

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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INTRODUCTION

There are different types of intelligence. There is the Intelligence Quotient (IQ), which most people seem to be aware of, which is used to measure how intelligent or how smart a person is. There is Practical Intelligence, which has to do with the ability to communicate well with a wide range of audiences. There is Executive Intelligence, which has to do with navigating the C suite, thinking outside the box and dealing with and solving complex management challenges.

Then, there is Social and Emotional Intelligence, which combines all of the above mentioned intelligence. The measure of it is Emotional Quotient (EQ) or Emotional and Social Quotient (ESQ). We are all emotional beings, at least so science tells us, (apart from Sociopaths and Psychopaths) that is how we are born. But, our emotional intelligence needs and has to be developed.

WHAT THEN IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

“Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand one’s emotional make-up and the emotional make-up of others and use insight from this knowledge to effectively manage and regulate one’s own emotions to make good decisions and to act effectively in relation to others”.

According to Goleman, D. (1998), Emotional Intelligence refers to the capacity for understanding our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and managing emotions well in our relationships.

Have you heard the phrase that 90 per cent of high achievers are also high in Emotional Intelligence and that there is a direct link between Emotional Quotient (EQ) and a person’s success and earning capability?

It is therefore, about the ability of the brain to process emotions and emotional information. “Success in business today is 15% technology and 85% Emotional Intelligence.” - Tom Peters, Author of “In Search of Excellence”

Emotional Intelligence is a relatively new concept in the work place. Several scholars have done research in this emerging area. Most of the scientific query came about because there were some disparities between people of similar IQs in terms of their successes in managing people and achieving their set goals, as well as in their level of expressed satisfaction with their status.

Daniel Goleman was not the first to look into Emotional Intelligence. However, he is widely regarded globally more or less like the father of Emotional Intelligence. Other scholars have examined and written about this particular subject matter, but Goleman’s work is seen as a seminal piece.

Our ability to develop emotional intelligence is rooted in our willingness to allow the neurons between emotional brain and our cerebral Cortex, which is our rational brain to be active. The motorway between both regions of the brain must be well travelled before we can begin to become emotionally intelligent.

The reason is that the emotional brain deals with feelings, while the rational brain deals with consequences and rationalising situations. When we allow the message of what we feel to be transported to the rational brain – which happens within Nano seconds - the rational brain looks at all the possible scenarios and advices about the best course of action based on how well we have evolved and learned. This learning has probably emerged from our past mistakes, how many battle scars we have received and how many more we are willing to receive.

The inability to allow messages to travel that route means we are still going to be knocked down a bit more and therefore gain more battle scars from our action or inaction before we finally begin to accept to learn. However, if we allow what can be described as the whole brain concept to operate, that is feeling, followed by rational thinking, equals felt/thought action, then we are most likely to act or react better, feel ultimately better, build better relationships and grow our family, community and so on.

We are born already emotionally aware, we can feel, we can discern joy, tension, fear, anger and so on. Give yourself the opportunity and ability to act or react appropriately by synthesizing, thinking and not just acting on difficult situations. For instance, someone steps on your toes, do you just lash out negatively and retaliate or do you pause, think and ask, was it intentional or accidental?

Thinking and asking these questions will impact your action or reaction. You may find yourself empathising with the offender, and that is emotional intelligence at work. Or you feel pain and automatically, you lash out. Rather, think and ask yourself, what this pain is trying to teach me. Learn to reflect and see things sometimes from the other person's perspective and you will gain better insights and become more emotionally intelligent.

Our level of emotional intelligence, which is our EQ is therefore, the distinguishing factor that determines if we make lemonade when life hands us lemons or spend our life stuck in bitterness. It is the distinguishing factor that helps us to maintain a warm relationship or a distant contact and it is what draws others to us or repels them. It is also the factor which enables us to work in coordination with others or to create a disputed situation and enables us to win the heart of people or to win the situation by argument.

In preparing this material, I stumbled on this insight: - "The workplace & workplace culture is changing. Today the emphasis is more on people-focused style of leadership. Today employees are motivated by the relationships they have in their workplace and EI seems like a logical framework to help build these relationships. Emotions influence all aspects of our lives. It's impossible to separate them from work. They play a large role in how others perceive us through our tone of voice, facial expression and body language".

EI is increasingly being applied to organisational level initiatives such as workforce planning, performance management, strategic and cultural change as well as the recruitment process. According to Jim Hunter, CEO at Genos, issues of employee retention and

employer of choice are front of mind in many corporations. "EI is being seen as an excellent medium to enhance the environment, culture, leadership and team dynamics within an organisation".

HOW DOES LOW EQ SHOW UP AT WORK?

- Blaming others
- Victim statements such as "If only he would ..."
- An inability to hear critical feedback
- Passive or aggressive communication style
- Bad listener and gives destructive criticisms
- Low morale, rude and self-interested
- Inability to handle pressure

What portion of the decisions you make at work are Emotional versus Rational?" Note that we are being judged by a new yardstick. Decide to grow yourself today, so that you can gain trust, respect and therefore be able to motivate, inspire and influence.

According to Dale Carnegie, when dealing with people, remember that you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but with creatures of emotion.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP

Emotional Intelligence and leadership are directly correlated as research by scholars such as Goleman and co has shown us. It was in an attempt to answer the leadership question of why some people with high IQ excelled at leading others and

became exceptional leaders, and some others equally with high IQ fell short. The baffling answer to this question led to the extensive and ongoing study of Emotional Intelligence.

Research has shown that leaders who are emotionally intelligent, collaborate more, build better teams, are inspirational and great influencers. And these attributes are some of the major competencies of Emotional Intelligence in the domain of Relationship building.

Leadership involves getting people to buy into a vision, and working as a team towards the attainment of such a vision. Emotional Intelligence helps a leader to know self, know others and use such knowledge to make good decisions that directly impact the bottom line, including being able to retain the best talents.

CONCLUSION

The Emotional Intelligence topic is therefore, wide and evolving, and this is just to touch the tip of the iceberg. More study is required and is on-going. A research about EI in Africa and Nigeria, will do a lot of good to management science and the growth of small business and help the practice of Human Resources.

I close this piece with a quotation from Daniel Goleman in his book "Working with Emotional Intelligence", "We are being judged by a new yardstick; not just how smart we are, or by our training and expertise, but also how well we handle ourselves and each other."

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