

# LEADERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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## ABSTARCT

Emotional Intelligence as a concept has bloomed in the past few years. The ability to be prospectively in tune with yourself and your emotions as well as having sound situational awareness can be a powerful tool for leading a team. The act of knowing, understanding and responding to emotions, overcoming stressful moments and awareness of how your words and actions affects others is described as emotional intelligence. Emotional Intelligence consists of the following five factors: 1) Self Awareness, 2) Self-Regulation 3) Motivation, 4) Empathy, 5) Social Skills. People who are successful have optimistic attitude, right kind of flexibility in thoughts, a quick learning attitude and are emotionally balanced. An emotionally balanced professional has the capability to cope up with uncertainty and imperfection. They are not very judgemental and believe in win-win situation. They like to groom others; respect humanity i.e. treats others as “humans”. They have the ability to cope up with all kind of situations whether it’s about managing a bad boss or an undisciplined subordinate, or high demanding job responsibility etc. Also, today the definition of leadership has changed in a way that it has become more people-focussed. A person having a good understanding of EQ can be a good team player and hence can become an effective team leader. This paper throws some light on how effective leaders demonstrate EQ and what dimensions of EQ are highly important for effective leadership.

Key Words: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, EQ

## 1. INTRODUCTION

What is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotions are involved in every activity one does in day-to-day life. Any action, decision, and judgement one make are followed by an emotion one face or feels. Emotional Intelligence is an important indicator as to

how a person manage his/her emotions at work or even after work at home or other social gatherings. The concept of Emotional Intelligence came into being when Dawin worked on the importance of emotional expression for survival in 1990's.

It is apparent from the review of the research that there is no consensus as to what is Emotional Intelligence (EI) as defined by John Mayer and Peter Salovey is "The ability to perceive emotions to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (Mayer, 2004). According to Nelson and Low, Emotional Intelligence is the single and most important variable in personal achievement, career success, leadership and life satisfaction. (Nelson D. B., 2000). Recent researches have shown that emotions act as an active part and contribute towards decision making, performance and fulfilment both at work and life after work. Hence, it's very crucial to know about one's emotions and work on managing those emotions in order to sustain a healthy work and life balance.

There are three school of thoughts:

- 1) Some (e.g. (Goleman, 1996), equate it to personal characteristics, such as "initiative", "self-confidence", "drive for results" etc.
- 2) Others (e.g. Bar-on,1997,), view emotional intelligence as a personality dimension like extroversion, agreeableness and emotional stability.
- 3) A third school of thought defines emotional intelligence as a specific set of abilities that include the capacity to understand, reason about and use emotions in thinking and action (e.g., (Mayer, 2004) (Solovey & Grewal, 2005)

Goleman Daniel has highlighted the following five emotional competencies:

- a) Self-Awareness: It is the knowledge about one's own feelings, emotions and capabilities at a particular moment and using this knowledge in handling situations and decision making
- b) Self-regulation: It is the way one has a control over one's emotions so as to handle a situation as the way desired
- c) Motivation: It is one's ability of how one takes initiative and moves towards the goals and strives to improve in order to avoid situations of setbacks and disappointments

- d) Empathy: It is one's ability to see things through other's perspectives, empathy is to simply keep yourself in other's shoes.
- e) Social skill: It is one's ability to handle one's emotions in social situations and persuade others in goal achievement when performing group activities.

In order to understand the emotional transactions and deal with them efficiently and effectively, one needs to possess self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy and social skills, and above all motivation to stay focussed and achieve goals. The above-mentioned abilities would help one to understand one's own feelings and emotions and also to act in a sensitive and balanced way to react to others emotions and feelings (Druskat, 2001).

## 2. Understanding Leadership

One of the important functions of management is Leading. Leading is the process of directing, influencing and motivating employees to perform essential tasks and thereby achieve the organizational goals.

Leadership is the ability of a superior to influence behaviour of a subordinate and persuade him to follow a particular course of action (Barnard, 1938). Effective leadership is a key factor in any organization's goal achievement. Leaders have the capability of transforming potential into reality. Leadership is a major way in which people change the mind of others and move organizations forward to accomplish predefined goals.

