

# **The Emotionally Intelligent Leader**

**By  
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Today we have a strong body of research that supports the idea that emotional intelligence is key to the success of any organization. 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.

<b>SELF AWARENESS</b>	<b>SOCIAL AWARENESS</b>	<b>SELF MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>SOCIAL SKILLS</b>
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 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.

My 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?**

Yes, when 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?

Various personal and professional development programmes exist that focus on developing key emotional intelligence competencies. These programmes normally offer the intrapersonal and the interpersonal dimension of emotional intelligence. Other avenues for developing emotional intelligence are counselling, coaching and mentoring. Whatever form of support one looks for, it has to be made clear that emotional intelligence is not something we can develop in one or two sessions. Rather it is a process of learning more about oneself, and the role that emotions play in guiding one's thinking and behaviour.

### **Can leaders develop an emotionally intelligent organization?**

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 the customer 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.

Goleman identifies fourteen steps which need to be considered when introducing emotional intelligence as a key characteristic of an organizations culture. These include 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 these 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 is always a good starting point for cascading a change in culture.

## **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.

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