

## **Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace: Application to Leadership**

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### ABSTRACT

Traditionally, intelligence was viewed as cognitive mental ability consisting primarily of two relatively narrow dimensions: mathematical/logical and verbal/linguistic, or IQ. Howard Gardner expanded this narrow perspective to include multiple intelligences. Later, Daniel Goleman introduced a new kind of ability, emotional intelligence (EI), the capacity for understanding one's own and others' emotions. The multiple intelligences construct, and emotional intelligence in particular, have received a great deal of attention recently, particularly with respect to leadership capacity. There is some evidence that the characteristics of EI (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, social awareness, and relationship management) may be a better predictor of leadership performance and success than the traditional "intelligence quotient," or IQ.

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When most people speak about intelligence, they are generally referring to cognitive ability, "intelligence quotient", or IQ. More than a century ago, Alfred Binet developed a written test to measure the IQ of elementary school children in France. Later the U.S. Armed Forces began using the test with recruits in World War I. Subsequently, it was used widely in schools and businesses to classify students and select employees, respectively. IQ was assumed to be genetic. This notion of intelligence was unchallenged as a predictor of school and job success for many years. However, in recent years, there has been a debate concerning whether or not intelligence is fixed at birth (Cooper, 2012; Marrin, 2011; Sternberg, 2011).

In 1983, Howard Gardner published a breakthrough book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. The Binet IQ Test (Stanford-Binet IQ Test) basically measured two traditional cognitive ability dimensions: mathematical/logical and verbal/linguistic, which were thought to determine intelligence. Gardner recognized these two dimensions and added five others: interpersonal, intrapersonal, visual/spatial, musical, and bodily/kinesthetic (Gardner, 1983). In developing these seven multiple intelligences (MIs), he reasoned that intelligence was not entirely fixed at birth, but it could be developed. Gardner (2008, 2011a) added three new intelligences to the original

seven: naturalist, existential, and emotional. Many educators have used the MI paradigm in schools and classrooms (Gardner, 1993, 2011b).

### **Emotional Intelligence: A New Kind of Ability**

Building on the work of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences is the more recent emergence of emotional intelligence. It was the publication of Daniel Goleman's (1995) best-selling book *Emotional Intelligence* that popularized the construct. Goleman defines *emotional intelligence*, or EI, as the ability of an individual to know one's emotions, manage them, motivate one's self, recognize emotions in others, and manage relationships with others (Goleman, 1995). According to Goleman (1995, 1998), the key dimensions of emotional intelligence in the workplace include: self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, social awareness, and relationship management.

#### **Self-Awareness**

The ability to understand one's own emotions is the most essential of the emotional intelligence dimensions. Having high self-awareness allows people to know their strengths, weaknesses, values, and motives. People with high self-awareness can accurately measure their own moods and intuitively understand how their moods affect others; are open to feedback from others on how to continuously improve; and are able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures. They are able to show a sense of humor. A leader with good self-awareness would recognize factors such as whether he or she was liked, or was exerting the right amount of pressure on organization members.

#### **Self-Management**

Self-management refers to how well we control our emotions, impulses, and resources. It includes keeping disruptive impulses in check; displaying honesty and integrity; being flexible in times of change; maintaining the drive to perform well and seize opportunities; and remaining optimistic even after failure. A leader with high self-management would not suddenly decide to fire a team member because of one difference of opinion or throw a temper tantrum when activities do not go as planned.

#### **Self-Motivation**

Self-motivation refers to being results oriented and pursuing goals beyond what is required. Highly self-motivated people set challenging goals for themselves and others; seek ways to improve their performance; and readily make personal sacrifices to meet the organization's goals. They harness their emotions and employ them to improve their chances of being successful in whatever they are seeking to accomplish. They operate from hope of success rather than fear of failure. For example, consider an author who is struggling to finish a book with a contract deadline with the publisher. The author who is

high in self-motivation would likely encourage herself to work hard through bouts of writer's block. In contrast, an author low in self-motivation might begin to doubt her competence as a writer, engage in self-defeating thoughts, and withdraw from the project.

### **Social Awareness**

Social awareness refers to having understanding and sensitivity to the feelings, thoughts, and situations of others. This includes understanding another person's situation, experiencing the other person's emotions, and knowing their needs even when unstated. Socially aware leaders go beyond sensing the emotions of others by showing that they care. In addition, socially aware leaders have the ability to sense office politics and understand social networks. They are good at acknowledging people's strengths, accomplishments, and development. For example, a team leader with high social awareness would be able to assess whether a team member has enough enthusiasm for a project to assign him to that project. A CEO who has understanding and sensitivity for a labor union's demands might be able to negotiate successfully with the head of the labor union to avoid a costly strike.

### **Relationship Management**

Relationship management refers to guiding other people's emotions. It includes inspiring others, influencing others' beliefs and feelings, developing others' capabilities, managing change, resolving conflicts, building strong personal bonds, supporting teamwork, and leading by example. These practices require the ability to communicate clearly and convincingly, with the purpose of influencing others. A leader with good relationship-management skills is good at persuading others to share her vision and would continually enlarge her network of people to win their support when support is needed.

When Goleman published his book *Emotional Intelligence* in 1995, he aimed it at the education community. It received a favorable response. In addition, Goleman received an unexpected response from the business community. The appeal came from employees at all levels of business organizations that success and performance has more to do with what Goleman referred to as EI (that is, self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, social awareness, and relationship management) than with intelligence in the traditional sense (IQ), technical skill, or job experience (Goleman, 2007).

