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Emotional Intelligence: Using Relationship Management in Leadership

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Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace:
Using Relationship Management in Leadership

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Introduction:

This project aims to educate those in leadership roles on how to overcome uncomfortable conversations and interactions, specifically when dealing with emotional situations in the workplace. The dynamic of the business discipline is changing and there is a movement beginning regarding how professionals view their work relationships (Martin). This movement aims for leaders to be able to identify emotions and be able to control the environment around them. Emotional intelligence is one of the ways that this goal can be accomplished.

The main project completed was a workshop presented on emotional intelligence in the workplace and how to be vulnerable in professional relationships. This is an important topic to address because of the social change occurring in the workplace. Employees are calling for more compassionate leaders. Using coaching tools and building trust in teams are ways to create rapport and build a more productive environment. This project focuses on the importance of self-awareness and how it can result in a comfortable and open environment that creates a productive, content workplace.

Literature:

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the ability to first identify emotions in oneself, and then identify the emotions in others. When those are identified properly, two parties then enter relationship management, the most difficult aspect of emotional intelligence and the fourth stage of EQ. It is often considered the most difficult stage because it involves multiple parties, and everyone is different.

The book *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman focuses on this topic and introduced the world to the emotional intelligence grid, revolutionizing the way people view relationships and authenticity in their connections.

Emotions are difficult and can make people uncomfortable. This is why they tend to go unaddressed and feel like they do not belong in the workplace. This is faulty rhetoric as emotions are a part of life and inevitable. Emotions are how we make connections and avoid things like burnout (Kresser).

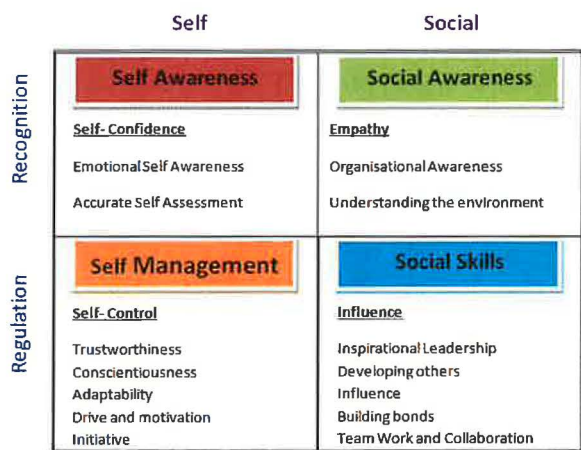


Figure 1: Emotional Intelligence Grid

Self-Awareness

Understanding one’s emotional state is a skill that requires years of practice and effort. One of the biggest obstacles to self-management is highly charged emotions such as anger or frustration (Ajzen). When one is over-stimulated with powerful emotions like anger, it is hard to move past them and be genial. Psychologists refer to this as the “anger iceberg”; just like with icebergs, only about ten percent is above the surface, while the rest is below and cannot be seen. When someone appears to be angry, there may be other emotions there, but the person does not know how to identify and show them. This is one example of emotional regulation that is very common in social interactions that may hinder one’s ability to effectively communicate.

The importance of self-management is overlooked quite often because it is easy to point at others and not realize that the problem might be within oneself (Bradberry). This holds one back from accomplishing the rest of the levels of emotional intelligence. On average only “36

percent of people are able to accurately identify their emotions as they happen,” a staggeringly low number (Bradberry). This statistic only considers the self-awareness step, not the three other levels of EQ. Self-management is the beginning of emotional intelligence and without it, one cannot hope to move onto the other steps.

The way that one improves self-awareness is by living in emotions that occur so that they can better understand themselves and can manage those feelings (Martin). A common occurrence in emotional management is a term known as buffering. It is similar to procrastination but occurs on an emotional level. When an emotion or feeling makes us uncomfortable, it is easy to distract ourselves with games or other activities that fill that mental space. Being able to properly identify and manage those emotions helps us grow that skill and become more emotional aware of ourselves.

Self-awareness is arguably the most important step of emotional intelligence. Without it, there is a lack of understanding and control over emotions that occur throughout conversations and conflicts. Being able to properly manage oneself is crucial to leading others. When one understands their own path, it is easier to help guide others down theirs.

Social Awareness

When developing social awareness skills, it is important to understand that no two people are alike. There are many different factors affecting a person's nature, such as their childhood, sociocultural status, religious or political beliefs, and other environmental factors. These are all potential communication barriers that hold people back from being able to identify others' points-of-view and empathizing with them (Kresser). It can be difficult to be understanding when one disagrees with another's stance or opinion. Therefore, taking a moment to be mindful of different factors that may influence others is very important in social awareness.

