

**BRAIN
POWER IN
ACTION**



AUTHOR: STUART HODGE

BRAIN POWER IN ACTION

What if you could build your company based on the brain chemistry of employees and their individual abilities? Game Intelligence is setting out to revolutionise how organisations find and develop talent by predicting performance. CEO Anders Norén tells us more

For any transforming business, the value of bringing together high-performing and engaged leaders and teams cannot be understated.

Despite that, attempting to calibrate what makes certain individuals both perform well individually and dovetail well in a team is an area where there can be a huge variance in both how well it is done and how it is approached.

But by using cutting-edge neuroscience techniques and technology, Swedish startup Game Intelligence is looking to revolutionise exactly how organisations find and

develop talent.

The research team, made up of Karolinska Institutet neuropsychologist Torbjörn Vestberg alongside neuroscientists Professor Martin Ingvar and Associate Professor Predrag Petrovic, has taken research techniques normally used for the assessment and treatment of behavioural and neuropsychological conditions and applied them instead to understanding performance by using cognitive testing.

They study how the executive functions in the frontal lobe of people's brains – encompassing abilities such as problem solving, memory, verbal ability and impulse control – help them to

carry out their job, both individually or in teams.

The highest profile cognitive testing the company has done so far was with two of the most decorated and talented footballers of their generation, former Barcelona and Spain midfield duo Xavi Hernández and Andrés Iniesta. The two players spent over a decade operating at the very top of their sport, winning everything from the World Cup and two European Championships internationally to well over a dozen club honours each.

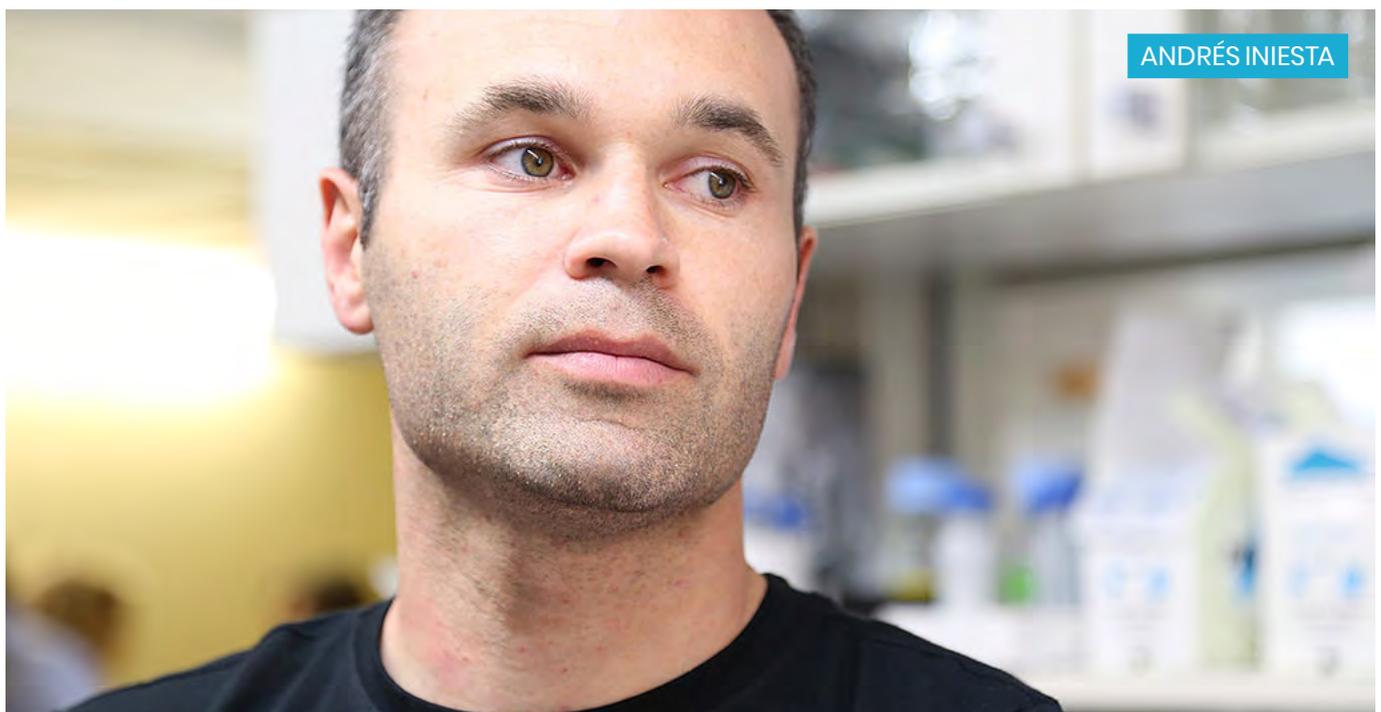
The Game Intelligence team sought to discover how the pair's neurological makeup helped them maintain their astounding levels of performance, utilising testing which is standardised and normalised for the entire world population and is scientifically proven with the highest level of validity.