### **Application to Leadership**

More recently, Goleman has entered the domain of leadership. Research conducted by Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee (2005) is bringing scientific data to the question of leadership. They have been tracking the science of outstanding performance for the last three decades. In order to identify the essential ingredients of outstanding leadership, they reviewed data ranging from neurology to measures of the emotional climate that the leader creates. Hundreds of studies in organizations of all kinds—from

small family businesses to the largest companies, from religious groups to schools and hospitals — have yielded a dozen or so abilities that distinguish the best leaders. (See Table 1 to rate yourself on some of these essentials of leadership.)

Table 1

*Leadership Skills: Rate Yourself*

The best leaders have strengths in at least a half dozen key emotional-intelligence competencies out of 20 or so. To see how you rate on some of these abilities, assess how the statements below apply to you. While getting a precise profile of your strengths and weaknesses requires a more rigorous assessment, this quiz can give you a rough rating. More important, we hope it will get you thinking about how well you use leadership skills- and how you might get better at it.

Statement	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Frequent
1. I am aware of what I am feeling.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I know my strengths and weaknesses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I deal calmly with stress.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I believe the future will be better than the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I deal with changes easily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I set measurable goals when I have a project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Others say I understand and am sensitive to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Others say I resolve conflicts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Others say I build and maintain relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Others say I inspire them.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Others say I am a team player	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Other say I helped to develop their abilities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total the number of checks in each column:	_____	_____	_____	_____
Multiply this number by:	X1	X2	X3	X4
To get your score, add these four numbers:	= _____	+ _____	+ _____	+ _____

**Interpretation:****Total:** \_\_\_\_\_

**36+:** An overall score of 36 or higher suggests you are using key leadership abilities well- but ask a coworker or partner for his opinions, to be more certain. **30-35:** Suggests some strengths but also some underused leadership abilities. **29 or less:** Suggests unused leadership abilities and room for improvement.

Leaders are unique, and they can show their talent in different ways. To further explore your leadership strengths, you might ask people whose opinions you value: “When you have seen me do really well as a leader, which of these abilities am I using?” If a number of people tell you that you use the same quality when doing well, you have likely identified a leadership strength that should be appreciated and nurtured.

Just what are the essentials of leadership? Goleman’s work and that of hundreds of other researchers make clear that what sets the beloved leaders apart from those we hate is excellence at things like “motivating power,” “empathy,” “integrity,” and “intuitive ability.” These abilities fall within the domain of emotional *intelligence*—

adeptness at managing ourselves and our interactions with others—not school smarts (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002). For instance, why do Phil Jackson, Oprah Winfrey, the Dalai Lama, and Colin Powell have what it takes to be effective leaders? Phil Jackson, LA Lakers coach, winner of eleven NBA championships, has “motivational power.” His skill in bringing out the best in his players helps to make the team a winner. Oprah Winfrey has “empathy.” Her capacity to listen, to relate, and to communicate the pain and resolve of millions has given her enormous authority. The Dalai Lama has “integrity.” His consistent stance of tolerance, nonviolence, and humility has made him a great moral leader and a voice of conscience. Former Secretary of State Colin Powell has “intuitive ability.” His ability to connect with others makes him a superior diplomat.

According to Daniel Goleman and colleagues, new findings in brain science reveal that this kind of intelligence uses different parts of the brain than does the academic kind. Cognitive abilities such as verbal fluency or mathematics skills reside in the neocortex, the wrinkled topmost layers, which are the most recent evolutionary addition to the human brain. But emotional intelligence relies largely on the ancient emotional centers deep in the midbrain between the ears, with links to the prefrontal cortex—the brain’s executive center, just behind the forehead (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2005; Lunenburg, in press).

According to Goleman and colleagues, this may explain the fact that IQ and emotional intelligence are surprisingly independent. Of course, to be a great leader, you need enough intelligence to understand the issues at hand, but you need not be super smart. By the same token, people who are intellectually gifted can be disasters as leaders. Such situations are all too common in organizations everywhere. It happens when people are promoted for the wrong set of skills: IQ abilities rather than the emotional intelligence abilities that good leaders display.

### **Can You Learn to Lead?**

According to Goleman and colleagues, the aptitudes of leadership, unlike academic or technical skills, are learned in life. That’s good news for all of us. If you are weak in leadership, you can get better at virtually any point in life with the right effort. But it takes motivation, a clear idea of what you need to improve, and consistent practice. For example, good leaders are excellent listeners. Let’s assume that you need to become a better listener. Perhaps you cut people off and take over the conversation without hearing them out. The first step: Become aware of the moments you do this and stop yourself. Instead, let the other people speak their minds. Ask questions to be sure you understand their viewpoints. Then—and only then—give your own opinion. With practice, you can become a better listener.

Another skill that good leaders possess is helping others stay in a positive emotional state. Research shows that leaders who achieve the best results get people to laugh three times more often than do mediocre leaders (Goleman, et al., 2005). Laughter signals that people are not caught up in, say, anger or fear but rather are relaxed and enjoying what they do—and so they are more likely to be creative, focused, and productive. In sum, leaders are made, not born.

## Conclusion

Traditionally, intelligence was viewed as cognitive mental ability consisting primarily of two relatively narrow dimensions: mathematical and verbal abilities, or IQ. Howard Gardner expanded this narrow perspective to include multiple intelligences (MI). Later, Daniel Goleman introduced a new kind of ability, emotional intelligence (EI), the capacity for understanding one's own and others' emotions. The multiple intelligences construct, and emotional intelligence in particular, have received a great deal of attention recently, particularly with respect to leadership capacity. There is some evidence that the characteristics of EI (e.g., self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, social awareness, and relationship management) may be a better predictor of leadership performance and success than the traditional "intelligence quotient," or IQ.

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