This is problematic, as the biggest part of social awareness is empathy, the ability to mentally put oneself in someone else's situations and try to understand why they reacted the way they did. Empathy is a very difficult concept to apply and can be frustrating when others do not know how to use it. It is not generally understood by adults because it is a concept that is learned in childhood. In the book *Raising Your Emotional Intelligence*, Jeanne Segal writes that empathy is one of the hardest topics that she teaches to others in her work. It is not something that people can do unless they actively work at it and try to improve that skill (Segal). This factor poses a major obstacle for emotional intelligence because it can take years to develop the tools needed to empathize with others. Even when people can empathize, it might only be for certain situations while a person may still harbor biases in a different situation. Social awareness is a very important step in communicating with others and a necessary component to effective leadership.

Leading others is about communication and cooperation. In the book by Karen Kimsey-House, *Co-Active Leadership: Five Ways to Lead*, the author describes how one of the worst feelings for an employee is to feel frustrated or unimportant. Using social-awareness, leaders can understand their employees on an emotional level and be able to navigate conversations and conflict. This mitigates hard feelings and stressful situations. Understanding others is a very useful tool in management.

Relationship Management

The final piece of emotional intelligence is relationship management. This is where the intersection of self-awareness and empathy for others align. Relationship management is so important because people are naturally hardwired to give emotions the upper hand (Bradberry). This factor is what is driving the change in the workforce. There has been a push for mental health awareness and more understanding managers (Brant). These are unavoidable changes and leaders are being forced to adapt in new ways.

Being emotionally in-tune with the environment one is in elevates a leader's ability to manage their workforce. Dori Meinert from SHRM say that "outstanding leaders almost continuously monitor the emotional climate in any setting where they are." Being aware of attitudes and tones in a meeting or conversations helps managers steer conversations towards a positive outcome and can lead to a more productive environment.

Emotional intelligence has been referred to as the way people can influence the emotions of others. This gives leaders the ability to manage their conversations in a healthy and constructive manner. Being the final component to EQ, relationship management takes a lot of practice and patience. Being patient with oneself to develop the skills for self-management takes time and effort. Being consciously aware of the interactions around the environment and the reactions one has to them will make it easier to advance towards social awareness.

Social awareness has many different factors involved. People are unpredictable and everyone has their own individual stories. These differences make it difficult to be perfectly in-tune with their surroundings. The biggest component of social awareness is to be adaptable. All great leaders are adaptable and able to work through issues alongside their employees (Meinert).

Bringing all these components together results in relationship management. "Research shows that every unaddressed conflict can waste about eight hours of company time" says Daniel Brant from the Harvard Review. Managing employees can sometimes require having hard conversations. These are necessary for the whole team to improve and stay on the same path. Understanding a team and meeting their needs is one of the toughest roles as a leader but is what will bring cooperation and success.

Application in the Workplace

It does not matter what profession one is in, EQ effects many aspects of professional life: leadership, decision-making, teamwork, negotiation, and much more. These are fundamental skills that are required in any field. With the automatization of the workforce, it has never been more important to sharpen these soft skills. Automatization is a concern because jobs that can be done by machine and robots are disappearing. Having interpersonal skills makes a person valuable and nonreplaceable by a machine. These skills like conflict resolution are the number one indicator of productivity (Meinert). They are invaluable to the employers of today.

Trust

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

is one of the most informational books on building trust within a team. The importance of trust on a team is paramount and will affect every other aspect of communication and productivity. As seen in Figure 2, Trust is at the bottom of the pyramid. This

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team - Patrick Lencioni



Figure 2: *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team Graphic*

demonstrates every other aspect that goes into teamwork is built off trust. The type of trust that Lencioni references is not on a performance level but is rather based on vulnerability. It is the ability to trust a coworker that they will receive feedback, be honest, and be the teammate that one needs to perform the task at hand.

One of the most important aspects of this vulnerable based trust Lencioni describes is that every single member of the team has too “buy in.” If there is one team member that cannot be

vulnerable, it will ruin the trust that the team has built. Lencioni references a team that was built of the top executives from around the world, but they were underperforming. He was called in to help them solve this issue and observe what was going on. He soon realized that there was one woman that refused to take any feedback or consider that anyone else's opinions might be right. This created a huge rift amongst the team. They later found out on a retreat with the executive team that she had chronic trust issues that most likely stemmed from her childhood.

Lencioni's team worked with her for months on overcoming her fears, but it was to no avail. She was eventually relocated and Lencioni recalls that the first meeting without her present was astronomical. He said it was as if every person on that team was replaced. The executive team did not trust her to take their feedback and it had costly effects on their productivity. This emphasizes the point that trust on a team is pivotal and it only takes one person to jeopardize their growth.

