## **WAY-OF-BEING AND THE INTEGRAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL**

Leadership is not only a state of doing; it is also a state of being. It's not only what you do as a leader that counts. It's who you are! This distinction is critical because it is in how leaders "show up" that differentiates good, or not-so-good, leaders from great ones. Integral Intelligence is the capacity to access, integrate, and effectively use multiple sources of intelligence – cognitive, emotional, relational, somatic, and spiritual.

## Integral Intelligence Model

***Integral Intelligence is the capacity to access, integrate, and effectively use multiple sources of intelligence – cognitive, emotional, relational, somatic, and spiritual.***



Cognitive Intelligence includes the use of logic, observation and analysis to generate effective plans. Emotional Intelligence includes self-awareness and awareness of others' emotional states and moods and the ability to respond appropriately. Relational Intelligence includes being able to effectively interact with others in a respectful and appreciative manner. Somatic Intelligence includes caring for one's body, the ability to observe and respond to the body language of others, and awareness of one's own leadership stance. Spiritual Intelligence is based in deeply held values and in one's ability to live with meaning and purpose. The integration of all of these intelligences manifests as a Way-of-Being for leaders by cultivating their ability to lead with vision, be authentic, present, courageous, creative, inspirational and resilient. A focused emphasis on Way-of-Being asks the leader to grow in self-awareness and to focus on how she shows up in every moment, every interaction, and every response. Integral Intelligence provides a foundation for coaching and leadership development, which generates significant expansion of the capacity and capability of leaders and their teams.

Historically, leaders have most often relied almost exclusively on cognitive intelligence, on the ability to analyze and think things through. In recent years, emotional intelligence has also emerged as a necessary element for effective leadership (Goleman, 1995). Our work in developing Integral Intelligence in leaders moves these cognitive and emotional capacities to the next level, while simultaneously supporting the development of the physical (somatic), values-based (spiritual) and human relationship (relational) intelligences.

## **DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP QUALITIES**

When we talk about leaders who move us, inspire us and make a difference, we usually don't speak about what these leaders do; instead we speak about the qualities of leadership that distinguish them. More highly developed Integral Intelligence results in the growth of a set of leadership qualities: authenticity, presence, vision, courage, inspiration, resilience, and creativity. Several years ago, leading organizational learning theorists and leadership development consultants Peter Senge, Otto Sharmar, Joseph Jaworski and Betty Sue Flowers interviewed over one hundred fifty leading scientists, business and social entrepreneurs to discover what would be required of leaders for the future (2004). Presence was the core capacity they found that is required to access what they call the "field of the future." They define presence as "deep listening, of being open beyond one's preconceptions and historical ways of making sense" (2004, p.11). Our work with Integral Intelligence supports leaders in developing presence, which many of our participants describe as one of the most significant outcomes of the program.

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In the case of working with our second group of telecommunications leaders at Comcast, we had a specific opportunity to help them develop their "leadership stance" while preparing to present their project work to the senior leadership team. In this instance, we focused on presence, authenticity and courage. We employed several practices, particularly practices that develop somatic intelligence throughout the program to build authenticity, presence, and courage. These practices included sitting and breath work, centering and moving our bodies into our leadership stance. These practices serve to embody the leadership qualities through practice. The notion of practice, repeating something until it becomes an embodied habit, is often overlooked in leadership development. It is one thing to talk about presence, but it is quite another to be present. Here are some observations from participants.

I have learned what it means to show up and be present...I am committed to finding my gift and giving it back to others.

I have become more self-aware of who shows up. What made this possible was working on my somatic and spiritual side and through understanding others' perceptions. I have become more self-generating and the people who have benefited are my family, my co-workers, my company and myself.

I found centering to be very important and I use it to calm myself before going into meetings and before coming to work. I have benefited from this work, as have my direct reports, my peers, everybody I interact with. I'm even more tolerant of my kids! I will use what I've learned by continuing to work on this area of being fully present and being available to others.

As leaders deepen their capacity to lead from a place that embodies these qualities, they are able to lead more powerfully in their teams, their organizations and to make a broader impact in the world.

