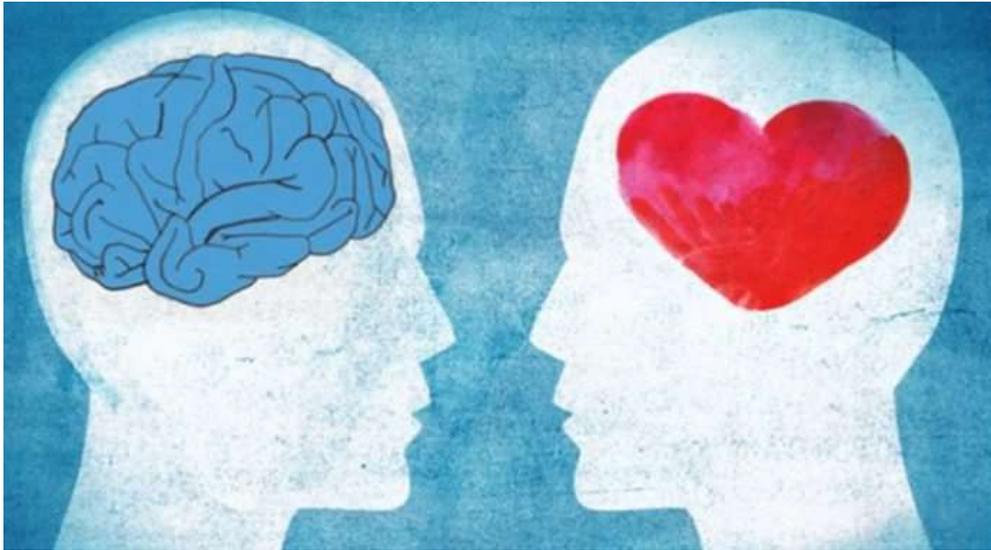


# Emotional Intelligence for Effective Leadership

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## Abstract

As business literature on emotional intelligence increasingly expands, it seemingly remains unknown or misunderstood. The capability to be aware of one's own and others' emotions and the effects of such emotions on social interactions to reduce conflict and build cohesion describes emotional intelligence, or EI. Emotions vary in type, intensity, and phase, thus emotional intelligence helps to navigate through them to manage a given situation. Organizations consist of people, and with people comes emotions, which is to be expected as it would be misleading to assume organizations are emotionless, objective, performance-only environments. In organizational settings, conflict and stress may arise, leading to tension and altering workplace dynamics, thus emotional intelligence may be the missing component in work environments and in leaders for maintaining and sustaining healthy professional relationships. As leaders tend to create the team or organizational culture, their awareness of self and others is essential to model emotional intelligence as it can enhance performance, loyalty, and trust. Four important aspects of emotional intelligence include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management/social skills. Each of these would behoove those in leadership positions to develop for effectively managing and leading people and processes in an emotionally intelligent manner.

