

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 feel like we genuinely ‘belong’? Where are the leaders who make us feel good? We do our best work for people with these qualities. We don’t want to leave leaders who make us feel these pleasant emotions. I suggest that leaders with these qualities do exist, 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 identify the skills that 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 that we use to refer to the person in the position 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.

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 they are 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 hundreds of employees 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? 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 2,760,000 websites containing the term ‘emotional intelligence.’ This number has almost doubled since the article was first written in 2005. 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 one to use. Let us consider what might be important in determining which perspective is for you.

Jack Mayer and Peter Salovey first wrote about “emotional intelligence” in an article in 1990. Their definition is, in a ‘nutshell’, that emotional intelligence is the ability of the brain to process emotional information. Then Daniel Goleman wrote a best-seller called, “Emotional Intelligence” (1995) based on a review of the literature and he created his own definition and theory. In the meantime, a previously little known researcher named Dr. Reuven Bar-On (pronounced ‘barr-own’) was working on what he called ‘social and emotional functioning.’ Dr. Bar-On began his research in 1982 which resulted in an assessment instrument (Emotional Quotient Inventory-EQ-i) designed to measure how we use our emotional intelligence. In the process he coined the term Emotional Quotient (EQ) and created what

I believe to be the most useful model of skills or competencies to help us understand how well or poorly we use the emotional intelligence that we possess.

Dr. Bar-On’s work began with his concern with having so many patients in his clinical psychology practice with high IQ scores who seemed to struggle with so many aspects of life. In other words, why did smart people do dumb things? To bring it back to leadership for a moment, it’s like technically brilliant managers who drive down productivity by treating people poorly. Dr. Bar-On then set off to study what competencies differentiated between people who did ‘smart’ things, that is, demonstrated behaviours that assisted them to reach their stated objectives and people who did ‘dumb’ things, that is, demonstrated behaviours which did not assist them to meet their own stated objectives.

Dr. Bar-On’s definition of emotional intelligence, which he initially called ‘social and emotional functioning,’ is as follows:

“Emotional Intelligence is an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures.” — Dr. Reuven Bar-On, 1997

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

Bar-On has described 5 general areas or 'composite scales' of emotional intelligence competencies:

- » Intrapersonal
- » Interpersonal
- » Adaptability
- » Stress Management
- » 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 be in touch with one's emotions.

Benefit: In the workplace, good emotional self-awareness promotes knowing what one is all about including values and priorities and the ability to monitor one's emotions to be able

to use this information to act accordingly and communicate successfully. Allows one to 'clear the air' by addressing issues directly and promptly, without avoidance which often makes things worse.

Assertiveness

The ability to speak up when necessary.

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

Self-Regard

The ability to accept yourself just the way you are.

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

Self-Actualization

The ability to strive to lead a fulfilling life.

Benefit: In the workplace, high self-actualization is connected with strong 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 free from emotional dependency.

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 have good quality relationships.

Benefit: In the workplace, good interpersonal relationships translates into productive working relationships of trust.

Empathy

The ability to pay attention to what others are feeling. The ability to care what others are feeling.

Benefit: In the workplace, understanding the impact of the duties and demands being placed on staff members creates cohesive relationships of trust. Understanding others’ experience will help lead others more effectively.

Social Responsibility

The ability to give back. The ability to make a contribution.

Benefit: In the workplace, social responsibility means going the extra mile to help your colleagues. A good leader is also a team player. It also means being aware of the greater good you and how your group can contribute to society as a whole.

3 ADAPTABILITY

Problem Solving

The ability to be a systematic and stepwise problem solver and resist the temptation to come up with temporary ‘band-aid’ 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 be present and to be mindful of what's really going on.

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

Flexibility

The ability to 'transition' ones emotions 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 potentially stressful situations.

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 see what's good in each situation.

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 helps ward off stress and is inspiring and motivating for others.

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

How can leaders develop their emotional intelligence skills? Let's first look at how we as human beings develop our emotional intelligence skills. 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. For example, as toddlers we learn from significant others that we must control some of our basic drives and temptations and so 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 skills.

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, intentional system for the development of IQ, but we leave EQ, or the development of emotional intelligence skills, totally to chance.

How do we as adults develop our emotional intelligence skills if we want to be better? The best way 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 skills. There are also a lot of resources available such as books and websites for those who want to learn more on their own (contact me for a complete list). In each case, the steps involved are to learn more about your current level of emotional intelligence skills through the use of an assessment tool. One of the best on the market is Dr. Bar-On's Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) which is a 125 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 designed on the same model of emotional intelligence skills.

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 encourage employees to be happy, engaged, and 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, fully engaged 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, Telus, 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, Africa, 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. In addition to his coaching, training, consulting practice, David teaches for several post-secondary institutions and works with the Canadian School of Public Service in Ottawa. David is also active with the International Society for Performance Improvement and is a 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.eitrainingcompany.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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