### **COACHING: THE CATALYST FOR INTEGRAL INTELLIGENCE**

Integral coaching (Flaherty, 1995) was a core component of the learning experiences of both groups we worked with at Comcast. In the first group, participants formed peer-coaching pairs, who supported each other for the duration of the program. In the second group, project teams of four participants coached each other in the context of completing their project work. In both cases, Executive Coaches, who also served as session facilitators, coached individuals, the peer pairs and the project teams. The peer pairs worked on developing coaching ability and on their unique leadership development areas, and the cross-functional teams worked on initiatives sponsored by senior leadership, as well as on their personal leadership development plans. The learning experience spanned 4-6 months and included individual 360° feedback, personal leadership development plans, group sessions, individual coaching, and peer or team coaching.

The power in the work occurred as a result of modeling the concepts and practicing Way-of-Being. James Flaherty says that "Human beings change in biological time," and this principle is deeply embedded in the Integral Intelligence work. Somatic practices such as breathing, centering, and sitting helped these leaders embody the qualities of presence and authenticity. Relational and emotional intelligence were developed through the use of practices including dialogue, Appreciative Inquiry and learning to balance inquiry and advocacy. Participants developed spiritual intelligence by clarifying purpose and values and their contribution to the greater good. Leaders left this program not only having achieved their personal leadership development goals, but also with greater capability to coach their direct reports, peers and customers, cascading the effect of the program deeper into the organization.

### **INFLUENCES ON THE INTEGRAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL**

As we developed the Integral Intelligence™ model and the ensuing experiences we structured for leaders, we drew upon several bodies of work and thought. These include: social constructionism (Gergen, 1999), Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperider & Whitney, 1999; Watkins & Mohr, 2001; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). We also incorporated concepts

from the field of appreciative leadership (Busche,2001; Schiller, Holland & Riley, 2001; Srivastva & Cooperrider,1999; Stoneham, 2004). Additionally, we applied concepts from action learning (Argyris, Putnam & McLain Smith, 1985; Schön,1987). We also incorporated work on developing learning organizations (Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 2000), integral coaching (Flaherty), integral philosophy (Wilber, 2000, 2001) and emotional intelligence (Goleman,1995;Weisinger, 1998). Key ideas from the fields of transformative learning and education (Boyd & Myers, 1988; Heron, 1992; Mezirow,1991, 2000; Reason, 1994;Yorks & Kasl, 2002) and adult learning (Friere, 1995; Knowles, 1998; Kolb, 1984; Rogers,1995) are also applied in our approach.

Social constructionist thought proposes that human beings create knowledge and meaning in relationships and that relationships are built through language. Our program participants build relationships through the practice of inquiry and dialogue. Using Appreciative Inquiry, our work builds from strengths and what's working for leaders and organizations, rather than focusing on weaknesses or gaps. Action learning provides the structure, a process in which a people come together to help each other to learn from their experience. Our coaching model is based on James Flaherty's integral coaching approach, which takes into account the integral, multi-faceted nature of human beings and offers a respectful, reciprocal relationship between coach and client. This approach develops new practices and new language, and provides the opportunity to examine results in relationship to intentions, which leads to self-correction, self-generation and long-term exceptional performance. The four-quadrant model (intentional, behavioral, cultural and social) and the evolving stages of human development are drawn from Ken Wilber's integral philosophy. The work on emotional intelligence, the nurturing of self-awareness, self-discipline and empathy, helped us blaze a path that both incorporates this dimension of intelligence and also moves beyond it. Finally, the principles of adult learning – direct and immediate relevance, autonomy, honoring the experience of the learner, and orientation to practical goals – form a foundation for the leadership learning experience.

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All of these approaches overlap, support and inform one another in an integral fashion, resulting in a remarkably different learning experience for leaders. What we have observed with some amazement as we have interacted with program participants in the corporate environment is the openness for establishing a safe space for learning, for allowing vulnerability, and for approaching the notion of spirituality, or contribution to a greater good. In a very short time span, we are finding the willingness of leaders to open themselves within a group to the larger possibilities of their own leadership journey in courageous and powerful ways.