Key words: emotional intelligence, leadership, intelligence, social awareness

## Emotional Intelligence for Effective Leadership

### Emotional Quotient (EQ) vs. Intelligence Quotient (IQ)

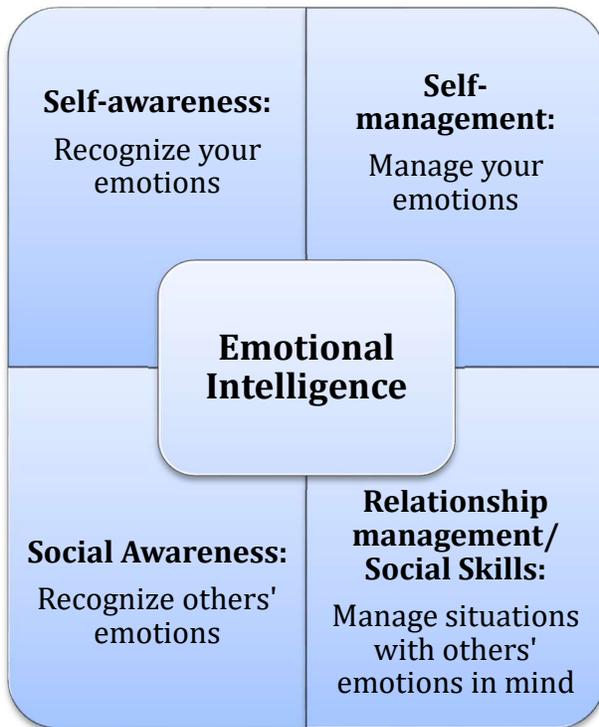
**Intelligence** is defined as the ability to think abstractly based on criteria developed for tests or to apply knowledge to manipulate an environment (Merriam-Webster, 2016 <sup>1</sup> as cited in Drain, 2016 <sup>2</sup>), thus a test to measure human intelligence and generate a score is the intelligent quotient (IQ). IQ tests, a combination of standardized tests, have been praised for assessing levels of cognitive abilities and performance while criticized for subjectivity and lack of or limited cultural variation. In organizational settings, intelligence is sought for hard skills, cognitive ability, and work performance, and reciprocally, the display of or success in these areas are also often credited with intelligence. Although cognitive intelligence is necessary to complete certain tasks, such as understand information, solve problems, and make decisions <sup>3</sup>, it is not the sole form of intelligence. Intelligence is complex and multifaceted as it encompasses various types, one such being emotional intelligence. **Emotional intelligence** (EI or EQ-emotional quotient) is the capacity in individuals to recognize, identify, and manage their and others' emotions as well as to utilize their awareness of the emotional information gathered in a given situation to apply it to decision-making (Drain, 2016 as cited in Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004 <sup>4</sup>; Goleman, 2013 <sup>5</sup>).

Furthermore, EQ, unlike IQ, cannot be summarized with a single number (i.e., someone can have empathy without having self-confidence and vice versa). Emotional intelligence comprises two distinct mental processes, thinking and feeling, working together <sup>6</sup>. There are 19 competencies across four areas of emotional intelligence, as Goleman proposed <sup>5</sup>, including self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management/social skills. **Self-awareness** refers to perceiving one's own skills and knowledge, value, and responsibilities accurately and being confident in the knowledge, values, skills, and abilities he or she has to offer. As the core of emotional intelligence, self-awareness is important not only for one's self-esteem, but also because without an understanding and awareness of one's own behaviors and motivations, it is nearly impossible to be aware of others'. Additionally, self-awareness is the first step in the process of full acceptance and/or change. For example, if a manager or leader is not self-aware, then he or she does not understand his/her own thinking and behaviors or those of others, thus may not fully appreciate the *self*, see the importance of changing for improvement if necessary, or self-express in a healthy manner. The power of self-awareness transfers into the interactions with others in the workplace, work duties, and performance. Lack of self-awareness, therefore, can lead to low or unrealized worth in the company or quality of work performance, which can have a devastating effect when holding leadership or management positions as self-doubt as well as doubt and questions of competence from others arises.

**Self-management**, as part of EI, is synonymous to self-regulation and self-control, the ability to control one's emotions, desires, and behaviors for the purpose of reaching a positive outcome. A positive outcome is not a one-sided positive for a single party but rather an outcome that is conducive to peace for the situation. Certainly, expressing feelings is important, especially when done in a respectful and safe manner, but self-management can be difficult. Finding the balance between expressing one's feelings and minimizing unnecessary tension is self-management. Tension may occur and emotions may fluctuate, hence removing further unnecessary tension must be considered. Self-management is crucial to be both self-aware and able to regulate one's emotions when leading others. As emotions are natural, self-management does not suggest controlling, hiding, or ignoring them, but it does mean to discern the moment or situation and manage the emotions for appropriate expression for the particular situation. Overreaction and under-reaction are possible without emotional intelligence, thus a balance of self-expression and situational context for such expression is the underpinning of self-management.

Self-awareness and self-management fosters social awareness. **Social awareness**, which includes empathy, service orientation, and organizational awareness, refers to the manner in which people handle relationships and the awareness of others' emotions, concerns, and needs <sup>7</sup>. With social awareness, **empathy** is a sense of others' perspectives and feelings and actively showing interest in their concerns. For example, in a workplace that may be undergoing changes to policy or personnel, those in leadership positions must recognize the impact to employees individually and collectively and work to ease tension, discomfort, or fear even if not eliminating these completely. **Service orientation** is a competency of social awareness that involves anticipating, recognizing, and meeting the needs of others. In changing work environments, for example, employees may need to see leaders' competence with handling change, transparency of the reason for such change, assurance of stability during the change, and clarity of direction for after the change. Service orientation is the competence in which those in leadership positions have the foresight for others' needs or concerns and address them adequately, thus relating to **organizational awareness**, the reading of group's emotional exchanges and power dynamics. In any group setting, emotions are exchanged and power structures can complicate further the expression of emotions. Those in leadership are in unique positions to manage group dynamics and hierarchical challenges with utilizing social awareness.

