

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AT THE WORKPLACE

A key factor for anyone who leads people in organisations. From hard work to heart work...



Aveling

If I told you that you can achieve greater results without having to work any harder, would you be interested? The good news is that this is possible! But there may be a cost - you may have to change the way that you think and behave towards the people that you manage.

Leadership is the art of helping people achieve more than they thought was possible. It's about achieving extraordinary results out of ordinary people. It's about understanding that a key word that leaders focus on is "feelings".

Daniel Goleman, in his book, *The New Leader*, states that "Great leaders move us deeply. They inspire us by touching our feelings. Leadership works through emotion. And what makes a leader shine looks the same, whether he or she heads a major corporation, runs the corner store or leads the Wednesday night church group."

This brings us to an important point. If you want to get the most out of people, you need to understand the role of emotions - your emotions, and that of the people around you.

Many managers will recoil at the proposition that emotions are an important managerial tool in the workplace! These managers strive to be "high performance managers" who focus on driving the numbers and driving employees to work harder.

Unfortunately, these managers are under the misconception that they need to be "smart" to

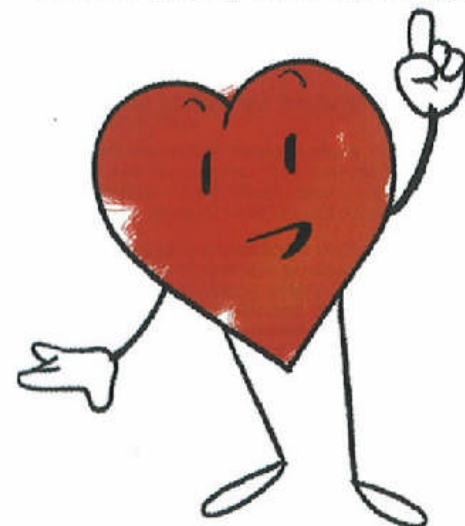
achieve results. However, the research shows that IQ accounts for just 4-20% of your success, while your Emotional Intelligence accounts for up to 80%.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

So what is Emotional Intelligence? We had a clue earlier in this article. It's about how you understand and manage emotions - your own and that of people around you. Emotional Intelligence relates to your ability to manage your intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships.

The five key elements of Emotional Intelligence are:

- The ability to understand their own emotions: Emotionally intelligent leaders recognise that they don't have to have all of the answers. They know their strengths and weaknesses. They build on their strengths and compensate for their weaknesses, most often by surrounding themselves with the right people. They are honest about themselves and welcome constructive feedback. Our experience in Malaysia is that many managers feel that they have to have the right answers. Emotionally intelligent leaders know that they need to ask the right questions and surround themselves with the right people.
- They appraise their own emotions: They know that their moods are contagious. Emotionally intelligent leaders maintain composure and focus even under trying conditions. They express themselves clearly, assertively and non-destructively.
- The ability to manage their emotions: The key elements that fall under this heading are the ability to manage stress levels under challenging circumstances; impulse control e.g. avoiding becoming hostile under stress; and decision making i.e. they deal with problems and make decisions rather than procrastinating.
- Self motivation: Emotionally intelligent leaders display optimism and self belief even under adversity. They have an achievement drive i.e. they strive to realise their own potential and of those that they lead. They set challenging goals, take the initiative and seize opportunities. Another element under this heading is contentment - the ability to get the best out of any situation, to inspire others and have fun.
- Social awareness i.e. they are attuned to the emotions, needs and concerns of the group and its stakeholders. They show empathy to others.
- Social skills in that they are able to maintain good relations with those around them, both in one-on-one and team situations.



MANAGING EMOTIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

Through our work in Malaysia, we have encountered workplaces that are demoralised and under-performing. A common factor is a lack of emotional intelligence among managers.

In some cases, managers display emotionally illiteracy. Negative managerial behaviours that we have encountered include throwing temper tantrums, threatening employees, shouting,

banging on tables and not acknowledging when employees greet them.

These are examples of managers who could not manage their own emotions, nor manage their relationships with people in their sections. The impact in one instance was extreme - there was virtually a 100% turnover of employees in one senior manager's section. But the manager could not see that his behaviour was the source of the problem. This person certainly was intelligent, and certainly pushed his people, but as a manager he was a failure.

These observations are not limited to Malaysia. Polls by the Gallup Organisation have shown that while 25% of the work force is engaged in their work, 60% are disengaged, and the other 15% are actively disengaged. Disengaged employees have higher absentee rates. They are less productive. They look for reasons to leave the company.

On the other hand, we have also witnessed a small number of examples of leaders who inspire their people and lift them to great heights. They give their people a sense of direction. They spend time with their teams. They are performance driven, but they do so by winning the hearts and minds of their people.

It's now time to give you some good news. While your IQ is fixed, you can actually improve your EQ (emotional quotient). In next month's article, I will give you strategies to improve emotional intelligence to help you achieve more from yourself and from your team. ■

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Everyone watches the boss!

