

Emotional Intelligence – The Missing Link in Today’s Leadership

By

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A traditional fable by Aesop talks about a farmer who one day discovers a golden egg under one of his geese. The next day he finds another golden egg and soon he is a wealthy farmer with a large estate. Every morning he picks his golden egg from under the goose and goes to the bank to make his deposit. One day the farmer decides that with all the golden eggs he is getting, he can expand his business, buy new machinery, more land, and employ people. However, to do this, he needs many golden eggs at once as capital for his investment. Soon he becomes impatient, so one morning he decides to open up the goose to get as many golden eggs as he could all at once. The rest of the story needs no narration!

If we apply the moral of Aesop’s fable to leadership in organizations we can say that companies who favour short-term profitability at the expense of the well being of their employees are gradually digging their own grave. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) interviewed a number of top managers of highly successful retail outlets. They found that effective managers treated employees as individuals, with dignity and respect, focusing on developing and nurturing already existing talents. This finding points at three major areas of effective people strategy highlighted by Binna Kandola (2001) which are: (a) finding the right people (b) valuing them (c) providing opportunities to develop their skills. She states that, “organizations that value professionalism, friendliness, courtesy, cooperation, fairness, forgiveness, honesty and integrity are more likely to nurture strong commitment from their employees.” Ian McWhinnie (1999) looked at various studies that focused on the qualities to look for in a company, what keeps people working well and staying in their jobs. He concludes that “it is primarily the quality of the relationship with their bosses, and through them the company itself.....people leave managers not companies.”

The conclusions of many research studies are telling us that it is not enough for a manager or leader to have sound technical knowledge, effective organizational skills and good strategic thinking. Today’s leaders need to be person centred, sensitive to the relationships they create with employees, aware of their own strengths and vulnerabilities, and able to communicate with honesty, clarity, and openness. They need to know the language of feelings and feel comfortable dealing with intense emotions created by anger, conflict, disappointment and fatigue. In other words, today’s leaders need to be “emotionally intelligent”. This is both an attitude and a skill and seems to be one of the major qualities that motivate people to work well, teams to function effectively, and organizations to thrive.

What is Emotional Intelligence?

As early as the 1930's strands of research and theory were emphasizing the importance of non-cognitive factors in helping people to succeed in both personal life and the workplace.

In the organizational field, "consideration" was found to be an important aspect of effective leadership. The research suggested that leaders capable of creating "mutual trust, respect, and a certain warmth and rapport" with members of their team are more effective (Fleishman & Harris, 1962).

In 1990, Salovey & Mayer coined the term emotional intelligence. They described it as " a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action".

Five years later, Daniel Goleman published his book called "Emotional Intelligence – why it can matter more than IQ". Since then, the concept has been popularized and researched worldwide.

He describes emotionally adept people as those who **"know and manage their own feelings well, and who deal effectively with other people's feelings"**. Today many research studies indicate that IQ by itself contributes as little as 10% to job performance in positions of leadership.

Emotional Intelligence is linked to what Goleman describes as "emotional competencies". These are the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills based on emotional intelligence and are essential for effective leadership. For example, the ability to recognize accurately what another person is feeling enables one to develop a specific competency such as influence. The following table illustrates twenty competencies grouped in four clusters identified by Goleman (1998) as the behavioural indicators of emotional intelligence.

SELF AWARENESS	SOCIAL AWARENESS	SELF MANAGEMENT	SOCIAL SKILLS
Emotional Self-Awareness	Empathy	Self-Control	Developing Others
Accurate Self-Assessment	Organizational Awareness	Trustworthiness	Leadership
Self-Confidence	Service Orientation	Conscientiousness	Influence
		Adaptability	Communication
		Achievement Orientation	Change Catalyst
		Initiative	Conflict Management
			Building Bonds
			Teamwork & Collaboration

As one can see from the above table, all the competencies involve the ability to deal with the human aspect of leadership rather than the structural,

procedural, or the strategic. In addition, all competencies deal with understanding feelings whether in oneself or someone else's. The first two clusters are the awareness clusters. These deal with recognition of emotional movements in oneself, others, and organizations such as morale, motivation, etc.