*Figure 1. Four pillars of emotional intelligence.*



The way in which those in leadership handle work relationships can dictate work performance, work commitment, and loyalty. Self-reflection and interaction with others benefits from emotional intelligence as this valuable skillset can influence a productive outcome. **Relationship management**, then, is the adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others for outcomes conducive to a healthy work environment. Competencies of relationship management consist of developing others, inspirational leadership, influence, change catalyst, conflict management, and teamwork and collaboration <sup>8</sup>. Managing conflict while inspiring employees to collaborate

through change can be challenging, but not impossible with self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, the hallmarks of emotional intelligence. If, for example, an organization is experiencing change whether on a micro or macro level, then those in leadership positions must recognize their own internal emotional responses to the change(s) in order to anticipate the emotional currents in other individuals and groups and relate to those feelings in order to mitigate potential additional issues.

Considered a soft skill in business settings, emotional intelligence is influential in employees' work productivity. As leaders, an essential skillset to develop is emotional intelligence to manage situations and relationships within the workplace. Although characteristics such as self-awareness and empathy are understood, some continue to overlook these and other characteristics of emotional intelligence; instead, intelligence and technical capabilities are considered the leading factors of professional success <sup>9</sup>. However, evidence suggests that high emotional intelligence is a stronger predictor of success than technical ability, and in fact, strengthens the hard skills, fostering creative thinking about how best to leverage the technical skills <sup>9</sup>. Emotional intelligence may be considered a soft skill, but it is a skill necessary to produce desirable, effective results while still maintaining relationships with those with or for whom the work is done.

Going further, both hard and soft skills are important to the professional success of an individual, and emphasis on both in workplace settings is needed. If hard and soft skills

are utilized together, then they are complementary to one another rather than oppositional. Being emotionally intelligent complements, and completes, leadership skills. If one is solely technically intelligent with limited or lack of emotional intelligence (i.e., adept at performing tasks but not adept at relating to people), then it creates and perpetuates a disconnected team or entire organization. Emotional intelligence is not manipulation for desirable outcomes in situations or responses from people but rather management, effectively and efficiently, of such situations and relationships, and those in positions of leadership fare better with EI than without it.

## **Benefits of Emotional Intelligence**

There are numerous advantages to developing emotional intelligence. For those in leadership, benefits to the individual include: higher self-confidence, increase in willingness to self-express, respectful communication skills, increase in willingness to advocate on employees' behalf, and greater resilience to the challenges and changes that arise in an organization. Emotionally intelligent leaders, and people in general, tend to be more motivated, more assertive, more dedicated to their organization, and better at application of their skills to workplace tasks<sup>10</sup>. Having a high EQ aids individuals in reducing their stress and anxiety, resolve conflicts, empathize and manage relationships, and overcome challenges in a healthy manner.

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*“Evidence suggests that high emotional intelligence is a stronger predictor of success than technical ability, and in fact, strengthens the hard skills, fostering creative thinking about how best to leverage the technical skills.”*

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As there are individual benefits of emotional intelligence for those in leadership positions, these benefits extend to the organization as well. Having emotionally intelligent people in positions of leadership make for an emotionally intelligent organization overall as leadership typically sets the work culture. The behaviors modeled from the top communicate to others how to interact with one another, with authority figures, and with customers or clients. Additionally, as a benefit of emotional intelligence to individuals is increased willingness to share<sup>11</sup> and listen to others' ideas, this aids an organization in the dynamics and interactions transcendent through hierarchical structures. Willingness to share and be open to others stem from self-awareness and social awareness, meaning that emotionally intelligent leaders recognize that others have useful contributions and are empowered when able to contribute, thus ultimately helping those in leadership lead by remaining open to new ideas. Organizations are comprised of people, and people come with emotions, which are natural and not to be controlled or ignored but rather managed with care and respect. Organizations benefit from individuals' EI as emotionally intelligent people build better relationships both with colleagues and customers or clients. If an

organization, for example, is experiencing changes to processes or personnel, then a leader with emotional intelligence would be aware of his/her as well others' emotions and perspectives prior to, during, and following the changes, anticipate and respond to possible difficulties, and use the emotional information to promote collaboration for an effective outcome.

