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Emotionally Intelligent Leader(ship): An Efficient Approach

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Abstract

Recent studies have shown the fact that leaders are often faced with several potential issues of professional adaptation, for example, the difficulty of setting up a team, building good interpersonal relationships, the impossibility to interact efficiently (Caruso & Salovey, 2012, p. 20). The premise of our research is the fact that promoting and building emotionally intelligent leader(ship) is essential for cultivating a comfortable mental climate and team work spirit, as well as for building interpersonal relationships. The purpose of this research is twofold: to present the concept of emotional intelligence by highlighting its defining dimensions and applicative nature, respectively to evaluate its level of development at leaders. The ability to interact efficiently, cultivating a healthy environment, stimulating trust and a responsible conduct constitute a real challenge for a leader. To be successful, a leader should constantly replenish his leadership skills through an efficient use of emotional intelligence. In this case, "know thyself!" gains a special signification: that of knowing the others for the benefit of the entire team.

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1. Main text

The literature defines emotional intelligence in relation to four basic components, respectively *self-knowledge*, *self-control*, *social conscience* and *relationship management* (Goleman, Boyatzis, McKee, 2007, pp. 60-61). *Self-knowledge* means being aware of one's own emotions and their impact, one's own strengths and limitations, the accurate appreciation of personal values and skills, the disposition to reflect and meditate upon one's own actions. A leader with a good level of self-knowledge is aware of his own feelings and the way in which these may influence professional performances, and constantly cultivates the habit of reflecting upon his own acts in professional life

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also, instead of reacting impulsively.

Self-control implies emotional self-control, adopting positive emotions to the detriment of negative ones, flexibility in adapting to changing situations and the possibility to overcome obstacles. Preserving optimism and a good mood even under stress enables the building of a climate of trust, comfort and security. For a leader, self-control becomes the major challenge.

One of its most important responsibilities is controlling one's moods, expressing positive emotions fully and managing negative ones appropriately. A leader's emotional state is extremely contagious at the level of the group, a reason for which emotional control should constitute a reference point. A leader dominated by negative emotions, such as frustration, anxiety or panic, will not be able to build a proper work environment, as his mood would reflect upon the group he is leading.

The third component of emotional intelligence is related to *social conscience*. This implies the ability to perceive the others' emotions and harmonize them with his own, so that emotional states may converge. Inside an organization, social conscience becomes the leader's main responsibility, which is that of creating resonance. Empathy – the fundamental skill of social conscience – enables a leader to seize the others' feelings and views, identify the shared values and priorities which may guide the group and generate positive reactions inside the group. A leader with no empathy will send, without realizing it, discordant messages through a behaviour which will generate negative reactions. In such situations, empathy turns into the sine qua non element of efficient social interactions in professional life.

The last but not the least element of emotional intelligence, is represented by *relationship management*. This implies relational management, mobilizing others towards a new direction, team spirit and collaboration. For a leader, this skill is of major importance since building and maintaining relationships is absolutely compulsory for the progress of the organization.

The four elements of emotional intelligence are interconnected and mutually conditioned. The dynamic relationship established between them is theoretically and practically relevant. Self-knowledge facilitates both empathy and self-control which, in their turn, determine a good relationship management. They constitute the basic ingredients of an emotionally intelligent leader(ship). A leader with emotional intelligence integrates all these elements in his own leading style, in order to constantly improve his leading skills. A study conducted on 400 executives revealed the fact that, first of all, they resort to self-knowledge and empathy to monitor their own acts as well as the others' reactions to their actions, accept critiques, take feedback into consideration and are not afraid of potential negative reactions. Unlike these, less efficient leaders are constantly waiting for appreciative feedback, which makes them simply lose the sense of reality, often having less correct views regarding their leading performances. The self-evaluations of the most efficient leaders were very similar to how other people evaluated them (Ashford & Tsui, 1991, pp. 251-280).

Values play an important role in discovering the self. A person's life philosophy represents the system of values which guides and possibly indicates the leading style of that person. What makes the difference is the way in which people relate to their own values, respectively the degree of correspondence between these and their actions. Such differences may reflect different life philosophies, the most frequent ones being the pragmatic, intellectual and humanistic ones. The questionnaire of philosophical orientation measures the relative predominance of each of the three life philosophies, the missing link between values and behaviour. Thus, the central theme of a pragmatic philosophy is the belief that usefulness determines the value of an idea, person or organization; the individualist orientation makes its "followers" adopt a promoting style, to the detriment of the democratic or collegial style. The central theme of an intellectual philosophy evaluates the value of a thing according to a code or set of principles related to reason; those who adopt this perspective focus on cognitive skills, eliminating social skills almost entirely and may adopt a visionary leading style, if the vision describes a rationally founded future. Unlike these, the central theme of a humanistic philosophy is the belief that personal relationships are those which give meaning to life; whereas pragmatic philosophy may lead to "sacrificing the few for the many", the humanistic leader cultivates the skills related to social conscience and relationship management, adopting a democratic or collegial style (Boyatzis, Murphy & Wheeler, 2000, pp. 47-64).

This life philosophy which stimulates human values coincides with the point of view we have expressed in the introduction, namely that promoting and building emotionally intelligent leader(ship) is essential for cultivating a comfortable mental climate and team spirit, and for developing interpersonal relationships.

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