



More than a hunch

Domini Stuart delved deep into intuition and asks whether it could be the key to a stress-free life

Intuition used to be considered an impediment to logical thinking. Rarely used without the prefix 'female', intuition had no place in the rational, hard-headed world of business.

Now it is being embraced – and not just by women. Mike O'Neill, former Managing Director of Whirlpool Australia, is just one of a growing number of men who believe that intuition can make an important contribution to running a successful company. In a recent interview with CEO Forum, he said that 'as a CEO your instinct, your gut feel, is more than likely - nine out of ten times - going to be correct'.

But what if you're not an intuitive person? According to one of Australia's leading authorities, there's no such thing. Bob Jajko believes that each of us can access the power of intuition and build it for practical use, both in every day life and for achieving long term goals. As director of New Vision Institute (newvisioninstitute.com), he takes that message to individuals and businesses of all sizes.

"Intuition is an innate skill for survival – knowing stuff that you don't have enough information about," he says. "For instance, if you have a feeling that someone you meet for the first time is not telling the truth, you're probably right. If you happen to be interviewing them for a job, that feeling could help you avert a significant mistake."

Most of us have had at least one experience of a meaningful 'gut feeling', so why are we so quick to deny our power? According to Jajko, most of us have learned to suppress our intuition, either because we're not sure how to interpret it, because we find it hard to trust ourselves or because it brings things to our attention that make us uncomfortable. As a result, we're wasting a very valuable resource.

"When we act on our intuition, success automatically follows," he says. "I have no doubt that companies with leaders who use intuition are consistently more profitable than their counterparts."

Healthy business, healthy mind, healthy body

Along with a more successful business, intuition could be the key to a life of happiness and fulfilment.

"When the majority of business owners set goals, they judge the outcome against community standards and other people's expectations," says Jajko. "They may then achieve the great material success they *thought* they were working for only to find the rest of their life sucks. This is because they're living a life which is at odds with who they really are – their authentic self. This discontinuity lies at the heart of much of the chronic stress experienced by so many people in business."

Jajko is particularly concerned about the physical effects of this stress. "If you injected yourself with stress hormones every day, it wouldn't be too long before your bodily systems started shutting down," he says. "High levels of cortisol have been linked with diabetes, weight problems, heart disease, cancer and depression. When you're suffering from chronic stress, you're being cooked in the stuff!"

"People who use their intuition rarely have problems with stress because they can sense and see situations in a different light."

Taking time to look inside

A non-profit Trust, the Asher Foundation is dedicated to the integration of natural therapies and orthodox medicine in the prevention and treatment of disease. Unique in its multi-disciplinary approach, the Trust was founded by Michelle Richmond after her own experience with breast cancer highlighted a lack of cooperative care.

“When I started the business, I suppose the way I ran it was fairly typical,” she says. “I’d make up my mind about something, then charge on through regardless.

As soon as I started using my intuition I found myself doing things totally differently. That’s one of the great things about it – when you take notice of it, your intuition starts working for you right away.”

One of her first challenges was establishing a clearly-defined focus. “I learned to think more deeply and become more aware of what is around me and inside me. I was able to identify my real intention, then start working towards goals that reflect my authentic self.

“This makes life a lot less stressful – something you’re particularly aware of when you’ve had cancer - and the difference in the way the business runs has been phenomenal. Other people notice it too. I’m often asked ‘how do you do that?’, but I’m not sure everyone believes me when I say ‘by using my intuition’.

Einstein knows best

Jajko occasionally finds resistance to his ideas, most frequently from men in their forties and older. This is when he calls on the support of one of the greatest thinkers the world has ever seen. “Einstein said ‘The intellect has little to do on the road to discovery. There comes a leap in consciousness, call it Intuition or what you will, and the solution comes to you, and you don't know how or why.’ The fact that Einstein says it’s OK is usually enough to get people to listen,” he says.

Finding the ‘aha’ experience

- Intuition doesn’t work when you’re stressed. You need time and space to listen to your heart; meditation is perfect.
- Learn your own language of intuition. You could receive your messages as feelings, as a thought in words or pictures, or metaphorically, as in a dream.
- Don’t throw away analytical thinking – the two can work together. In his book *Intuition at Work: Why Developing Your Gut Instincts Will Make You Better at What You Do*, Gary Klein says that honing your analytical skills can only make applying your intuition more effective. The more complex and uncertain the task at hand, the harder it is to use intuition alone.
- Avoid talking about intuition to anyone likely to scoff
- Keep a record of your intuitive thoughts whether or not you acted on them. Seeing how often you were right will help build your confidence.
- As Benjamin Spock once said, trust yourself – you know more than you think.