**Effective Leaders Build Emotional Intelligence in Work Teams**

**Introduction**

In today’s business environment it is becoming less common for people to work in isolation as individuals. Effective leaders are required to guide and support work teams to reach their goals. Today’s work environment relies on collective intelligence and this is driving businesses to respond to new challenges in an ever demanding and turbulent economic environment. Companies today depend on teams for decisions and tasks that previously had been an individual’s responsibility (Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Pratti, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003). Dwyer (2013) confirms that people drive an organisation’s success and today those people are working together in teams to accomplish goals.

This essay seeks to identify how leaders can effectively manage teams by managing emotions. This essay will review the importance of emotions, the significance of leaders developing emotional intelligence, and the movement towards developing emotionally intelligent work teams.

**Emotions are Important**

Human beings are emotional. Emotions generate powerful chemicals that create feelings of being positive, as well as, feelings of negativity (Ingram & Cangemi, 2012). Emotions exist and people can become victims of their emotions or they can use them to their advantage. Emotionally intelligent people are able to recognize the early signs of rising emotion and impending conflict (Ingram and Cangemi (2012). Conflicts are a part of life, yet learning to navigate intelligently through them is important.

Humans have the ability to manage their emotions and the emotions of those around them. Caruso and Salovey (2004) emphasize that if we can manage our emotions by blending emotion and thought, we increase the chances that our decisions will be more effective (p. 73). Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand and manage moods and emotions in ones self and others (George, 2000). Bradberry and Greaves (2009, p. 1034) found that emotional intelligence is the single most significant predictor of performance in the workplace.

**Developing Emotional Intelligence in Leadership**

In the past, leaders were seen to control, plan and inspect the overall running of an organization. Today they are to motivate and inspire others, foster positive attitudes at work and create a sense of importance with and among employees (Hogan, Curphy & Hogan, 1994). This requires today’s leaders to understand themselves, know how their emotions affect their actions, be aware of others, and know how to effectively manage emotions in others (Ingram & Cangemi, 2012), particularly within work teams. Leaders that are able to do this are leaders with high levels of emotional intelligence.

Effective leaders do not just have an official ‘title’ that designates them as a leader. Leadership is about influence. The ability of leaders to manage emotions in themselves and others is the way that leaders effectively influence others. It should be noted that a powerful leader might influence a group to do ‘bad’ things. This does not make him a bad leader as such, it makes him a powerful person that is able to effectively manage the emotions of others but influences them to do bad things. Corporate culture should encourage an environment where leaders use emotion in a positive way to motivate.

**Developing Emotionally Intelligent Work Teams**

The attitude use to be that team members should put emotions aside and concentrate on accomplishing tasks and goals. Today, the challenge for leaders is not to suppress feelings encountered by team members but to create environments where emotions are used as a source of information and integrated into the thinking to assist in intelligent decision making (Caruso & Salovey, 2004). Caaruso and Salovey (2004) assure us that effective leaders create positive connections with team members, support and guide them to achieve success, encourage the development of inner motivation that leads to team members, and ultimately teams, reaching their potential (p. 774). Emotionally intelligent leaders effectively encourage teams to become emotionally intelligent.

**Conclusion**

Work teams drive business today. The goal of leaders today is to improve organizational performance within work teams. Leaders can proactively select team members that are able manage high stress (Pratti et el., 2003), develop positive working relationships and manage the emotions of themselves and those around them. Research shows that teams, just like individuals, are most effective if they are emotionally intelligent (Druskat & Wolff, 2001). Leaders should strive to create effective teams by fostering an environment of emotional intelligence.

Corporate culture is the shared values and norms of an organization. It is the collective identity that helps to develop the foundation of work teams. Leaders need to create a culture that inspires and moves team members to pursue and achieve stated goals (Ingram & Cangemi, 2012) through the development of shared emotional intelligence. Ingram and Cangemi’s (2012) research has found that emotional intelligence can be learned. It is up to the leader then to model and nurture emotional intelligence within work teams today.

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