The theme of trust is throughout the rest of the pyramid. In fear of conflict, a team member most likely does not trust that their feedback or opposing opinion will be received. This is a major concern when trying to solve complex problems because there will be a lack of communication and collaboration. A lack of commitment references back to the concept of "buying in." Lencioni refers to this as if a person is not weighing in, they are not buying in. Companies need to be able to make fast decisions and cannot always wait for a mutual consensus. The ability to have candid conversations about getting results is what drives productivity in teams. Trusting a team to take feedback and then make decisions on that brings success.

The last two levels of the pyramid are about a mismatching of metrics and finding the balance between goals. The avoidance of accountability generally results from two members

heading in different directions. They may be getting paid to accomplish different goals which can create a direct conflict. Aligning goals will help realign the focus of a team. It also comes down to trusting other members to do their share in the task at hand. The pyramid eventually boils down to the success of the team. Once the members have learned to vulnerably trust their team and be able to overcome conflict and decision making, they will see result and cooperation as a group.

Building trust takes time, dedication, and consistency. Shawn Burke from the University of Florida summarized trust into three pillars: ability, integrity, and benevolence. In the article “A formula for trust,” these three pillars are dissected. The first is ability, which refers to a persons’ competence at their tasks, or job performance. If an employee does not believe their superior can do a job, there will be no trust and they will doubt the abilities of that person.

The next pillar, integrity, is crucial in building rapport with a team. It is being reliable and staying true to the values that one holds. Most miscommunication that occurs comes from a misalignment of values and trying to communicate those to others (Meinert). When values don’t align, it is hard to understand each other and can cause tension. Making the values important to a person clear and staying accountable to those builds consistent trust.

The last pillar is benevolence. This may be one of the hardest pillars to accomplish because it requires a deeper level of self-management. When one has those strong emotions that prevent people from keeping an open mind, they lose the ability to be benevolent and understanding. Kindness is more likely to be received than an aggressive demeanor (Toussaint). It also creates a space that encourages honesty and vulnerability. Having an open environment leads to trust and from there the rest of the skills that teams require can be built.

Collectively, trust is the most important quality to have on a team. Mike Krzyzewski once said, “when you first assemble a group, it’s not a team right off the bat. It’s only a collection of individuals.” To become more than a body of individuals, the teams must buy in to the bigger picture. A leader’s role is to inspire others to move towards the collective task at hand. When they have the emotional intelligence to understand others and receive feedback humbly, they create that space for vulnerability and trust.

Coaching

In his book *The Coaching Habit*, Micheal Bungay Stanier highlights the seven magic questions that lead to better conversations. As a manager, knowing techniques to better understand one’s employees will help both parties connect and deal with conflicts that may arise. They will also be able to better communicate on projects as well. One of the most important topics that Stainer addresses is the importance of not only listening, but also understanding what the employee is saying. Asking the right questions at the right time will the individual in question open up and gain insight into what is going on (Bungay Stainer).

Coaching is a technique used by managers to understand their employees. There are people that have adopted the title “life coach,” which is a similar concept to coaching in the workplace. Life coaches tend to focus more on aspects outside of the workplace while this project is specifically focusing on relationships and dynamics related to work (Coller-Peter). Coaching has also been compared to therapy but is different because therapy tends to focus on the professional giving answers to solve the issues presented. A coach will approach the situation believing that their subject has the answers but does not know it. The questions and conversation that they have will lead the subject to answering their question or solving their problem (Kimsey-House).

Coaching is a great way to practice emotional intelligence and utilize relationship-management skills. Having one-on-one meetings creates a space for people to open up and give honest feedback (Jones). When that feedback is applied and the employee feels understood, trust is built, which makes for a more productive environment. Coaching is an underutilized tool that can be used to build relationships and understanding between peers for a more conducive workplace.

Project Piece:

For my thesis, I chose to create and lead a workshop. I was introduced to this topic when I attended a conference and was forever changed by its impact. I was inspired to do the same for others and help plant the seed in their lives.

While initially creating this project, I wanted to speak to a female audience, and the workshop was originally titled “Women in Leadership: Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace.” The project was to be from a female point-of-view, as I wanted to reach an audience like myself that may need help in having vulnerability in their professional lives. However, I have had the opportunity to present the workshop twice so far, and both times were to a male and female audience of all ages. I made the decision to change this project to include all people rather than just females because I could not be true to the project’s original intentions. I did not have the experience, and, furthermore, I had worked with different male mentors and professors that had major influences on this project.

