**Why Does Emotional Intelligence Matter in the Workplace?**

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Advanced Business Communication219.703

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22 March 2013

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**Introduction**

Emotional Intelligence does matter in today’s challenging and changing workplace. It is not enough to simply have the required skills or the academic knowledge. Today, businesses are confronted with change and uncertainty in an increasingly competitive market. General Motors discovered that emotional intelligence can significantly improve individual, team and organizational effectiveness (McShane, 2010, p. 72). Ensuring that individuals are equipped with emotional intelligence provides the foundation that companies need to not merely survive but to thrive in today’s world. Emotionally intelligent (EI) individuals become EI leaders who in turn manage the environments that support and maintain EI teams. It is in this way that organizations boldly confront and succeed in today’s business climate.

This report seeks to examine the importance of emotional intelligence in today’s diverse workforce, in the development of leaders, and in work team environments. For the purposes of this report, a model of emotional intelligence includes these four dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (McShane, 2010, p. 73). Emotional intelligence is the ability to effectively reason about emotions and use emotions to aid cognitive processes and decision-making (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009; Dwyer, 2009; George, 2000; McShane, 2010; Salovey, P. & Mayer, J., 1990; Zhou & George, 2003). EI has emerged as a critical factor in workplace success for individuals and leaders and teams (Gardenswartz, Cherbosque, & Rowe, 2010). This report will highlight the importance of emotional intelligence as an essential ingredient to success in the workplace that relies less on individuals and more on work group dynamics.

**Hiring for the Diverse Work Place**

Those setting out on a career path involved in the hiring and recruitment stage realize that jobs and work environments today are changing and so are the skills needed to perform those jobs. Zeidner, Matthews and Roberts (2004) acknowledge that IQ gets you hired but EQ (or EI) gets you promoted (p. 380). Caruso and Salovey (2004) emphasize that today’s workers need to manage their emotions by blending emotion and thought. But these emotions and thoughts come from an employee group of diverse backgrounds, intellects and cultural perspectives. Individual employees and leaders need to have at the hiring stage an ability to build, maintain and leverage relationships (Gardenswartz et al., 2010) whilst accomplishing tasks requiring cognitive skills. Hiring employees today needs to include a blend of cognitive and emotional intelligence.

Today, business environments and work teams are confronted with people who have differences in values, language, behaviors, preferences, and norms. The emotional reactions to these differences depend on how effectively an individual can deal with these differences. Gardenswartz, Cherbosque and Rowe (2010) developed the EID model that involves emotional intelligence within a diverse environment. The four elements included in this model include a self-awareness combined with self-reflection on the individual’s worldview known as *affirmative introspection*, the managing of emotional reactions to differences among people known as *self-governance*, the effort to explore and understand others’ cultural norms in terms of values, beliefs, and behaviors that is known as *intercultural literacy*, and the deliberate act to structure relationships and social environments for mutual benefit known as *social architecting (p. 76)*. This model is based on other emotional intelligence models but includes the necessary aspect of diversity.

Business teams in today’s environment are confronted with challenges that produce stress. This stress and anxiety can lead to the team not being productive. When diversity within team environments is confronted and supported teams are able to leverage diversity to bring benefits and creativity to team efforts (Gardenswartz et al., 2010). Conflicts and stress are a part of life, yet learning to navigate intelligently through them is important. Emotionally intelligent people are able to recognize the early signs of rising emotion and impeding conflict (Ingram & Cangemi, 2012; Jordon & Troth, 2002). Emotionally intelligent individuals when faced with conflict are able to compromise in the appropriate circumstances and regulate their emotions to achieve goals in times of change.

**Development of Leaders**

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; Prati, Douglas, Ferris, Ammeter, & Buckley, 2003), particularly within work teams. The team leader motivates the team to work together, facilitates supportive relationships, encourages team identity, empowers team members The EI of the team leaders is important to the effective functioning of the team (Prati et al.,2003). Low levels of EI in a leader present significant barriers to success (Gardenswartz et al., 2010; Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2004). EI helps leaders to manage the emotions of their followers. They are able to sense frustration and stress and create favorable conditions to channel it into creative problem solving (Zhou, 2003, p. 564).

Leaders need to assess the emotional intelligence of workers to place them in the most suitable jobs. Jordan and Troth (2004, p. 65) found that emotional intelligence predicts a specific style of conflict resolution. In today’s changing and challenging business environments it is essential that leaders select people that can most effectively manage the organizational change process. Jordon and Troth (2002) found that leaders with higher levels of emotional intelligence facilitate collaborative and problem-solving behavior in which emotions are controlled and generated. This allows new solutions to evolve and success in attaining set goals.