Game Intelligence CEO Anders Norén

believes the studies conducted on the two sporting superstars, along with its scientific testing, showed the potential of the business and also exactly how cognitive profiling can help explain performance.

“The results from that study were amazing,” says Norén. “It gained a lot of attention from media all over the world because of the fascinating results. The researchers had shown to the world that there is a way to better understand ‘game intelligence’, why someone constantly shows the ability to be in the right place, at the right time and do the right thing.

“The first study showed that you can predict, on a very high level, success in football. The researchers also found very clear, combinative profiles of the different positions. And we also realised you can use this to select, build and coach teams to perform better, with the



ANDRÉS INIESTA



XAVI HERNÁNDEZ



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cognitive profile playing an important part.”

But it's not just footballers and sportspeople with whom Game Intelligence has been cooperating; it has also been working with companies such as Atlas Copco, H&M and Volvo to prove the benefits of their work in the business world.

“What the researchers did was to correlate the cognitive test results and the capacity of specific executive functions with the company's own judgment evaluation,” Norén explains. “There's some depth in the evaluation of their managers and coworkers.

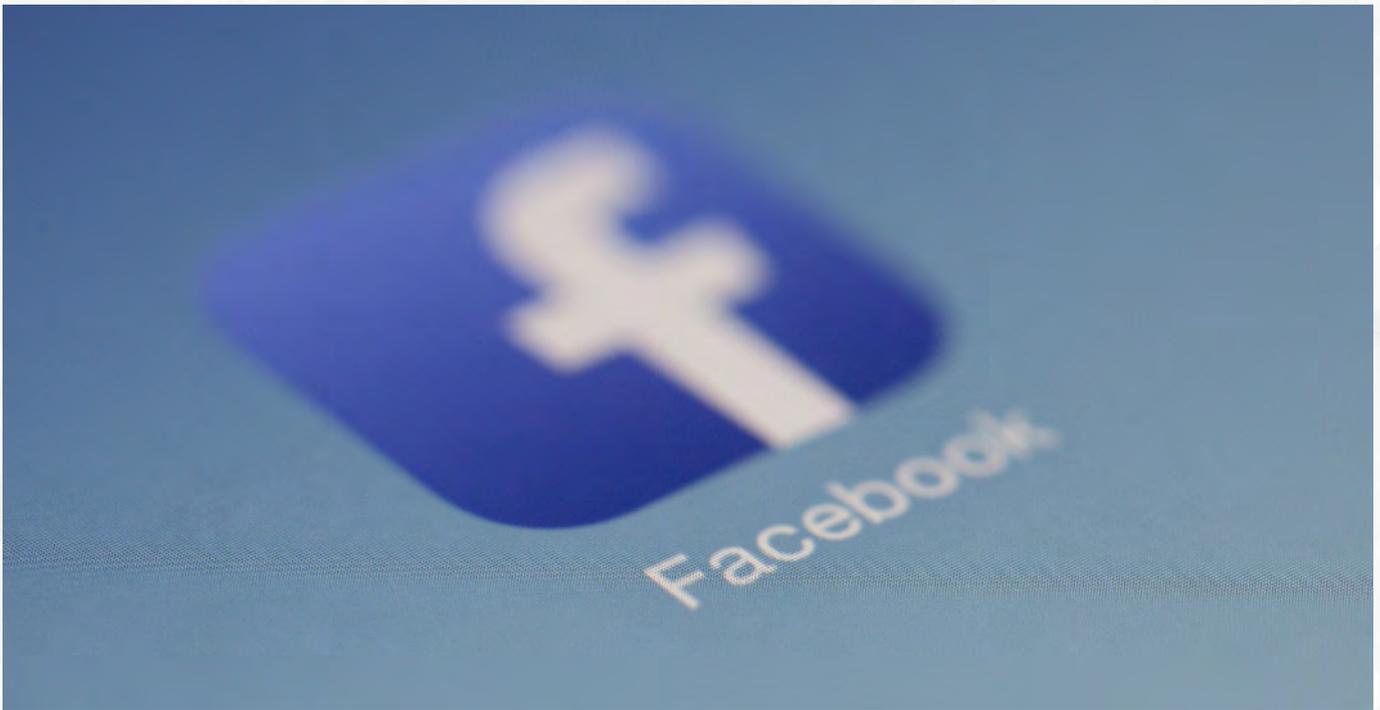
“We found a very strong correlation between the capacity level of specific executive functions and what they considered being a good leader, or a good manager, with result and goal orientation.

“Adaptability, stress resilience, team building... those were other indicators the scientists looked for and found strong statistical correlation between specific brain functions, their capacity, and these indicators. That's a very important tool when we work with businesses, to look at this capacity. It's a way of bridging things.

