Emotional Intelligence is Key to Our Success

If you realize the importance of internal relationships, and you know how much our emotional intelligence helps to put people at ease, create trust and respect, align people and further a can-do attitude, then I believe you will appreciate this article. I would certainly welcome your feedback and ideas.

If you are not especially familiar with emotional intelligence and the part it plays in highly effective leadership, I hope you will read this article carefully as I have given this a lot of thought. There is important information here that can help you.

Emotional intelligence leads to personal achievement, happiness and professional success.

It is widely accepted that soft skills such as active listening greatly affect how people feel and respond to their boss and senior management. If they feel valued, appreciated and heard, they are engaged and motivated to achieve goals set out by leadership.

Great leadership is, in fact, servant leadership: attending to our team members with empathy, helping them succeed.

A recent Harvard Business Review article reports that the quality that most senior executives lack is empathy. For this reason, it is essential that all of us understand emotional intelligence. Simply put, emotional intelligence deepens our empathy, our ability to sense the feelings of others. Our ability to utilize soft skills is our level of emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is that “something” within us that helps us to sense how we feel and enables us to truly connect with others and form a bond.

Emotional intelligence gives us the ability to be present and listen to someone when they most need it.

And emotional intelligence is that sense of internal balance within us that enables us to keep our composure, make good decisions, communicate successfully and continue our effective leadership even when under stress.

The four main skills of emotional intelligence are:

- **Self-awareness** – our ability to perceive our emotions and understand our tendencies to act in certain ways in given situations
- **Social awareness** – our ability to understand the emotions of other people, what they are thinking and feeling
- **Self-management** – our ability to use awareness of our emotions to stay flexible and direct our behavior positively and constructively
• **Relationship management** – our ability to use our awareness of our own emotions and those of others to manage interactions successfully

Some of us are born with a great deal of emotional intelligence; others are not. Most of us are not aware of how our emotions may be adversely affecting our thinking and our reactions. The good news is that we can learn to increase our emotional intelligence. We can take an online assessment to determine our EQ, our level of emotional intelligence. I recommend doing this, as the skills we can measure are the ones we can best improve.

When we gain in our effective use of emotional intelligence, we will increase our ability to develop more solid, trusting relationships in our business arena. Relationships are so important to our success in business, and not just our relationships with clients. Our internal relationships – the ones we have with our colleagues and team members – are also critically important. They can make or break us! The quality of our internal relationships determines the effectiveness of our organizational cultures.

In my experience, the most productive organizational cultures are those with women active in senior management. Why? Women, on average, have an overall emotional intelligence that is four points higher than men’s. In fact, women generally score higher on self-management, social awareness and relationship management, while our scores on self-awareness tend to be equal. Also, women’s relationship skills build trust and collaboration. For this reason, I strongly believe that business leadership is most effective when shared between women and men. We have different natural leadership strengths, and combining our talents significantly strengthens our business cultures.

Think this is important? You bet it is. Yet most companies continue to be run predominantly by men. I absolutely know that financial results in this economy would improve substantially with shared leadership.

Recent research by TalentSmart, a recognized leader in the emotional intelligence field, shows that 85% of business people do not feel respected and valued by their employer. This has a massive negative effect on our organizational cultures. Yet, do you think these bosses know their people do not feel appreciated or valued? Not likely!

We will all benefit from being much more aware of the impact of emotional intelligence. From now on, let’s:

• Promote people to management positions because of how effective they will be as leaders, not because of what they know and how long they have worked. One may be very good at sales or information technology, but effective leadership requires a different set of skills. Does the person realize that, want to develop these skills and accept that it is not longer about him; it’s now about the team?

• Recognize that emotional intelligence is more important to job performance than any other leadership skill. It is said that our emotional intelligence is more than twice as important as our technical knowledge.

• Work to improve our emotional intelligence competencies. The path to success is to strive for continuous improvement. If we accept that and realize just how important our “soft” skills are, then we are well on our way to success as a leader and in business. And let’s realize that soft skills may be hard for some of us. That’s okay. Where there’s a will, there’s a way to improve.
It’s our soft skills that put people at ease, helps them feel appreciated, and enable us to build and maintain solid relationships founded on confidence and trust.

And yes, being friendly and likable matters, a lot!

We can all appreciate how much our mood matters. Our mood is contagious. As a leader, if our mood is positive, it ignites a spirit of trust, good energy, collaboration, pride in our work, respect for senior management, and healthy risk taking.

If our mood is bad, well, we can expect a culture rife with fear, anxiety, high turnover and poor financial results.

Emotional intelligence is the single best predictor of performance in the workplace and the strongest driver of leadership and personal excellence. The wonderful book, The Emotional Intelligence 2.0, points out that the more we exercise our emotional intelligence skills, the more we will get out of life. These critical skills drive teamwork and excellent client service.

My invitation to you is to read the research about emotional intelligence and to make this a priority in your business. I have personally taken an EQ assessment, so I now have a baseline of my emotional intelligence, and I am committed to improving my competencies.

Take the EQ Assessment

If you’re ready to take the next step toward greater emotional intelligence, I suggest you read The Emotional Intelligence 2.0, by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, PhDs. This excellent quick read will guide the process for you as well as offer suggestions for personal developments plans.

As an example of the self-development strategies these authors suggest, let’s say we want to improve our social awareness. It is suggested that we practice greeting people by name, listen appreciatively in conversations, go for a 15-minute tour of our office every day, envision ourselves in other people’s shoes, and observe social interactions while watching a movie. These and other recommended practices will sharpen our social awareness and improve our emotional intelligence.

Our understanding of emotional intelligence will vastly improve our internal relations and deepen our sense of personal fulfillment and professional accomplishment. And stronger internal relations mean a stronger bottom line. High EQ leaders vastly improve the performance of our companies. I hope you will accept the importance of emotional intelligence, and make it a high priority to increase yours.

About The Author

John Keyser is the founder and principal of Common Sense Leadership, www.commonsenseleadership.com. He works with executives helping them develop organizational cultures that will produce outstanding financial results year after year, and a striving for continuous improvement, theirs and their team’s. His contact information is john@johnkeysercoach.com and 202-236-2800.