## Cultivating Emotional Intelligence in Organizations

### A Missing Link in Leadership: Emotional Intelligence

Given hierarchical structures and thus power dynamics in such hierarchies, those in positions of leadership typically have a major influence on the thoughts and motivation of employees. The individuals in leadership have the capacity to stimulate enthusiasm and high productivity in employees. They can lead employees with positive influence, create harmony within groups even in the midst of uncertainty or chaos in a company, and still motivate workers to follow direction. This leadership style for emotional intelligence in the workplace to construct is known as **resonance**, whereas leading with negative influence to destruct rather than construct, is known as dissonance, the opposite to resonance <sup>12</sup>. To cultivate emotional intelligence within organizations, individuals in leadership positions must begin internally with emotions, perspectives, concerns, and needs, then work externally to manage these in others, and be intentional and consistent with utilizing emotional intelligence whether for pleasant or unpleasant organizational occurrences.



**Figure 2.** Resonant and dissonant types of leadership. Adapted from Goleman D. *Emotional intelligence*. 1995; Goleman D. *Working with EI*. 1998. Retrieved from <http://slideplayer.com/slide/3979742/13/images/12/This+is+called+DISSONANCE...jpg>

Those leading with dissonance typically are authoritative, keeping social and emotional distance from employees. This aspect of leadership style may be useful in times of urgency for a task to be completed or for setting respectable boundaries. However, leading with dissonance can bring stress, emotional frustration, burnout, and disengagement in employees and spread throughout an organization. Although **dissonant leaders** intend to remain objective and logical in decision-making, employees tend to view their approach as distant and emotionless <sup>13</sup>. Those leading with resonance tend to be emotionally intelligent, maintaining harmonious and open communication in work relationships and empowering others to utilize their skills all while still maintaining healthy boundaries.

Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management, the four pillars of emotional intelligence, demonstrates the science of EI in that it merges the thinking and feeling mental processes of the brain. If effective leadership requires technical skills as well as social skills, then lack of self-awareness, for example as a competency of emotional intelligence, can also impede the ability to think rationally and apply such technical skills. In a given situation, cases of pleasure or pain, two parts of the brain, the neocortex and the amygdala, compete for control. The cognitive center, or the **neocortex**, consists of the IQ and working memory, whereas the **amygdala** is the emotional center of the brain that hosts feelings <sup>14</sup>. As the part of brain that is concerned with survival, the amygdala responds 100 times faster than the neocortex <sup>15</sup>, and such rapid responsiveness is particularly valuable when encountering a potential threat. However, both real and perceived threats can trigger the amygdala, thus increasing susceptibility to catastrophize events and imagine the worst outcome prior to gathering all of the facts. For example, if employees learn that layoffs are underway, then this information regarding change in the workplace, and possibly in their personal lives, can lead many to fear for their job security, which then impacts their mental state, and thus their productivity.

When the amygdala is triggered, it takes control over the neocortex, limiting clear and rational thinking. The employees in previous scenario have not gathered all of the facts, which would come from the neocortex part of the brain, prior to agonizing over job security and instead, immediately concluded their job security was threatened and they are in danger, which comes from the amygdala, the feeling side of the brain. The cognitive system, the neocortex, is basically suspended when the amygdala is rapidly active. Even given the slightest provocation of real or perceived threat, the ability to apply reason and logic may drop by as much as 75%, leading to thinking in binary frameworks (i.e., win or lose, right or wrong, and yes or no) because the mind may then be able to cope with only two interrelationships or variables such as these, as opposed to 24 interrelationships <sup>16</sup> as it would when in a calm state. Certainly in actual cases of harm, the amygdala responds for

survival protection, which is helpful, but it also responds when there is not an actual threat. In instances of either real or perceived threat, as the brain processes threat as all the same, it can take about 20 minutes to recover from an emotional current <sup>17</sup>. Thus, if employees immediately react with fear to information about pending layoffs, it can take time from their work tasks or affect work performance, decreasing their work productivity, while the amygdala re-stabilizes. In this instance of impending changes within an organization, if employees' feelings are provoked frequently, then it could lead to spending a significant amount of time in this feeling state with minimal ability to leverage their technical capabilities as the fear dominates other mental processes.