The second pair of clusters is more action oriented in terms of managing oneself and managing other people. Leaders with the right attitudinal disposition and a working knowledge of the twenty competencies listed can make a significant difference in the way they manage people.

Our experience with various organizations shows that employees often complain that they feel like just a number; not listened to; their opinions and ideas ignored; they do not feel understood, valued, or respected. On a more fundamental level, many employees say they are rarely thanked, acknowledged, or consulted in decisions that affect their work. All these comments refer to their leaders and not to the nature of the work they do. Of course, there are other hardships, however, workload and competition can be dealt with a hundred times better in an atmosphere of trust, respect and supportive teamwork.

Based on examining many years of research by the Gallup Organisation, Buckingham and Coffman (1999) conclude that employees are still more interested in the quality of relationships at work, especially with their leaders. They want to feel valued and cared for in the same way as they would in a family. Second to the pay packet itself, the primary needs being met are emotional. It is important for employees to find approval and self-esteem at work, as it is to see a pay and career path developing.

Can a leader develop Emotional Intelligence?

The answer is yes, if there is the right disposition and a deep value and respect of people. One can say that we all have a degree of Emotional Intelligence just as we all have a level of IQ. The question is how well developed is it and how well can I apply it to my leadership in the workplace? Many development programmes have been designed to help leaders understand more about Emotional Intelligence and to develop the associated competencies. One such programme is called the Emotional Competence training programme, developed by the American Express Financial Advisors University. It targets virtually every aspect of emotional intelligence, but particularly the competencies of emotional self-awareness, self-control, empathy, communication and conflict management. The leadership version of the programme also helps build the "developing others" competency. Another established programme was developed by researchers Akiri Ikemi of Okayama University and Shinya Kubota of the University of Occupational and Environmental Health – Japan in 1996. The programme runs over five days and covers the theory behind Emotional Intelligence together with the key competencies that embrace the intrapersonal and interpersonal awareness clusters.

Can leaders develop an emotionally intelligent organization?

The response is the same as in the previous section – yes.

The organizations of today and tomorrow will become ever more dependant on people with very specific expertise, information and knowledge. These people will make their own decisions about how they do their work, and will not be told by supervisors or managers. The word portfolio working has already become part of business language and there is a greater acceptance of people working on contracts for one or more companies.

Other developments include collaboration where businesses come together as associates or partners to create more effective and efficient purchasing and acquisition of larger contracts.

This way of working cannot be managed by the more traditionally structured systems and procedures, the fluidity, complexity and possible physical distance of the people requires emotional intelligence and application of the competences. It is only with this way of working that the understanding; trust, motivation and good interpersonal relationships can be established and maintained.

A key factor in building an emotionally intelligent organization is to ensure that emotional intelligence is at the top of the values chain. One of the most destructive aspects of organizations is when the espoused values are not witnessed as a day-to-day reality. This creates cynicism, frustration and even, at times, despair.

To ensure ownership and acceptance of the possibility of an emotionally intelligent organization there needs to be involvement at all levels of the organization in the planning and implementation.

Before we look at some examples of successful organizations it is useful to note that because the culture of organizations is complex and ever changing nothing in itself will ever be the “magic pill”. However, organizations are actually groups of people and every management textbook in the world states that the job of management is to motivate people to do the work necessary to achieve the organization’s functions

Customers are also people, and the focus on customer care rather than on products has also been well documented. Emotional intelligence is vital to developing an effective internal customer chain and the subsequent high quality external customer care.

So, it is all about people, and if organizations want to have a competitive edge in the market place, then they need emotional intelligence.

“Investment opportunities are now measured by the emotional intelligence of the organization CEO Lotus Development Corporation.