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AND THE “SOFT STUFF”**

The initial response of leaders to the Way-of-Being leadership development work ranges from discomfort to resistance, because it is seen at the outset as “touchy-feely” or the “soft stuff.” Many organizations and their leaders are much more comfortable working on the “hard stuff” of leadership: the numbers, the output, the presentations, and expertise in the business. This



mistakenly makes an assumption that the "soft stuff" falls in the category of "nice to have, but not necessary." In practice, the "soft stuff" is really much more difficult than the "hard stuff"! Another participant in the program, Darren, a respected and accomplished leader when he arrived at the first session, was challenged to confront what was holding him back from being fully authentic in the workplace. He knew if he could achieve this goal, it would move him to the next level of leadership. On the last day of the program, he shared his leadership story with his peers and senior leadership.

For me, this program has been a journey of discomfort and resistance that has evolved into enlightenment and then development. I'm not a touchy-feely type person. I don't know if you've had the opportunity to see the Oprah show, but Oprah has this uncanny ability to get people to open up. In this program, we had three Oprah's [coach/facilitators] that created a lot of discomfort! As leaders, we have created resolutions about ourselves and we don't like having our resolutions challenged. I've been through many leadership development programs in my career, but this was the first time I had an opportunity to step outside myself and see who I am and how I do what I do. My biggest challenge is the challenge of presence. Who do you see? Do you see me the person or do you see me, the role? My challenge has been to find the balance and to allow the real me to be present when I engage with others. That is what I'm learning how to do.

For Darren, who was already an accomplished leader when he entered the program, a focus on Way-of-Being, or the "soft stuff," turned out to be the powerful catalyst for his continuing growth as a leader.

## **THE CLIENT'S PERSPECTIVE**

The experience for the two groups we worked with at Comcast's West Division had somewhat different applications, based on the end result sought for each group. For the first group, the client wanted leaders to grow coaching capability and authenticity, as well as to develop leadership bench strength as part of the company's succession planning process. The business case for the second group was also based on the organization's need to develop a bench of leaders who could engage the full participation and commitment of their teams in a decentralized, fast paced, dynamic environment. The client wanted to develop leaders who could lead and influence across functional lines, coach and develop future leaders, stay centered and focused in the midst of change and deliver exceptional business results.

Past leadership programs for this division had focused primarily on what leaders do as they perform their work, their Way-of-Doing, and they had not been as successful as desired in producing the long-term sustainability and self-generative quality that was needed to transform their organizational capability. Our client, Debbie Rocco, Sr. Director of Learning and Development for Comcast's West Division, summarized the company's

experience with our Integral Intelligence programs.

With the support of a few key senior leaders within the company, we were able to take a “leap of faith” and integrate the Way-of-Doing approach with a focus on how leaders are showing up, or Way-of-Being. Within our organization’s culture, this attention to the “soft stuff” was a foray into the unknown and a risk, but the early results have far exceeded our expectations. We were most struck by the gratitude our leadership program participants expressed for the opportunity to explore their own leadership within the larger context of who they are as individuals, and by the support and engagement senior leadership demonstrated as the participants shared their leadership stories. We are confident that as we continue to provide support for our leaders to grow as human beings, we will be able to demonstrate a sustainable return on investment for the business.

## **THE RESULTS**

Having practiced many years in the area of leadership development and organizational development, we were particularly interested in both the sustainability and applicability of this learning experience. How often do you hear someone say that the session or program was great, but the learning was quickly lost when participants returned to work? Our belief was that a combination of individual coaching, peer coaching, group sessions and experiential learning and practice over time would embody learning so that participants would continue on their leadership learning path after the program was complete. Based on post-assessment data we have received, our belief appears credible, according to our client, Debbie Rocco.