Transformational Leadership and Team effectiveness:

Managers perform different roles in an organization of which transformation is a very important role. Leaders are required to develop, implement, find innovative ways of completing a task, and handle new tasks, business processes, and projects (Hull, 2006). Maintaining co-ordinal relations with the team. A leader not only has to maintain formal relationship with his subordinates but informal meetings on regular basis may empower joint decision making and participative management. Moreover, the existence of accurate job description department and role wise is associated positively with proper utilization of resources and avoidance of conflicts (Polychroniou, 2005)

Team effectiveness can be achieved further when tasks are allocated to employees through a transparent process that takes into consideration the organisational goals as well as the subordinates' abilities and

preferences. Successful management not only promotes team spirit, but also installs team mechanisms and the means to develop in team skills (Harris, 1996)

Moreover, the team effectiveness depends largely on leadership style of supervisors. The role of leadership in management is largely determined by the organisational culture followed by the organization. It has been argued that supervisors' beliefs, values and interpersonal competences are of critical importance to the overall style of leadership that they adopt. Theoretical contributions suggest that components of EQ may be associated with effective leadership (Morris, 1996), (Goleman, 1996),

Existing literature support that dimensions of supervisors' EQ influence supervisor's transformational leadership, subordinates' outcomes and job performance (Megerian, 1996)

The transformational leader has the capacity to motivate people working with him to do more than normally expected. Transformational leaders raise subordinate's consciousness about innovative ways of doing things and motivate them to transcend their own interests for the goal of the team. They create an atmosphere of change, and they may be obsessed by visionary ideas that excite, stimulate, and drive the team to work hard. The true transformational leader often does not fit within a traditional organisation and may lead to change rather than a formal organisation (Hellriegel, 2005)

Leaders who possess empathy are likely to recognise subordinates' need, take interest in them, respond to changes in their emotional states, and work together to achieve goals (Rahim, 2002). Empathy is likely to be associated with individual preference Social skills that are associated with enabling followers to engage in desirable behaviours is likely to be associated with intellectual stimulation (Goleman D. , 2001) (Rahim M. P.-Y., 2006). Employees are likely to respect and would be able to emotionally identify with a leader who is considerate and is willing to help subordinates to be effective, enhance their job performance (Rahim M. P.-Y., 2006).

### 3. How Effective leaders demonstrates EQ?

In this paper we have taken the approach advocated by (McClelland, 1973), which identifies the most effective leaders and studies what makes them different from the average. From the review of researches and extensive secondary data we have found the following:

- 1) Effective leaders are aware of their impact on others and use it to their advantage: the most effective leaders are sensitive as to how they come across to others. They know that their position in the organization, their personalities, and even their mere physical presence have a dramatic impact on others. They therefore channel how they come across in ways that brings out the best in others. These leaders are always in charge of their own feelings and how they express them. The downside? There is a risk of overreaching with more impact than in usual. The risk is that the leaders may come across as overbearing or disingenuous. Effective leaders create the perfect balance.
- 2) Effective leaders have Empathy for others: yes, can still make tough decisions: the most effective leaders are able to put themselves in others' shoes to understand how and why employees are reacting in a certain way to organizational events, personal crises and seemingly relentless change. At the same time their empathy does not prevent them from making tough decisions. They do this by appealing to reason and acknowledging others feeling thus enabling people to feel that the decision makes sense. The danger here is that it's easy to over identify with others or let empathy be confused with sympathy and not make the tough decision as needed.
- 3) Effective leaders are astute judges of people without being judgemental: good leaders are able to size others up quickly in terms of their key strengths and weaknesses, and are especially good at recognizing and applying the diverse talents of everyone in the organization. A danger is that they may become judgemental and overly critical about what they perceive to be others' shortcomings. They are likely to dismiss the advice of these people out of hand, making them feel undervalued and disrespected.
- 4) Effective leaders are passionate about what they do: Good leaders are passionate, highly optimistic and believe in the inevitability of success. They encourage others to believe that the most challenging goals can be met and the most daunting obstacles overcome. But it does not mean that they are always cheer leaders; their passion may be expressed as persistence in pursuing an objective or a relentless focus on a valued principle. However, there's a fine line between being excited about something and letting too much passion close your mind to other possibilities and ignoring realities that others see.

