EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: A KEY TO LEADERSHIP SKILLS

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ABSTRACT
Many of us believe great leaders are born, specifically, we attach certain characteristics to our version of what we believe is successful. Great leaders are aware of their own leadership style. For them, having awareness of how their style influences their team makes these already great leaders, exceptional. Truly great leaders identify, understand and not only manage their own emotions, but are able to do that with others in a very empowering way. This is referred to as having emotional intelligence. This paper reveals how Emotional intelligence is a key to leadership skills.

KEY-WORDS: Emotional Intelligence (EI), Leadership skills

INTRODUCTION
Salovey and Mayer (1990) defined Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the collection of abilities used to identify, understand, control and assess the emotions of the self and others. "Emotional intelligence is widely known to be a key component of effective leadership. The ability to be perceptively 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 stress in the moment, and being aware of how your words and actions affect others, is described as emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence for leadership can consist of these five attributes: self-awareness, self-management, empathy, relationship management, and effective communication. Being able to relate behaviors and challenges of emotional intelligence on workplace performance is an immense advantage in building an exceptional team. One of the most common factors that lead to retention issues is communication deficiencies that create disengagement and doubt.

Psychologist Daniel Goleman stated unequivocally: The most effective leaders are all alike in one crucial way: they all have a high degree of what has come to be known as emotional intelligence. It’s not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but...they are the entry-level requirements for executive positions. My research, along with other recent studies, clearly shows that emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership. Without it, a person can have the best
training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won’t make a great leader.

A leader lacking in emotional intelligence is not able to effectively gauge the needs, wants and expectations of those they lead. Leaders who react from their emotions without filtering them can create mistrust amongst their staff and can seriously jeopardize their working relationships. Reacting with erratic emotions can be detrimental to overall culture, attitudes and positive feelings toward the company and the mission. Good leaders must be self-aware and understand how their verbal and non-verbal communication can affect the team.

To help understand the emotional intelligence competencies required for effective leadership, it’s very necessary to understand the components of EI

**Self-Assessment:** This can be defined as having the ability to recognize one’s own emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values and drivers and understanding their impact on others.

**Empathy and Compassion:** Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else’s shoes and understand how they may feel or react to a certain situation. When one has empathy, the capacity to feel compassion is open.

**Motivation:** The emotion that we feel in response to suffering that motivates a desire to help. The more we can relate to others, the better we will become at understanding what motivates or upsets them.

**Effective Communication:** Motivation comes from effective communication. Clarity and consistency in stating a thought or directive gives employees the ability to understand what is expected or needed from them. This extends itself to being able to listen without judgment, keeping emotions under control and to ask questions when necessary to seek to understand. People have to believe in their leader, and communication is a key to that credibility

**Self-Awareness:** Clarity on strengths and weaknesses is important for any leader to recognize. With self-awareness a leader can focus on the strengths he or she possesses. Having awareness includes understanding others and promoting their strengths. If a leader lacks awareness, they may fail to connect their actions and words, thus demoralizing their subordinates.

**Authenticity:** Knowing oneself and acting from that truth makes a person a real leader. Leaders must understand their own values and be consistent in applying them. A leader needs to possess the courage to hold true to them, without losing sight of reality.

**Respect:** Respect is not just about others; the emotionally intelligent leader practices self-respect. A leader who respects themselves and others doesn’t speak disrespectfully at any time, even when
mistakes happen. The way to do get the best out of people is not through demeaning behavior, but by treating all people the same in every situation

**Not Detached Behavior:** If leaders are just cold and calculating, there may be too much distance between them and their subordinates. Dictatorships don’t work in a company, especially as a long term solution to employee engagement or loyalty. Although, this doesn’t mean a leader with heart is a pushover or puts up with inappropriate behavior either, it means addressing a subordinate with warmth. Detached behavior without empathy is brutal.

**Sense of Humor:** If a leader is serious all the time, then it creates a very austere environment. Some leaders are afraid to be light, because they want to be taken seriously. It’s usually a sign of insecurity. An emotionally intelligent leader presents balance. People tend to work harder and smarter when there is a sense of fun. Morale is linked to productivity, and as a leader, this means to instill a positive energy to the workspace.

**Confidence:** As a leader, there will be crisis and calm times when things are not moving forward. Whatever size the business, it’s important to not fall into overwhelm or overreact. People look to the leader for cues on how to respond to the circumstances and if a leader is confident while taking care of issues, it will help keep the team feeling the same. Great leadership is about having the confidence to make decisions and not second guess them. Those that inspire others to follow into the unknown, do so possessing self-confidence.

**Intuition:** Intuitive leaders make quick decisions based on a lifetime of accumulated wisdom and understanding. Leading a team through new territory, without a map, means everything is uncertain, and the higher the risk, the higher the pressure. Logic is important, but can’t be the only determining factor for making a decision. A leader who trusts his or her gut will take the necessary measures that inspire others to do the same.

**Creativity:** In a study conducted by IBM, 200 CEO’s stated: “Today’s business environment is volatile, uncertain and increasingly complex. Collaborative brainstorming with no holds barred can bring an entirely new and creative solution to a challenge. Innovation is the result of creativity. A leader, who confidently promotes diverse creative thinking, will arrive by taking quantum leaps that create innovations.

It’s clearly evident that that emotional intelligence can not only help leaders manage any team but also encourage team members. These EI-enhanced leaders are much more effective because they can change their style to fit their teams, “Effective leaders have multiple styles in their toolkits, equipping them to respond flexibly to changing demands,”
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