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LEADERSHIP

Is It All About Emotions?

Thousand of volumes have been written on the subject of Leadership. We are all looking for someone who can lead and some of us want to be that leader.

Leaders appear at every level of society. Often they are simply people who have committed themselves to something they feel strongly about and take on the responsibility of carrying it out. Others feel that commitment and want to be part of it.

One of my favorite stories about such a person comes from World War II. Early in the war when England was alone and facing the overwhelming forces of Germany, this inscription was found on a battlefield wall.

Hitler has taken Poland.

Hitler has taken Denmark and Norway.

Hitler has taken Holland, Belgium and France,

He will not take this pillbox.

Signed J. Smith, Corporal, Home Guard.

Was this a leader? You bet. Was he a born leader? Probably not. Did he become a leader because of his personal commitment? That's how I see it.

The key question on leadership, with strong opinions on both sides is – “Can leaders be made or must they be born as leaders?” It's the classic “nurture or nature” issue. Can you develop your leadership skills or do you have to be born with the leadership gene?

Let's consider that question by defining what leadership is.

What Is Leadership?

There are many definitions. Most depend on whether you're in the “nurture” or the “nature” camp. But current research tells us that leaders, in order to be successful, must be able to create a climate that not only fosters performance but also a sense of pride. And there are ways we can learn how to do that.

The research also shows that 30% of all business results come from that climate that fosters performance and pride. Further, it shows that 70% of that climate comes from the abilities of the leader.

And we can define those abilities. They come in a package called “Emotional Intelligence”(EI).

Although some may find the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) difficult to accept, studies from organizations such as The American Insurance Industry, Johnson and Johnson and Siemens are showing us that EI had a real impact on their bottom line, sometimes doubling and even tripling productivity for them.

These studies are also showing that EI can be increased over time, whereas IQ (Intelligence Quotient) cannot. Emotional Intelligence can be developed.

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Author Daniel Goldman, who wrote the book “Working With Emotional Intelligence”, defines it as:

Emotional Self-Awareness, The ability to recognize our own feelings

Empathy, The ability to recognize how others feel about motivating themselves.

Self Confidence, The ability to trust our own emotions and abilities.

Self Control, The ability to manage the emotions in our relationships.

Listening Skills, The ability and desire to hear, understand and respect input.

Developing Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is a complex set of skills that can require time to develop.

The list below shows the behaviors of a leader with EI. These are the behaviors and abilities to develop.

Develop the ability to:

- 1 Gauge readiness
- 2 Motivate
- 3 Make change by self direction
- 4 Establish manageable goals
- 5 Encourage practice
- 6 Arrange support
- 7 Provide Models

1. Gauge Readiness

Not everyone is ready for training all the time. This may be a novel concept, but sending people to training sessions who are not ready for development and maybe never will be, can be wasting the training investment. It is estimated that only 20% of any given group is emotionally committed and ready to make the changes required for development.

Leaders will use good information tools, such as 360-degree feedback to identify abilities. They must determine if individuals (including themselves) are ready and committed to make the changes needed for development.

2. Motivate

Everyone wants to know, “What’s in it for me?” They become motivated when training and development are aligned with their values and their personal goals.

Tying an individuals personal goals with professional goals is what leaders must learn to do.

One way to do this is for one to write down their ideal or dream job, visualizing where they want to be in five years and identifying times in their lives when they felt engaged and truly alive.

3. Make change by self-direction

Training your people through a one-size-fits-all practice works best for very basic skills. But for people whose jobs require individual commitment, innovation, end result goals or the need to direct themselves, a more individualized, self-directed concept is needed.

Fit the training to the individual. Does this individual need to study first and practice later? Or would they rather experience the activity and then ask questions? Is the classroom the place to do all the training? Take participants to

real-life situations and environments, allowing them to grasp things at their own pace. Then you can ask questions to determine if it's working and how best to proceed. Do they do best as individuals or as team members? You usually need both.

4. Establish Manageable Goals.

Leaders understand that they cannot set unreachable goals. While "Shooting for the stars" really can work, the EI leader understands that if the individual cannot see how to get there, it will be very difficult for them to get motivated, much less to be effective. Goals should be specific, understandable and based on behavior. "What do I want to get done and what do I need to do to get it done?" Break that down into behaviors and actions. Accomplishing each small success will build self-esteem and confidence.

5. Encourage Practice

Some believe that behavioral changes in EI will occur after a one, two or three day process. People with 10-20 years of work experience will find it difficult to change current and established behaviors to any significant degree in a few days.

Good musicians practice. Good golfers practice. Good public speakers practice. The same applies to any desired results in changing behaviors.

6. Arrange Support

There's an old saying, "Practice does not make perfect. *Perfect* practice makes perfect." Perfect practice requires support. This may mean coaches; study groups, support networks and in some cases a personal coach or mentor. The leader using EI finds out what's needed and what works for that individual,

understanding his/her individual key and providing the support that fits it.

7. Provide Models

"Do as I say and not as I do" is a game leaders don't play. Those who lead and those who teach will have to understand that they must be the example for what is being taught. Practice the behavior you want them to emulate. Individuals actually do tend to model their behavior on the senior people in their organizations. That's true for the negative habits they see as well as the positive. Recognize and reward the behavior you want. Whatever you reward you will get more of and that also becomes a model.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is developed by reflecting on your experiences, learning about yourself and practicing new behaviors.

Developing EI is a journey that unfolds in stages. It's about personal transformation and like all such transformations it's a call to adventure. Crossing new thresholds into unknown territory, embarking on a road of trials and tests, coming face to face with your greatest weaknesses and ultimately transforming yourself.

This is the process of developing Emotional Intelligence and becoming a leader.

Making It Happen For You

- Start with developing a clear picture of your "ideal self". What are your most important values? What are you passionate about? What would you like most to do? What is your unique contribution?

- Get feedback from others. How do they see you? Find out what impact your behavior has on others. Is there a gap between your “ideal self” and the way you really are in the world?
- Choose a personal development goal that is meaningful for you. Make it specific and behavioral. Remember, sometimes making a small change can have a big impact.
- Recognize your own journey. Get a picture of the transitions that brought you to this point. Identify those experiences that forced you to grow as an individual and a leader.
- Find a helper, someone who has been through the journey themselves and can give you that sense of perspective and a roadmap for what you can expect along the way.
- Become more deliberate about your own learning. If you haven’t failed lately you’re not learning.

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In times of rapid change, leaders must possess the skills and knowledge that can create a climate for outstanding performance. Emotional Intelligence, the capacity to recognize and manage one's emotions and show empathy towards others is the foundation upon which leadership is based.

Developing Emotional Intelligence demands your personal commitment to long-term growth. It's a journey worth taking. Becoming more emotionally intelligent enriches not only your own life but also the lives of those around you and the organizations and community in which you live.