**Work Team Environment**

Organizations today are confronting challenges and finding better ways to innovate by collaboratively working in teams. Dwyer (2013) confirms that people drive an organization’s success and today those people are working together in teams to accomplish goals. Companies today depend on teams for decisions and tasks that previously had been an individual’s responsibility (Druskat & Wolff, 2001; Prati et al., 2003). Today’s work environment relies on collective intelligence and is driving businesses to respond to new challenges in an ever increasing demanding and turbulent economic environment.

Just as IQ is not enough anymore for the skill set of an individual, it is also not enough for the skill set of collaborative teams. Team emotional intelligence involves a group to be empathetic, manage emotion and establish norms (Druskatt & Wolff, 2001; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Ayoko, Callan, & Hartel, 2008). Teams can increase their overall performance by developing greater emotional intelligence. The research completed by Druskatt and Wolff (2001) specifies that teams need to create emotionally intelligent norms. They define these norms as the attitudes and behaviors that eventually become habits. They further specify that group effectiveness relies on three things: trust among member, a sense of group identity, and a sense of group efficacy (p. 82). With these elements high performance is achieved through cooperation and collaboration. This is the foundation for an emotionally intelligent group. It is in this way that group members are mindful of the emotions of other members, the emotions of the group and the emotions of other groups and individuals with which they interact. Emotions are an essential aspect of group dynamics and when managed effectively can produce successful results.

Many teams are made up of members drawn from different parts of an organization (Druskat & Wolff, 2001). Gardenswartz, Cherbosque, and Rowe (2010) remind us that both managers and team members share responsibility for building emotionally intelligent team environments. These teams to work effectively need to be based on trust that allows for groups to become more self-aware which then leads to group efficacy. (Druskat & Wolff, 2001, p. 84). A true sense of group efficacy, according to Druskat and Wolff (2001), is the belief that the team can perform well and that group members are more effective working together than apart.

The EID model is relevant to individuals but the same concepts apply to teams (Gardenswartz et al., 2010, p. 80). Kelley and Littman (2001) found that diverse teams innovate more quickly and with more creativity. One key to their success is that the deliberately include diverse team members with varying backgrounds in regards to gender, age, race, education, culture and experience. The team leaders manage this work team by applying norms that encourage disagreement and discussion as it leads to creative solutions (Gardenswartz et al., 2010). As teams are at the foundation of organizations today it is effective to ensure that corporate cultures are based on the development and maintenance of emotionally intelligent groups and their interactions.

Leaders need to ensure that their vision is shared with their team. Leaders that are able to appraise accurately how their team members feel about certain issues and are empathetic to the concerns they may have will be more effective in getting the support (George, 2000). It is in this way the vision that the leader has becomes a shared vision amongst the group. Leaders with high levels of EI tend to succeed, exercise strong influence over others and achieve organizational goals (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2004). Strategic leaders actively recruit a diverse emotionally intelligent staff, implement policies and systems that reinforce their development and maintenance through teams (Gardenswartz et al., 2010).

**Conclusion**

Today’s workplace has changed. It requires new skills, characteristics and competencies as people work more collaboratively in both face-to-face and virtual teams.

Organizations that embrace diversity, weave the notions of inclusion into their cultures that assist in aligning strategies (Gardenswartz et al., 2010). Ingram and Cangemi (2012) encourage us in that their research has found that emotional intelligence can be learned. It is up to the leader to model and nurture emotional intelligence within work teams today.

Leaders can proactively select team members that are able manage high stress (Prati 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.

Collaboration is linked to a range of skills that are useful for management and employees during change episodes. Salovey and Mayer (1990) found that emotional intelligence is not fixed for life but can be improved with training. (Goleman et al., 2004; Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Employees that are taught emotional management and discussion skills within organizations might be better equipped to deal with and resolve conflict situations in their work (Jordon & Troth, 2002). This is a strong suggestion for training.

The EID model is founded in developing the skills and competencies for individuals to be emotionally intelligent while at the same time manage diversity. This is expanded at a team level by developing the norms and skills that diverse teams need to be emotionally intelligent. Further research needs to continue in how these teams, that are being redefined virtually and geographically, will engage in an emotionally intelligent corporate environment. Corporate cultures need to identify the principles, norms, and values that need to be developed, implemented and communicated in order to become an organization that is emotionally intelligent (Gardenswartz et al., 2010). The challenge will be to create a culture that balances having shared organizational values and individual uniqueness. A culture that fosters the creating and formation of emotionally intelligent networks.

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