### **Advantages of Emotional Intelligence for Individuals in Leadership**

- ✓ Raises self-confidence
- ✓ Increases willingness to self-express
- ✓ Fosters respectful communication skills
- ✓ Increases willingness to advocate on employees' behalf
- ✓ Grows resilience with challenges and changes
- ✓ Reduces stress and anxiety
- ✓ Increases ability to resolve conflict

For those leading teams or organizations that are in a fearful state of the changes, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management will support them in communicating to employees. Through self-management is emotion regulation, or the regulation of emotions. Emotionally intelligent leaders find a

balance of self-expression (i.e., self-management component of EI) and thus can model or teach employees to regulate emotions. Regulating emotions is an ability to manage strong emotions by not acting on them in their raw state or with impulsivity or destructivity <sup>18</sup>. Being able to be in the moment with unpleasant emotions and allow the necessary time and space to decide on how to assuage unpleasant feelings fosters self-confidence, brainstorming multiple solutions to a particular issue, and clearer decision-making when not reacting solely from an emotionally charged state. Utilizing emotional intelligence as someone in leadership, given these outcomes, cultivates a healthy work environment that is conducive to the stability of the organization. Considered a soft skill, emotional intelligence is an essential missing skill in much of the leadership across organizations small and large, and is a main component needed to actually lead people and manage processes to arrive at desired results and while keeping professional relationships intact.

## **Organizational Teams and Emotional Intelligence**

The rise of literature on emotional intelligence has many organizations seeking development in this area. However, some may not fully grasp that emotional intelligence is cultivated with intention and consistency rather than a single attempt or for a single situation. Instead, emotional intelligence is utilized in each instance. Research indicates that emotional intelligence greatly impacts organizational performance. A French pharmaceutical company, Sanofi, focused on the emotional intelligence skills of its sales team that increased annual performance by 12% <sup>19</sup>. Motorola provided training on emotional intelligence for its manufacturing plant staff, which increased the productivity of more than 90% of those trained <sup>20</sup>. There are many reasons that emotional intelligence increases job performance. Organizations have become more interested in provided EI training for its staff, it is also needed, however, for those in leadership positions for all to utilize emotional intelligence and so that an organization is fully prepared to collaborate in times of urgency, uncertainty, or chaos. An important aspect of emotionally intelligent leadership is their ability to inspire discretionary effort, the extent to which employees and team members go beyond that which is requested of them <sup>9</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

With the introduction and expansion of emotional intelligence, as a concept, in business literature and in organizations' trainings, there continues to be a disconnection within organizations between and amongst employees and those in leadership positions, and in their customer and client interactions. For leaders, an inability to manage themselves, a soft skill such as emotional intelligence, can majorly constrain their capacity to utilize the hard skills (i.e., technical competence) they have mastered an inherent intelligence that they possess when interacting with others.

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## Glossary of Terms

**Amygdala** - the emotional center of the brain that hosts feelings; the part of brain concerned with survival and responds 100 times faster than the neocortex.

**Dissonant leadership** – a leadership style with negative influence to destruct rather than construct; the opposite to resonance, or resonant leadership.

**Emotional intelligence** - the capability to be aware of one's own and others' feelings and the effects of such feelings on interactions and use it to reduce conflict and build cohesion.

**Empathy** - a sense of others' perspectives and feelings and actively showing interest in their concerns.

**Intelligence** - the ability to think abstractly based on criteria developed for tests or to apply knowledge to manipulate an environment.

**Neocortex** – the part of the brain that consists of the IQ and working memory.

**Organizational awareness** - the reading of group's emotional exchanges and power dynamics.

**Relationship management** - the adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others. Competencies include developing others, inspirational leadership, influence, change catalyst, conflict management, and teamwork and collaboration.

**Resonant leadership** – a leadership style that works to construct rather than destruct.

Self-awareness - perceiving one's own skills and knowledge, value, and responsibilities accurately and being confident in the knowledge, values, skills, and abilities he or she has to offer.

**Self-management** - the ability to control one's emotions, desires, and behaviors for the purpose of reaching a positive outcome.

**Service orientation** - a competency of social awareness that involves anticipating, recognizing, and meeting the needs of others.

**Social awareness** - the manner in which people handle relationships, and the awareness of others' emotions, concerns, and needs; includes empathy, service orientation, and organizational awareness.