

Leading with Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

To lead with emotional intelligence is to inspire, motivate and instill a sense of worth, belonging and confidence. It is to compel others to work to their fullest potential. Successful leadership is measured by the emotions of others. How does one develop such leadership skills? Leadership experts agree that it requires an ‘inside-out’ approach. It is critical for leaders to increase their awareness of their ability to manage themselves and their relationships with others. Emotional intelligence appears to be distinct from cognitive intelligence, as measured by one’s IQ. To lead with emotional intelligence involves an examination of the foundational skills and competencies that underlie leadership competencies. It involves a thorough understanding of the component parts of emotional intelligence and how each one can be developed in the workplace for greater organizational effectiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

Where are the leaders who inspire us, motivate us and make us feel like we can achieve great things? Where are the leaders who, when present, induce us to feel a sense of self-confidence, cause our self-worth to rise and make us genuinely feel like we ‘belong’? Where are the leaders who make us feel good? We feel like we do our best work for people with these qualities. We don’t want to leave leaders who make us feel these positive emotions. I suggest that leaders with these qualities are out there, but it is also safe to say that the world could use more of them. This paper will discuss the difference between leaders and managers and what skills need to be developed to create more leaders who are able to inspire workers for maximum organizational effectiveness.

LEADERS VERSUS MANAGERS

Think about the managers that you have worked for in your career so far. They were all managers, but were they all leaders? What's the difference? 'Manager' is usually the name of the position that we use to refer to the person that 'gets things done.' They have a responsibility to ensure that those tasks that are within the scope of their job are completed. Thus, the manager – **manages** – people, things, budgets, resources, etc. to ensure that tasks are completed.

So, what is a leader? 'Leader' is usually a label that we give to a person within an organization that has influence over our behaviour. They 'lead' us to do certain things. Think of an influential person in your office, division, department, etc. How do they 'lead' you?

It may not actually be the manager who influences you in this way. It may be a co-worker or someone who reports to you. Leaders are found at all levels within a company. Some may disagree with this statement. Some feel that leaders are only found at the top levels of an organization. If you believe this you may overlook the tremendous impact that 'leaders' have on other employees in the company – for good and for bad.

Leaders lead people to feel, think, act, and work in ways that they might not consider on their own.

Now, here's a question, "Who determines whether someone is a leader?" I would like to suggest that it is the 'follower' who determines whether someone is a leader. So, if we like the influence that someone has on us, then we have, in essence, determined them to be a leader. If, for some reason, we do not wish to be influenced by an individual—even if it is a manager who has been given a mandate to 'lead' us—they are not a leader in our eyes so will not have their desired effect upon us. Thus, leaders earn the privilege to lead.

What do good leaders do? I have asked this question to of hundreds of executives in the years that I have been delivering leadership workshops and the lists are always the same:

- » Made me feel inspired to do my best
- » Listened to me
- » Made me feel like I belong
- » Were available to talk to when I needed them
- » Made me feel like my work was valued
- » Involved me in decisions
- » Shared information with me

- » Provided feedback on my work
- » Honoured individual and group achievements
- » Listened to ideas and was open to innovation

Very seldom did individuals or groups identify “technically knowledgeable” as one of the qualities or attributes of good leaders. This is an interesting observation. Often managers are chosen based on their superior technical ability. One engineer once told me, “The day they made me a manager, they lost an excellent engineer and gained a poor manager.” He had no management, let alone leadership, skills and training, and felt unprepared for the job.

In our groups we also make a list of what bad leaders do – which, incidentally, is the opposite of the ‘good leader list.’ So, how do we interpret this list? One of the questions I ask in training is, “How do good leaders learn to do these things?” Groups often struggle to answer this question. Ultimately, the answer is that learning to do the things good leaders do involves developing an additional set of competencies that provide a foundation upon which we can learn the skills listed.

For example, how do we inspire people to do their best? Well, first, we need to know and understand how we are inspired to do our best. Then we need to get inspired to do our best. Finally,

we need to demonstrate those actions which communicate inspiration to do one’s best.

Let’s consider how to make people feel like they belong. First, we need to know and understand what makes us feel like we belong. Then we need to get to know and understand others to figure out what types of things would cause them to feel like they belong. Finally, we need to behave in ways that communicate to individuals that they belong.

Are you seeing a trend in how we build this foundation of competencies? How do we know when we are ‘inspired’ or if we ‘belong’? There’s a whole lot to do with ‘feeling’ and ‘emotions’ here. What we need is to know more about feeling and emotions. What we need is to be ‘intelligent’ about emotion. Let us consider what is known about ‘emotional intelligence.’

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

If you type 'emotional intelligence' into your favourite internet search engine, you will get approximately 1,180,000 websites containing the term 'emotional intelligence.' This begins what I sometimes call the 'EQ Maze.' There are so many different perspectives on emotional intelligence that it is difficult to tell which is the 'correct' one. Rather than there being a 'correct' perspective, let me tell you a little about what I consider to be important in determining which perspective is for you.

