

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP: AN INTUITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TOWARDS EXCELLENCE

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Abstract: Recent researches have emphasized the relationship of emotional intelligence and leadership in organizations which is attracting lot of attention worldwide. Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to a group of competencies that make individuals, especially leaders, to utilize their emotions in controlling impulse, moods and feelings and leveraging emotions appropriately as situation demands. It also has to do with one's awareness and sensitivity towards others' emotions. This paper aims to evaluate the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership. It is concluded that emotional intelligence is imperative for being an effective leader.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Leadership, Self-awareness, Empathy

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership is described as the heart of every organization. In order to achieve the organizational goals and to get best out of their employees, a leader at the very outset should be able to understand himself and then catch the pulse of employees.

Leadership is a process of leading followers. It gives right direction to the organization and induces employees to work in a smarter way and sacrifice their personal interest to larger extent for the sake of the organizational wellbeing. Generally people in the organizations expect that others should understand their feelings and respect them. So it becomes the duty of the leader to be very careful in dealing with employees' emotions. Through a greater understanding of one's own emotions as well as the emotions of others, leaders can positively affect their situation by creating an environment of open communication, enhanced trust and greater empathy. Emotional Intelligence (EI) refers to the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and others (Goleman, 2001). Peter Salovey and John Mayer, defined Emotional intelligence as: The ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions, and to regulate emotions to promote personal growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

Emotionally intelligent leaders are thought to be happier and more committed to their organization achieve greater success, perform better in the workplace, take advantage of and use positive emotions to envision major improvements in organizational functioning and use emotions to improve their decision making and instil a sense of enthusiasm, trust and co-operation in other employees through interpersonal relationships (Roseate and Ciarrochi, 2005). This research study is intended at evaluating the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership.

According to Daniel Goleman, an American psychologist who helped make the idea of EI popular, there are five main elements of emotional intelligence. The more that a leader, manages each of these areas, the higher emotional intelligence he acquires.

1. Self-Awareness: Being self-aware also means having a clear picture of one's strength and weaknesses. In order to bring out the best in others, leader first need to bring out the best in himself, which is where self-awareness comes into play. One easy way to assess the self-awareness is by completing 360-degree feedback, in which we evaluate our performance and then match it up against the opinions of our boss, peers, and direct reports. Through this process, a leader will gain understanding of his own behaviour and discover how he is perceived in the organization.

So what can a leader do to improve his self-awareness?

➤ Pen down Thoughts Coming out of Mind- If one spends just a few minutes each day writing down his thoughts, this can prove to be a great help towards person moving to a higher degree of self-awareness.

➤ Slow Down- One needs to manage his emotions by slowing down a little at work and taking time to enjoy little things of life. Leaders need to be persistent when confronted with adverse circumstances.

2. Self-Regulation- Leaders need to regulate themselves effectively. They should not verbally attack their subordinates and never make hasty or emotional decisions. Self-regulation is all about staying in controlled position. A reaction is always automatic. The more a leader is in coherence with his emotional intelligence, easier it would become to make the shift from reaction to response. It is pertinent to always keep in mind to pause, breathe, unwind and do whatever it takes to manage the emotions.

It includes-

➤ Knowing Your Values- Leader should have a clear idea where and when he will not compromise. One should have clear understanding of the most important values in his life. The leader should spend enough time examining his code of ethics. If one knows what is most important to him, then he is in a better position to face a moral or ethical decision.

➤ Being Committed- Leaders need to stand by their decisions and should take complete responsibility of their deeds. They should stop the habit of blaming others in situation of anything goes wrong. They should be bold enough to admit their mistakes and face the upshots, whatever they may be.

➤ Calm Behaviour- Leaders need to stay calm and never relieve their stress by yelling and shouting at their subordinates. They have to be polite and just with people.

3. Motivation: Self-motivated leaders are working consistently towards their goals and they always strive for extremely high standards in the quality of their work. They develop a healthy emotional connection with their subordinates and explain them clearly about the results they are seeking, making them to proceed without being compulsive.

It can be improved by taking into consideration the following:

➤ Re-examine your targets and goals to make sure that they are fresh and stimulating.

➤ Keep track of motivation levels of their subordinates and improving upon them in case of any slackness.

➤ Being Optimist helps in confronting challenges and harsh circumstances.

