



Photo: Leslie-Ann Holbrow

Flexing your "Soft" Muscles

How frequently have you encountered a boss or a colleague that has superb "hard" (technical) skills and weak "soft" (emotional) smarts? We all know individuals (including perhaps on reflection, ourselves) who have risen through the management ranks by virtue of the ability to get things done. These individuals have made these achievements based on their intellectual intelligence or IQ which consists of analytical skills, intellectual skills and technical knowledge. The classic example is the technically sound engineer promoted to the position of leading project teams or departments. This type of individual gets things done. But at what cost? The pre-occupation of getting results discounts the impact on interpersonal relationships. Getting things done at all costs leads to the loss of employees, relationship breakdowns and creates a dysfunctional and toxic workplace.

What is missing in these individuals and organizations is recognizing the need to balance task completion with relationship collaboration. A crucial element of balancing results with relationships is a leader being in tune with their emotions and being intentional about the feelings and how they seek to interact with others.

Fortunately there is hope for leaders in finding a comparable or even higher level of emotional intelligence than intellectual intelligence. The really good news is that EI, with work and commitment, will improve. Once the individual leader or others around him or her realize what's missing, then building the emotional or "soft" muscle can begin.

The concept of Emotional Intelligence or EI is not new. It can in fact, be traced back to the early 1900's with Charles Darwin's work on the importance of emotional expression for survival and adaptation. Over the past 20 years a significant body of hard evidence by authors such as Daniel Goleman, have shown that EI is key if not the key to effective leadership. After all, is leadership not the ability to deal with the world of emotion and feelings?

"Emotional Intelligence is the ability to recognize and positively manage emotions in oneself, in others, and in groups." American Management Association

What are the fundamental elements associated with emotional intelligence? According to Daniel Goleman, there are five essential components. This MonthlyINSIGHT focuses on the three elements associated with knowing and managing yourself first.

The first essential component in understanding our emotional intelligence is learning how you emotionally respond to circumstances. It is essential that you tap into your inner self awareness in order to know how you are feeling in the moment that you face the emotion of conflict, anger or joy. Once you have an awareness and understanding of your feelings, then you are better positioned to find an effective way of dealing with that feeling (self regulation). What could be more powerful than knowing you are upset and then expressing that feeling in a controlled, deliberate and positive manner? Channeling the power of your emotions towards a purpose taps your competency of self motivation. Setting **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goals is one way of using our enthusiasm and inspiration to keep ourselves on track.

Here are a few straightforward questions you can ask yourself. Rate your answers on a Frequently (3), Sometimes (2) or Seldom or never (1) and tally your total score. The maximum score is nine (9).

- You tune into your feelings when confronted with a situation?
- In the heat of the moment you positively manage your emotion.
- You remain positive in times of distress and resist the temptation of letting your inner doubting voice take control of your emotions?

"The ability to understand and positively manage your emotions and the emotions of people and teams." American Management Association

Your call to action:

- What do the results from the three questions above tell you about your emotional intelligence skills?
- Learn more about the importance of your emotional competencies by read books such as Primal Leadership, Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Intelligence,
- Assess your EI by taking an Emotional SMARTS or BarOn EQi diagnostic.

Here's to flexing your soft muscles and raising your awareness and understanding of your feelings so that you can manage your emotions in a positive and effective manner!

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PS. I highly recommend that when utilizing diagnostic instruments such as EI that you retain a professional coach to help you fully comprehend the results. Creating a personalized development plan is an effective way of harvesting the information gained by taking the assessment. I also highly recommend that a retake of the same diagnostic 12 or more months after the initial assessment will help identify what has changed.

Watch for an opportunity to participate in a teleclass on this and other leadership topics coming this fall. Information will be posted in future *MonthlyINSIGHT* and www.theholbrowgroup.com

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