First, I think it is important that the definition makes sense to you as something that you can work with. If you are in Human Resources, then you need a definition and a theoretical perspective of emotional intelligence that can be measured and improved to assist you with your objective of developing more productive employees. While there may be more than one perspective that fits this bill, let me tell you about the perspective of Dr. Rueven BarOn, a U.S. educated Israeli, who completed his Ph.D. studies in South Africa. Why Dr. BarOn's perspective and not another? Dr. BarOn's theory of emotional intelligence is one of the few that arises directly from empirical research and quantitative analysis of data.

Dr. BarOn's work in the area began with his concern with why so many patients in his clinical psychology practice with high IQ's seemed to struggle with so many aspects of life. In other words, why did smart people do dumb things? Dr. BarOn then set off to study what competencies differentiated between people who did 'smart' things, that is, behaviours that assisted them to reach their stated objectives in life and people who did 'dumb' things, that is, behaviours which did not assist them to meet their own stated objectives.

His work was carried out in the context of creating an assessment tool to measure these 'competencies.' Dr. BarOn's definition of emotional intelligence, what he initially called 'social and emotional competence,' is as follows:

"Emotional Intelligence is an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures." Dr. Rueven BarOn, 1987

If we think in terms of leadership skills, emotional intelligence then, is the array of competencies that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with the demands and pressures of leading in a corporate environment.

Dr. BarOn has described 5 general areas or 'composite scales' of emotional intelligence competencies:

1. Intrapersonal
2. Interpersonal
3. Adaptability
4. Stress Management
5. General Mood

In the sections that follow, each composite scale will be introduced along with its subscales, including definitions.

1 INTRAPERSONAL

Emotional Self-Awareness

The ability to recognize and understand one's feelings and emotions, differentiate between them, and know what caused them and why.

Benefit: In the workplace, good emotional self-awareness promotes successful conflict resolution and leads to improved interaction with staff. Allows one to 'clear the air' by addressing issues directly and promptly, without avoidance which often makes things worse.

Assertiveness

The ability to express feelings, beliefs, and thoughts and defend one's rights in a nondestructive way.

Benefit: In the workplace, appropriate assertiveness helps individuals to work more cohesively and to share ideas effectively. Good leaders have well-developed assertiveness skills.

Self-Regard

The ability to look at and understand oneself, respect and accept oneself, accepting one's perceived positive and negative aspects as well as one's limitations and possibilities.

Benefit: In the workplace, employees who have high self-regard have better work attitudes and behaviors. High Self-Regard often leads to better self-confidence which, in turn, leads to higher performance.

Self-Actualization

The ability to realize one's potential capacities and to strive to do that which one wants to do and enjoys doing.

Benefit: In the workplace, high self-actualization is connected with good motivation and striving to optimize both individual

and team performance. A well-rounded individual brings more life experience to the job.

Independence

The ability to be self-reliant and self-directed in one's thinking and actions and to be free of emotional dependency; these people may ask for and consider the advice of others, but they rarely depend on others to make important decisions or do things for them.

Benefit: In the workplace, the proper balance is for leaders to ultimately “think for themselves” and yet still listen to and incorporate ideas from others when appropriate.

2 INTERPERSONAL

Interpersonal Relationship

The ability to establish and maintain mutually satisfying relationships that are characterized by intimacy and by giving and receiving affection.

Benefit: In the workplace, good interpersonal relations translates into effective communication within and between individuals, teams, departments, and divisions.

Empathy

The ability to be attentive to, to understand, and to appreciate the feelings of others...it is being able to “emotionally read” other people.

Benefit: In the workplace, understanding the impact of the duties and demands being placed on staff members creates cohesive functioning. Understanding others' points of view will help lead others more effectively.

Social Responsibility

The ability to demonstrate oneself as a cooperative, contributing, and constructive member of one's social group.

Benefit: In the workplace, social responsibility means contributing to recognized departmental and company goals. A good leader is also a team player. It also means being aware of the greater good you and your group can contribute to society as a whole.

3 ADAPTABILITY

Problem Solving

The ability to identify and define problems as well as to generate and implement potentially effective solutions.

Benefit: In the workplace, the method used for problem solving is critical: viable alternative solutions must be considered, including a cost/benefit analysis and long-term implications.

Reality Testing

The ability to assess the correspondence between what is experienced (the subjective) and what in reality exists (the objective).

Benefit: In the workplace, the focus should be on practicality and not unrealistic expectations.

Flexibility

The ability to adjust one's emotions, thoughts, and behavior to changing situations and conditions.

Benefits: In the workplace, those high in flexibility perform better in positions where tasks are dynamic and changing.

Those low in flexibility may perform better at more well defined tasks requiring reliability and consistency.

4 STRESS MANAGEMENT

Stress Tolerance

The ability to withstand adverse events and stressful situations without falling apart by actively and confidently coping with stress.