4. Empathy: Leaders with empathy have the ability to put themselves in someone else's situation. This is very important when it comes to successfully leading a team or organisation. Leaders with empathy actively support the career and personal growth of their team members, offer criticism without crushing the recipient, and solicit regular feedback from their employees.

How can leaders improve empathy?

➤ Understand Others Perspective- Leaders need to take time to look at situations from other people's perspectives.

➤ Observe Others Body Language- Learning to read body language can be a real asset when in a leadership role because then leader will be better able to determine how someone truly feels and this gives him the opportunity to respond appropriately.

➤ Respond to Feelings- Leader needs to understand the feelings of its followers and understand them.

5. Social Skills: Leaders have to be remarkable conversationalists. They must be open to receiving any news be it good or bad and support their subordinates, be thrilled about a new mission or project. Leaders who have good social skills are also good at managing dynamism and resolving conflict.

They set the example with their own behaviour.

- Conflict Management- Leaders must know how to resolve conflicts between their team members, customers or vendors.
- Enhanced Communication Skills- Leaders must learn to be expressive and possess extraordinary interpersonal skills.
- Applaud others- Leader needs to make employees feel part and parcel of the enterprise. Leaders need to give pride when it is earned.

1.2 WHY AND HOW DOES EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN LEADERSHIP?

Leaders who make effective use of relationship, empathy and problem solving behaviours are likely to perform better and also communicate efficiently and effectively in a given situation. It is seen that young people have been instrumental in bringing out new business models and revolutionary products; Google, Yahoo! and Amazon.com are examples to name a few. But it seems, these visionaries in established organisations are not able to get back up from their senior management teams to march ahead in new directions. The Sony employee who created Play Station had difficulty influencing his superiors to develop the product because they felt that Sony should not enter into the field of making toys. But his persistence made him to win them over. To realize how he accomplished, consider the following scenario.

Rahul Sharma (not his real name) is a product developer in a large software company, struggling hard to convince his superiors of the qualities of a new product his team had developed. Management was reluctant in adopting the innovation because it meant losing a successful, established product. After trying several influencing tactics ranging from a soft sell through losing his temper, he finally demonstrated a prototype of the product to a group of customers. Rahul Sharma was not a very good people manager. His influencing style, both upwards and down, was always direct, factual and even aggressive. While he was not much liked, his captivating ideas often influenced colleagues to back him.

To get the benefits of bottom-up leadership, organizations should change their cultures so that those in executive positions become more comfortable letting go of their monopoly on leadership. In addition, budding, front-line leaders must to be encouraged to express themselves freely and courageously. Empowerment so extended is very motivating and has great potential in retaining the talent. Executive must learn to be more receptive to upward challenges to their authority if the organization's most vital leadership resource is not to be lost. This is a lot to ask from senior executives, which is all the more reason why they need emotional intelligence.

1.3 WHAT HAPPENS WHEN LEADERS ARE EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT

In an organisation Emotionally Intelligent leaders guarantees safe environments, where employees feel comfortable and is not afraid to take calculated risks, recommend new ideas and voice their opinions. In such safe environments, working is done in collaboration. And this practice is just not an objective, but it gets merged into the organisational culture as whole. When a leader is emotionally intelligent, they can use emotions to drive the organisation forward. Leaders always have the

responsibility of implementing necessary changes in the organisation, and if they are conscious of subordinates' likely emotional reactions to these changes they are in better position to plan and prepare the most precise methods to implement them. Additionally, emotionally intelligent leaders don't take things personally and are able to tramp ahead with plans without distressing about the impact on their egos. Personal feuds between leaders and employees are one of the commonest deterrents to productivity in many workplaces.

1.4 CONCLUSION

Great leaders have knowledge of power inherent in emotions, so they make sure that they are able to identify, understand and manage them. They also make sure that their subordinates also learn the same. Through emotional intelligence these leaders can make strong backbone of understandings which provide strength to team, enhances productivity and morale.

It can be concluded that, it is just as important to excel at your position in an emotional capacity as it is an intellectual one. It inculcates valuable qualities in leaders such as being centered and grounded. It makes leader respond effectively in the situations of adversity or conflict. Leaders with the help of emotional intelligence can bring in transformational changes throughout the organization, combat the dynamism and leads to sustainable growth.

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