Improving the company’s leadership bench strength has been one significant result of the program. Within two months of completing the first Integral Intelligence program, three of the participants in the first group had been promoted and one had received significant enhancement of job scope, resulting in a 25% increase in bench strength,. Two individuals who were promoted said that what they learned in the program gave them the leverage they needed to move to the next level of leadership in their careers.

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Following the interview process for his new job, Bill, a program participant shared:

The interview process was very challenging. There were three interviews back to back for five hours and each was a different style of interview. I have to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the training and support you have given me. Utilizing those new tools, I think I really hit the ball out of the park!

Sustainability or learning “stickiness” was a second key goal for our client. Debbie shared the results to date on this key dimension.

In post-assessment data collected in the first group nine months after program inception and three months after completion, all respondents replied that 75-100% of program content was applicable to their work and 100% reported that they had been able to sustain their learning much of the time. Additionally, 100% of respondents in both programs indicated their intentions to continue to work with their peer coach or their project team members following program completion.

A third goal for Comcast was that what participants learned could be cascaded throughout the organization as they shared their learning and modeled a new Way-of-Being with their teams. Sue, a program participant, made these comments in her post-assessment survey.

The program was quite beneficial to all parts of my life. It lays a firm foundation to develop leaders with the desire to develop direct reports and foster healthy relationships within the organization and across functions. I personally feel that what I learned and gained from this experience is contagious to the circle of influence I have today in all areas of my life. I have been able to sustain much of my learning by continuing to focus on them on a regular basis. I continue to ask for feedback from my peers, especially if I feel myself slipping back into old habits. As part of my development plan, I’ve been able to be more open to other peoples’ ideas and suggestions rather than imposing my “will” on people. This is attributed in large part to my self-observation and being able to rely on my peer network for feedback.

***92% of participants in the first group and 100% of participants in the second group said they would recommend the program to a colleague.***

Attaining each leader’s specific development objectives was another key objective, so we assessed participants in both programs with a 360 ° assessment tool before the program and again, by the same group of respondents, three months after the program ended. We measured each leader’s individual development goals, as well as the Integral Intelligence leadership qualities. At the time of this writing, the first group’s post-assessment data from their raters had been completed with the following results:

- 100% of items measured indicated that participants leveraged their leadership strengths “often” or “consistently.”
- 84% of the items measured indicated that the participants showed “significant” or “exceptional” improvement in their individual development areas.
- 79% of the items measured showed “significant” or exceptional” growth in the development of the Integral Intelligence leadership qualities: resilience, presence, creativity, vision, authenticity, courage and inspiration.

Additionally, 92% of participants in the first group and 100% of participants in the second group said they would recommend the program to a colleague. The first group rated their satisfaction of the program at 4.58 on a 5-point scale and the second group, at 4.8.

In addition to results, Debbie spoke of the focus on high value as an important consideration for Comcast in deciding to move forward with the Integral Intelligence programs.

Because of the way the program is designed, two to three leaders can participate for the cost of one Executive Coaching contract, so this was a high value proposition for our organization. That fact, coupled with the development of business cases for key business projects in the organization in the second group, should provide the company with a significant return on investment moving forward.

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF A HOLISTIC APPROACH**

The Integral Intelligence program takes a strengths-based, multi-faceted and integrated approach as it addresses Way-of-Doing and Way-of Being in order to achieve effective business results. What we are learning from participants is that this approach provides leverage for critical decision-making, expands the leaders' repertoire of choices, and creates the energy and resilience necessary for them to successfully address the complexity of their ever-changing, fast-moving worlds. The Integral Intelligence experience opens the possibility for greater contribution by participants, their teams, and those they lead and manage, while broadening the context for leadership.

Participants report satisfying their yearning to lead in a way that unleashes personal, team and organizational creativity and potential. These leaders are cultivating greater authenticity in all settings, leading to a deeper, more connected engagement in work and life. In an organizational setting, the Integral Intelligence approach develops individual leaders, enhances leadership bench strength for internal succession, and creates more cohesive, effective teams. Perhaps most importantly, this holistic approach to leadership development helps leaders manifest the dream of becoming the leaders they seek to become.

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