If I were to go back in time when I was beginning to form this project and wanted to stay with the female point-of-view, I would have selected different mentors and put more focus into the women in leadership topic. I still think that it is an important topic, and I learned a lot in the research that I completed pertaining to women, but my true passion and interest was in emotional

intelligence itself. I believe that it is a topic for everyone, and I wanted my project to reach a broad audience.

Regarding the research and prep work that I did for the workshop, I wanted to learn from people that have experience and knowledge in this field. I did a lot of general screening in the beginning stages where I worked with Dr. Erica Holley and Dr. Anderson Parks, both professors at Central Washington University. They provided me with great insight on different topics to focus on and a direction in which to begin moving. I also attended a few workshops by Dr. Parks on emotional intelligence, a valuable good experience.

One of the largest influences on this project was Professor Rob Ogburn. I met him in Fall 2020 in a class and we instantly connected on our leadership philosophies. He helped guide me through these topics and develop my leadership philosophies as a student and professional as well. For the activity in the project, we collaborated on how to get the most engagement in the time constraint I would have at the conference I would present in. My first mentor, Professor Bill Provaznik, was involved with our collaborations and provided a lot of assistance with the presentation itself. He has a lot of experience with conferences, and we had many great conversations about engagement and audience impact.

I presented my project at the 2022 Western Regional Honors Conference in New Mexico. It was an incredible experience, and I grew a lot as an academic and professional. For the conference, I would have 45 minutes to present the topic in a workshop setting. This time constraint was a big consideration in the activity I chose and knowing that most of the people attending would be strangers. Emotional intelligence can be a deep and emotional subject so I wanted to be mindful of the level of vulnerability that I would most likely receive from the attendees.

For the workshop, there were two main parts to my presentation. The first half of the project is a highly engaging activity. Everyone in the room pairs up and goes through one of three scenarios provided. The partners will choose one person to be the “boss” and the other is the “employee.” Each scenario is a random issue that has occurred, and the “boss” needs to address it with their employee. Below is one of the scenarios provided:

“Shannon owns a bakery and is in charge of a team made up of 5 assistant bakers. Johnny is one of these assistants and was given the responsibility of a cake for a birthday party. Johnny did not time manage well and was not able to make the cake by the deadline. Shannon lost the future business of a loyal customer because of Johnny’s mistake”

The bosses receive special instructions before they begin. One half of the room is instructed to be assertive in their interactions, taking more of an aggressive approach. The other half is told to be understanding and solution based in their interactions.

This activity is meant to help the audience understand and witness for themselves the power of a conversation’s tone. Afterwards, we go around and select a few experiences to

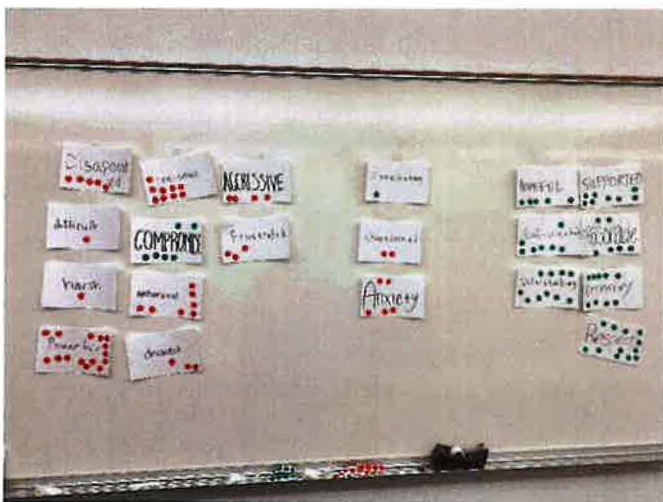


Figure 3: Image from WRHC Conference: Results of Activity

discuss. They then will write down buzz words such as “difficult,” “open,” and “respect.” These words are based solely on their experience and what they witnessed in their own conversations. Everyone then gets four green and four red dots to place on any of the cards shared. Green means that it is a positive

experience that they like to see in leadership and red is a negative correlation.

This activity is a great way to bring about the audiences' experiences. I did not want to stand up there and teach anything because these are very simple topics; at the core of emotional intelligence is simply caring about others. When presenting this project, I wanted the audience to witness and see for themselves how having a closed-off attitude will not lead to a productive conversation. Being vulnerable and empathetic leads to good, healthy conversations.

