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So the questions that need to be answered concerning intuition are the same as for any good business tool: Is it trustworthy? Can I use it? The answer to both is yes.

### INTUITION: MAGIC OR AN EXECUTIVE'S MOST USEFUL TOOL?

Demystifying intuition is not the easiest thing to do. After all, what is more magical than suddenly being provided with all the answers and all the correct decisions you could use? One of the best stories of business intuition involves Conrad Hilton, founder of the hotel chain. When he was bidding for the old Stevens Hotel in Chicago, a number suddenly popped into his

mind. Hilton used the figure and with it purchased the world's largest hotel with a bid that won by a mere \$200. In a case like this, maybe it was. But for a moment let's adhere to one theory of intuition that argues that the flash or hunch only surfaces after the subconscious mind completes a process very much like conscious reasoning. In Hilton's case, he had stored away a great deal of information about the Stevens Hotel sale. Naturally there would be the run-of-the-mill information such as the current market value of the hotel, how much he could afford to pay, and what he foresaw the hotel eventually being worth to him. But there was other information that was also being compiled. Details concerning the other bidders: how liquid their companies currently were, how much they coveted the hotel. Possibly he had met some of the other bidders in the past, their personalities were figured into the equation. Maybe from walking around town he had gotten a feel for the financial health of Chicago in general and his subconscious factored that in also. Once everything fell into place, a figure . . . out popped a figure that his conscious mind picked up.

This hypothesized scenario of Hilton's inner workings demonstrates what Phillip Goldberg, author of *The Intuitive Edge*, feels to be the advantage of intuition in decision making: "Intuition . . . can work with information that is not consciously available, that may have been stored in the past or

## INTUITION

Bring up the subject of intuition in conversation and you can bet that you'll hear stories best accompanied by the theme music from "The Twilight Zone." Tales of almost eerie precognition in which people somehow perceive information that they couldn't possibly have known by ordinary means. In the past, if you were interested in the subject of intuition you had to peruse books with titles like *Intuition: The Unknowing Power of the Mind* or *Minutes a Day*. Yet in a curious leap from the Ouija board to the venerable stacks of the Wharton or Harvard Business School, for while, top-level executives around the country are making it their business to develop their intuitive talents and put them to use on a daily basis. It is helping execs become more intuitive at organizations such as Tenneco, Walt Disney, and even the National Security Agency is Weston Agor, Ph.D., professor of public administration at the University of Texas, El Paso, and author of *Intuition in Organizations: Leading and Managing Productively*. To Dr. Agor, intuition is the key to success in business. But what exactly is it? "Basically, I define intuition as knowing something for certain without knowing it for sure," he says.

What Dr. Agor is referring to is that gut-level feeling we've all experienced, which, when it happens, delivers up an answer or decision that we somehow *know* is correct. What is particularly amazing is that the intuitive decision often seems more correct than many thoroughly weighed and analyzed decisions. In other words, we seem to be certain it is right even though we have no hard data to prove it for certain. "And while some people

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