“When it comes to successful teams,



Facebook to add 1,000 jobs in Ireland this year



Facebook says it will add 1,000 jobs in Ireland over the course of 2019. COO Sheryl Sandberg made the announcement in a Dublin speech. Facebook has 60 teams across the capital, County Meath and County Cork. The additions will take its total workforce in the country to 5,000. The news comes after Salesforce said it would build a new Dublin campus and create 1,500 jobs.

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ANDERS NORÉN

we do see executive functions that, between team members, coincide independently of how high or low they are but with most teams we've looked at, they seem to be similar, or the same, on a few of these functions. But, in almost any team, there are also very clear differences."

Game Intelligence studied some of the most successful founders in IT and life science throughout Sweden, and in many instances it comes down to pairings incorporating a strategic 'thinker' and a more focused 'doer'.

Another perspective is that it often comes down to a more people-oriented individual along with somebody who maybe lacks some interpersonal skills but has the vision to engender success.

There will often be lots of areas in common in a partnership and then one clear deviation in their

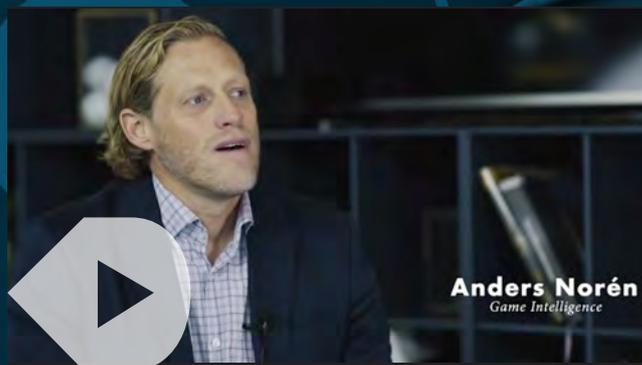
cognitive skills. Norén describes there as being "big room" for very different profiles working together in teams, but also strong evidence exists for complementary profiles collaborating, providing people that can accept and create benefits from the cognitive differences.

In a transformative world where the very fabric of how business is conducted is constantly subject to change, Game Intelligence's work could provide huge value.

"Basically this is a way of using modern cutting-edge science to actually systemise and integrate this cognitive science into the day-to-day life of individuals, leaders and teams at organisations," says Norén.

"The whole world of business is going through digitalisation in some way or another. In some trades, it's a dramatic change where digitalisation

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means that many jobs as we know are disappearing and replaced by new ones or digital processes. For those leaving and for those staying, this often means a huge transformation.

“Transformation means change and change, for almost all of us, is something we don't like because it's seldom you who chooses to change. We are creatures of habit, so this is where our tools come in handy.”

Norén says that the things an individual can understand about themselves, when it comes to how they react to changes in the environment and how it causes them to feel and react, is key to extracting the most from their ability. By understanding this on a deep level, people can much better choose their environment and situations where they actually have the best possibilities to succeed.

“Let's say that you realise that 'Okay, I don't have the best attention and memory,' then you can find ways to compensate by using different techniques, develop different skill sets and so on,” he adds.

“As a leader, you can use that to combine the knowhow with the better understanding of what's under the hood. 'What's actually the capacity beyond this overt behaviour that I see, that I want to bring forward independently of the behaviour that may make it difficult to lead this person?’

“By knowing, respecting and encouraging the capacity that you want each person to use, this person will feel more appreciated and that can drive transformation and change. In that kind of environment, you need more than ever to have the right kind of leaders with the right abilities, who can see what’s important and give people the leadership, support and development they need.

“For example, in software development you need testers and they need to be very sharp. Maybe, the testers don’t need to be good at interacting with people. They don’t need to have a very high level on flexibility or attention and memory, but they need to be extremely sharp when it comes to correcting and finding the problems.

“Companies can make very specific expert profiles and feel much safer. When individuals have a certain capacity in these abilities, they can do this specific job very well. You can then be much sharper and more insightful in your recruiting, and in your building of teams and organisations.

“If you combine that with self-insight and the ability and support to complement it then it can definitely help.”

Amongst all the science and learning, Norén has a vision which is not just to create a bespoke consultancy; he also wishes to build a global database of information and

data which can be used not just by businesses but everyone, from elite sports organisations to universities and other educational institutions.

“So far, we’ve been a niche consulting firm with psychology-led testing and coaching, but we’re now starting with the digitalisation of the complete process, from the testing to the advanced analytics of big data and also correlation with other data,” he concludes.

“You know that what we can tell you can be used to improve your behaviour, to improve your teamwork, your leadership, et cetera. What is the outcome? What is the effect? The action and the outcome is very interesting for the future. This database is what we intend to build over time.

“We will have these two (elements to the business). So far, it’s been the consulting – which will of course continue. It will be deep, qualitative, focused on management teams, leaders, high performers. And then, we will have the digital business. That will be broader, for selection or screening and so on, working with big data, advanced analytics and visualisation tools. They will work nicely together, we think.” 