The second half of the project is reflection questions and a conversation about EQ. This part of the presentation was a little more fluid and I tried something different than the first time I presented. One of the feedback pieces I received from my mentor was to keep up the engagement and conversation in the second part because the activity is so high. At the conference I decided to sit down after the second set of reflection questions, which made way for more conversation. This went very well, and the audience really began to engage. At first, they were a little hesitant, but after talking about personal experiences, they began to open up and become vulnerable. This was a huge success, and I was very pleased with the conference.

Overall, the experience of doing a workshop was great. I have so much more confidence in my ability to present and I feel that I am able to speak about this topic that I am so passionate about more eloquently. This is a skill that I will be able to take with me into my career and future endeavors.

Conclusion

Emotional Intelligence is a simple concept that we are taught as children—care about others and be a nice person—yet it is not that simple. Emotions are difficult and confusing. Hellen Keller once said “the best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.” For decades there has been a stigma about

professionalism and how real feelings do not belong in the workplace. Emotions are a part of being a human and inevitable.

Having emotional intelligence opens the doorway to so many relationship techniques such as coaching, creating mentorships, building trust in teams, and so much more. These skills are being demanded of the workforce and driving productivity. Companies are becoming aware that emotional intelligence is what makes the difference in a team and inevitably their profit margins. Having these skills decreases stress, helps conflict resolution, builds relationships, and makes for an overall more enjoyable professional atmosphere.

Accomplishing this project has made me a more well-rounded student and a more confident professional. The future of business is exciting with changes and new wave of a more emotionally aware workforce. I hope to continue spreading my knowledge on this topic and inspire others to grow personally and professionally.

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Women in Leadership:

Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

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Activity

SCENARIO A: Baker Mishap

Shannon owns a bakery and is in charge of a team made up of 5 assistant bakers. Johnny is one of these assistants and was given the responsibility of a cake for a birthday party. Johnny did not time manage well and was not able to make the cake by the deadline. Shannon lost the future business of a loyal customer because of Johnny's mistake.

SCENARIO B: Get Your Head in the Game

Tom is the coach of a high school basketball team. He is struggling with Robert who does not show up on time, distracts other players during practice, and is not very respectful to others. Semifinals are approaching and Tom needs to get Robert on track.

SCENARIO C: Project Deadlines

Samantha is the project manager for a construction company. The company was tasked with building the new rec center for their local city. Jessica did not order the project materials on time and has pushed the project completion date back. The city fined the company for breach of contract in the promised completion. Samantha needs to address Jessica's complacency with the importance of job tasks.

Activity Notes

“What is necessary for a person to change is [their] awareness of [themselves]”
-Abraham Maslow

Activity Reflection

What holds me back from managing my emotions effectively?

How does body language, tone, and behavior impact my communication and ability to connect with others?

What relationship consequences have you experienced when you haven't been able to self-manage in the most productive manner?

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

-Dr. Maya Angelou

Emotional Intelligence (EQ)

“Emotional intelligence is your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships.” -

Bradberry & Greaves

EQ Box

		Self	Social
Recognition		<div style="background-color: #e74c3c; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;">Self Awareness</div> <p><u>Self- Confidence</u></p> <p>Emotional Self Awareness</p> <p>Accurate Self Assessment</p>	<div style="background-color: #7ed321; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;">Social Awareness</div> <p><u>Empathy</u></p> <p>Organisational Awareness</p> <p>Understanding the environment</p>
Regulation		<div style="background-color: #f39c12; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;">Self Management</div> <p><u>Self- Control</u></p> <p>Trustworthiness</p> <p>Conscientiousness</p> <p>Adaptability</p> <p>Drive and motivation</p> <p>Initiative</p>	<div style="background-color: #3498db; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;">Social Skills</div> <p><u>Influence</u></p> <p>Inspirational Leadership</p> <p>Developing others</p> <p>Influence</p> <p>Building bonds</p> <p>Team Work and Collaboration</p>

The Next Steps

What do you want to accomplish as a leader?

How can vulnerability impact your leadership goals?

Where are ways that you can implement emotional intelligence in your relationships?

“It is very important to understand that emotional intelligence is not the opposite of intelligence, it is not the triumph of heart over head — it is the unique intersection of both.”

- David Caruso

Resources

Books

Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Coleman

The Five Dysfunctions of a Team by Patrick Lencioni

Aware by Daniel Siegel

The Power of Feedback by Joseph Folkman

Creating Emotional Awareness Topics

- Buffering
 - “Buffering Effect”- Psychology.net
- Vulnerability
 - “What is Emotional Intelligence?”- verywellmind.com
- Silence vs. violence in crucial conversations
 - “Silence Or Violence: The Art of Crucial Conversations”- linkedin.com
- Nonverbal Communication
 - “Nonverbal Communication and Body Language”- helpguide.org

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