- 5) Effective leaders balance feelings and logic in making decisions: effective leaders are in touch with their gut instincts about the right things to do in the absence of supporting data. They also recognize their internal warning signs that something might not be the right thing to do despite the seemingly compelling analysis. They understand that “logic” and “facts” are not the only things to consider. Nevertheless, they don’t just “go with their gut” without checking out their instincts with others. The drawback is temptation to rely largely on their feelings and things and guarantees that they are correct without further investigation. They are essentially gambling with the resources of the organization.
- 6) Effective leaders are excellent communicators: effective leaders are in touch with the pulse of the organization and where the “hot buttons” are. They are not all great public speakers, nor are they necessarily charismatic, but they do understand the importance of providing timely information about business and what it means to people. They also know that the communication keeps people motivated and connected. Where emotional intelligence plays a role in knowing what message will connect with everybody and how to express that message. Where leaders get into trouble is in providing too much or too little information, delaying important information and not being candid in their communication for fear of hurting them with the “Truth”
- 7) Effective leaders create personal relations with others: in today’s world of big business, multiple locations and global operations, employees can feel alienated from their leadership and disconnected from the company at personal level. The most effective leaders pay particular attention to this and find ways to make themselves personally visible and approachable. Most of them take time to engage employees individually and in groups. Listening to their ideas, suggestions, and concerns and responding in ways that make people feel heard and respected the downside of visibility is making too many unannounced visits, which can create a culture of fear and micromanagement. Again, striking the correct balance is the key.
- 8) Effective leaders temper drive for results with sensitivity to others: effective leaders drive results and champion beneficial changes. They also repeatedly emphasize the importance of continuous or breakthrough improvements and challenge people to rethink old ways of doing things. But good leaders are also patient enough to help others overcome their fear, get people involved before decision making that affect them, explains the reason for taking a difficult decision once they are

taken, and work to maintain high morale while counting on others to do better. However, they are only patient up to a certain point of time.

And importantly: are there any downsides to having too high an “EI”??



#### 4. Conclusion: in Context of Emotional Intelligence

What does it mean to be “Emotionally Intelligent” as a Leader? Clearly Emotional Intelligence (EI) is different from Intelligence Quotient (IQ), which has a distinct meaning and is represented by a single measure. We should really be speaking about “Emotional Intelligence” and measure it in different ways not as a single “EQ” Measure.

Rather than thinking about emotional intelligence as a set of general abilities, however we should really be asking as to how the best leaders use emotional intelligence to think and act effectively.

The most effective leaders we have known possess great reserves of empathy, impersonal astuteness, awareness of their own feelings, and awareness of their impact on others, but more importantly they apply these capabilities judiciously as best benefits the situations. The key to this is self-regulation, having some minimum level of these emotional intelligences will help one be effective as a leader as

long as they are channelled appropriately. Having a large amount of these capabilities may be too much of a good thing if they are allowed to drive inappropriate behaviour.

In addition, emotional intelligence alone does not guarantee good leadership. From a moral standpoint, emotional intelligence is neither good or bad. Emotionally intelligent leaders can be manipulative, selfish, and dishonest, just as they can be altruistic, focused on the general welfare and highly principled. It is also not the only way that an effective leader needs to be “Intelligent”. Serious consideration of other qualities that make for effective leadership such as mental capacity, confidence, integrity, drive, and wisdom must also be factored in.

As I most things, emotional intelligence in context of leadership should be kept in perspective. The key to effectiveness is balance. A strong mix of cognitive capacity (logical, conceptual, and creative thinking), people skills (interpersonal, astuteness, influencing skills, and communication skills) and the wisdom borne of experience and having to make unprecedented decisions based on a strong set of personal values and personal integrity. Taken together this is what makes for effective leadership.

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