“Either you learn to acquire and cultivate people or you will be eaten alive
Leon Royer Executive Director 3M

Asea Brown Boveri a world wide electrical engineering company was having a problem with sales in 1994, instead of considering the traditional product improvement route they established learning partnerships with a group of companies to find ways that each of them could contribute to each others success through creative future focused market orientated initiatives. More than a dozen companies were involved in major long-term customer partnering arrangements, and several joint ventures have increased sales significantly.

In the UK Richer Sounds a high fidelity company has earned a place in the Guinness Book of Records as the worlds top retail outlet. Richer's philosophy has two guiding principle, nonstop opportunity sensing and respect. "Respect for the individual has always been a guiding principle for me, do as you would be done by, should apply as much at work as in any other area of life" Richer also has the notion that work should be fun! His company is all about respect and creative initiative.

These are just two examples of emotionally intelligent organizations, and there are more so it is possible to begin achieve an emotionally intelligent organization by starting to do some research and bench marking

Another initiative is to take steps to measure the existing state of your organizations emotional intelligence. Gowing has researched this type of measurement with the Personnel and Resources Development Center at the US Office of Personnel Management who found "some amazing gaps"(Goleman 1999). The results of this research and the identification of the gaps, such as emotional self-awareness, adaptability, self-control, integrity and optimism, give organizations the basis from which to develop their own research tools.

Essentially one of the main issues is that we do not see what we do not notice, and if we do not notice things then we cannot give them a name and we certainly cannot do anything about them. These are the blind spots in the organization; people are very often blind to what is familiar and part of the day-to-day routine.

A recent example is the Barings Bank incident!

Other examples are personal assistants doing the job of their boss, not telling the truth about what is actually happening in the organization, having a victim culture about burnout and blaming the person. There is a relationship between efficiency and burnout and it is an organizational responsibility. Finally need for the recognition that changing technologies and/or structure does not solve people issues.

So, a first step in developing an emotionally intelligent organization is to notice what you do not notice. New people coming into the organization can be very helpful in this regard, because they will questions things that other staff take for granted.

There are further steps that can be taken, and these are ones that have been used by outstanding strategic planners in this field. These people themselves demonstrate acute political awareness, the ability to make arguments with emotional impact and have a high level of interpersonal awareness as well as analytical skills.

They are also aware of the need to carefully design and implement development programmes for building an emotionally intelligent organization, and not to just redo some other training programme to make it fit.

There are fourteen steps which need to be considered including assessment of the individual and the jobs, gauging readiness, making change self directed, motivation, support, encouragement, providing models, reinforcing and evaluating. It is important that at least some of the steps are included in the programme to ensure success.

Leaders who take the time to learn about emotional intelligence in a workshop setting achieve the most successful interventions. Modeling is a crucial factor in motivating others to change, and it is critical for the development of an emotionally intelligent organization. People notice that something has changed because they feel better in some way at work. This causes them to question and dialogue can begin.

Conclusion

One may contend that there really is nothing groundbreaking about emotional intelligence. Goleman, in fact, never claimed otherwise. He emphasizes, however, that the competencies associated with Emotional Intelligence have been researched for many years, and there is a consistent, impressive, and growing body of information suggesting that these competencies are important for success in many areas of life. "A person's ability to perceive, identify, and manage emotion provides the basis for the kinds of social and emotional competencies that are important for success in almost any job" (Cherniss, 2000). Leaders in particular seem to benefit from the deep understanding of self and others in their dealings with people, and from the ability to balance the rational and intellectual with the emotional components of their attitudes, behaviours, and decisions.

Emotional intelligence is in heart of every individual and it can be the true spirit that enriches how people live and work together.

At first people refuse to believe that a strange new thing can be done, then they begin to hope it can be done, then they see it can be done – then it is done and all the world wonders why it was not done centuries before

Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849 – 1924
English born US writer

So it can be done!

Dr. Katie Birch (Future Focus) and Mr. Patrick Psaila (WorkAssist) will be directing a one-day workshop on Emotional Intelligence on June 15, 2002, at the Radisson SAS Baypoint Resort. For information please contact Mr. Patrick J. Psaila on 21434660 or e-mail pjpsaila@euroweb.net

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