

## Emotional Intelligence

For many years, people believed that in order to be a strong leader, one must keep their emotions out of the workplace and keep a firm boundary between their personal and professional lives. It is becoming more understood and accepted that this is not only incorrect but also impossible!

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is defined as the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions as well as recognizing, understanding, and influencing the emotions of others. And for today's leaders, EQ has become a "must-have" for successful leaders.

We are constantly communicating our emotions - in our tone of voice, our body language, through our actions, and with the particular words, we choose.

### Why It Matters

More than a decade ago, Daniel Goleman highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence saying, "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 the IQ and technical skills are irrelevant. They do matter, but...they are the entry-level requirements for executive positions."

EQ helps you successfully give and receive feedback, coach team members, meet tight deadlines, handle stress, manage change, collaborate with others, and deal with setbacks and failures. High EQ often sets apart high performers from others with similar skills and enables them to move up.

### The Impact of Emotional Intelligence

In 2012, Google conducted a well-regarded landmark research project, code-named Project Aristotle, to understand why some of their teams were performing well-above the rest and why others stumbled. Their conclusion? Top-performing teams were the ones that had managed to create an atmosphere of psychological safety: one in which people knew they would be heard and in which they felt safe to take risks, to make mistakes, and to challenge one another.

To create and maintain this kind of safe psychological space, those leading teams must be able to recognize, regulate, and make use of their emotions. Because we are communicating our emotions constantly -- in our tone of voice, our body language, through our actions, and with the

particular words we choose, this ability does not always come easily and is directly correlated to one's EQ. EQ is an essential component of effective leadership and can be devastating to an organization when it's lacking. Leaders with strong EQ consistently generate better performance, making it a high priority for anyone seeking, being considered for, or in a leadership role.

## **What to Know About Emotional Intelligence**

While there are many factors that contribute to one's EQ, there are five central attributes: **self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy & compassion, relationship management, and effective communication.**

### **Self-Awareness**

This can be defined as the ability to recognize your own emotional strengths, struggles, values, and triggers. Essentially, "know thyself." Many people feel, communicate, and act out strong emotions without even realizing they're doing so, and often without understanding why. Increasing self-awareness increases understanding of others, and is beneficial to everyone. Self-assessment is also the first step toward self-regulation.

### **Self-Regulation:**

Self-regulation, often termed self-discipline, involves maintaining some control over what you do with your emotions. Self-regulation does not mean that you do not experience your emotions, it means that you work them through (or temporarily put them aside) instead of acting them out in unhelpful ways. When a leader can self-regulate, a safer space for cooperation will be fostered. Self-regulation in a leader also models to a team how to work through difficult situations and emotions.

### **Empathy & Compassion:**

Empathy is a willingness to genuinely feel someone else's emotions in order to understand them. Compassion is genuine caring for the well-being of others. If you have only an intellectual understanding of what others are feeling, you are not experiencing empathy; there must be an emotional component as well. Self-awareness and self-regulation are important prerequisites for empathy, and when you are truly empathetic to your team's needs and emotions, performance will be greatly enhanced.

### **Relationship Management:**

The ability to build and maintain healthy relationships is an essential skill for any leader. Good relationship management involves building trust, seeing and reflecting people's values back to them, maintaining healthy boundaries, working through conflict, ensuring that your team gets

one-on-one time with you, admitting when you have made mistakes, taking responsibility for how your team is doing, and communicating effectively.

### **Communication:**

Many issues that occur at work are a result of misunderstandings, lack of transparency, and poor communication. The inability to communicate effectively leads to confusion, frustration, and interpersonal conflict on a team. Once you have awareness of your own emotions and the ability to empathize with your team, you can use these skills to listen and to communicate in a way that can be heard. This will result in alignment, cooperation, organization, and productivity.

Science shows that emotional intelligence is not a fixed trait - it can be cultivated, increased, and honed if one is willing to practice and tend to it on an ongoing basis. There is always more to learn about oneself, and more work to be done to increase emotional intelligence. The following are a few suggestions for improving each of the five factors that contribute to emotional intelligence enabling leaders to drive greater happiness, collaboration, and loyalty amongst their teams.

## **PRACTICE**

### **Self-Assessment:**

To improve your ability to assess and know yourself, you must tune in regularly to your own self. Take time to ask yourself difficult questions such as: What are my strengths as a leader? What are my struggles? What are my biases? What are my triggers? What makes me most anxious? When am I at my best?

In order to better answer these questions, ask for feedback from those around you (your boss, your peers, your team) regularly and often and truly listen. Build a plan of action to address what you've learned. Consult with your coach or mentor. Keep a journal to better recognize your patterns.

### **Self-Regulation:**

One way to increase your ability to regulate your emotions is through mindfulness practices. Being mindful means focusing your attention on what you are feeling in a given moment, without judgment or an immediate need to act. Sometimes, it means just taking a moment to sit with an emotion, taking a brief walk, or stepping away. By doing this, you create space between your feelings and your behavior. Once you understand your state of mind, you'll be in a better position to decide the best course of action.

### **Empathy & Compassion:**

In order to increase your empathy for others, remember that allowing yourself to feel another's emotions does not mean you are responsible for fixing them. It is important to put aside your own viewpoint for long enough to genuinely consider theirs. When working with others, ask how they are doing regularly, and when they tell you, listen, and be fully present with them. Elevate others and prioritize the success of your team members.

### **Relationship Management:**

Conflict and disagreements are not a sign of bad relationships, in fact, they are a necessary component of healthy relationships. Resolving conflict in a healthy manner is the key to using effective communication.

In order to do this, try to view conflict as an opportunity for growth. Take responsibility for your actions, and encourage others to do the same. Genuinely listen to what your team members communicate to you. Consult with your coach, mentor, or your boss during times of conflict - having another mind to run situations through is immensely helpful.

### **Communication:**

Whenever possible, communication with your team should be done in person or virtually (rather than over Slack, email, etc.). When communicating, prioritize listening over speaking. Ask questions, clarify, reflect back on what you are hearing to make sure you've understood correctly. Pay attention to body language and other nonverbal cues. When speaking, be as transparent as you can be. Practice talking through difficult subjects with your coach or mentor

**SUMMARY.** Emotional Intelligence is one of the most important leadership characteristics that you should assess, develop, and continue to grow throughout your career. Make the time to regularly assess your EQ and ask for feedback, and put actions into place. You'll feel the difference and so will your team!

## **RESOURCES**

[Primal Leadership -- Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence](#) by Daniel Goleman and Richard E. Boyatzis. This book vividly illustrates the power - and the necessity - of leadership that is self-aware, empathetic, motivating, and collaborative in a world that is ever more economically volatile and technologically complex. This ground-breaking book is a must-read for anyone who leads or aspires to lead.

**Emotional Intelligence 2.0** by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves. This book provides a step-by-step approach for increasing your EQ based on research with 500,000 responses. Every book includes a code to take the survey and assess your own EQ. It's fast and easy-to-read, with great insights and strategies.

**What Google Learned From Its Quest to Build the Perfect Team**, NY Times