Benefit: In the workplace, effective stress tolerance has to do with managing reasonable workloads, establishing clear priorities, and meeting realistic deadlines.

Impulse Control

The ability to resist or delay an impulse, drive, or temptation to act.

Benefit: In the workplace, rash actions can be costly. Mistakes can often be avoided by simply taking time to stop and think.

5 GENERAL MOOD

Happiness

The ability to feel satisfied with one's life, to enjoy oneself and being with others, and to have fun.

Benefit: In the workplace, a positive atmosphere lifts spirits and helps overall performance.

Optimism

The ability to look at the brighter side of life and to maintain a positive attitude, even in the face of adversity.

Benefit: In the workplace, there are such things as self-fulfilling prophecies. When staff believe something is possible, they will often make it happen. An optimistic attitude also helps ward off stress.

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

How can leaders develop their emotional intelligence? Let's first look at how we as human beings develop our emotional intelligence. It begins in infancy when our significant care givers 'teach' us to be comforted and to comfort ourselves, and later on, to comfort others. In the psychological literature this self-comfort is called 'self-soothing.' This is the beginning of emotional self-awareness. Then, for example, as toddlers we learn from significant others that we must control some of our basic drives and temptations and we learn impulse control. We get all kinds of messages from our caregivers as we grow and we incorporate those into our Self Regard, Independence, etc. All of our experiences contribute to our developing emotional intelligence.

The most interesting thing about this process is that it is not systematic, nor is it fully intentional, or consistent, therefore, some people have excellent teachers and learn their lessons well and others do not.

One of the leading organizations in the world for the development of emotional intelligence is the Six Seconds EQ Network in San Francisco, CA. The introduction to one of their publications

notes that aliens from another planet would be very intrigued upon studying our societies down here on Earth to find that we have a systematic, fully intentional, and consistent system for the development of IQ, but we leave EQ, or the development of emotional intelligence, totally to chance.

So, how do we as adults develop our emotional intelligence? Well, the best way I know is to work one-to-one with someone in a coaching or counselling relationship. After coaching or counselling, group courses and workshops are the next best way to develop emotional intelligence and following that, there are a lot of resources available for those who want to learn more on their own. In each case, the steps involved are to learn more about your current level of emotional intelligence through the use of an assessment tool. One of the best on the market is Dr. Rueven BarOn's Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) which is a 133 item, web-enabled, scientifically validated, assessment or inventory of one's emotional intelligence competencies. Also available is the EQ-360 which is based on the EQ-i and is based on the same model of emotional intelligence.

CONCLUSION

Leaders create the context within which we work. They can create a productive, happy, healthy context where employees feel valued, inspired, motivated, and where they feel they can produce their best work. Likewise, leaders can create the opposite environment where employees feel dread as they think about entering the work environment and, given the choice, they would leave the organization at the first opportunity. Good leadership is crucial to workers being effective, hence, to organizations being productive. Leaders must, therefore, understand how to inspire and ignite passion to make employees happy and keep employees healthy, so they stay and contribute to their full potential for their whole careers. Therefore, managers need to learn how to become inspired leaders who ignite worker passion and create healthy, happy work environments. With this kind of leadership, employees at all levels will feel compelled to not only excel to their full potential, but keep it up for an entire career because they feel not only that their hard work is valued, but that they really belong.

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David Cory is a Vancouver based performance improvement consultant who specializes in leadership and team development. With a graduate degree in Adult Education, and several years of experience as a leader in workplace training, David works with corporate clients such as AT&T, Canadian National Railway, ABN AMRO Bank (Amsterdam), Allstate Insurance (Dallas), Phillips Medical Systems (Seattle) on the design, implementation and delivery of leadership and team development programs. This involves working in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean, and all over North America. David is a certified trainer in Emotional Intelligence through MHS Inc., and is accredited by several world leaders in corporate training to deliver their courses including Achieve Global, Development Dimensions International, Insights, CDI Corporate Education, Marathon Communications, and OTI Performance, Inc. In addition to his consulting practice, David teaches for two local universities and one foreign university (University of the West Indies, Trinidad) and provides services to the Canadian Centre for Management Development in Ottawa. David is also active on the executive of the International Society for Performance Improvement as Past President of the Vancouver Chapter.

FURTHER READING

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WEBSITES OF INTEREST

www.eiconsortium.org – leaders in the field of Emotional Intelligence

www.mhs.com – MHS publishes the assessment for EI (Emotional Quotient Inventory - EQ-I and the EQ-360) and has a lot of information and research papers available on their site

www.6seconds.org – leaders in the development of EI curricula for children and adults

www.eqi.org – the EQ Institute - review of all literature pertaining to EI

www.davidcory.com – for information on assessing emotional intelligence using the EQ-i or EQ-360 and for information about becoming certified to use the EQ-i and the EQ-360, also for information on workshops and seminars custom designed to address the unique needs of your organization



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