Primal Leadership
Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence
by Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, and Richard E. Boyatzis

Daniel Goleman's international bestseller Emotional Intelligence forever changed our concept of "being smart" by showing how emotional intelligence (EI) — or how we handle ourselves in our personal relationships and other social situations — is a far more important factor in determining life success than is traditional IQ. A short while later, Goleman's next book, Working with Emotional Intelligence, revealed how stellar career performance also depends heavily on EI.

Now, Goleman teams-up with renowned EI researchers Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee to explore the pivotal role emotional intelligence plays in great leadership. By exploring critical links between organizational success and a new concept called "Primal Leadership," the authors argue that a leader's emotions, if channeled correctly, can be highly contagious. When a leader resonates energy and enthusiasm — which is the leader's "primal" role — the authors believe the organization is destined to thrive. But if they fail to do so, the organization will inevitably flounder.

Drawing from decades of first-hand research within world-class organizations, Goleman and his team show that highly respected "Resonant Leaders" — be they entrepreneurs, CEOs, line managers or politicians — excel not just by mastering necessary work-related skills and habits, but by connecting with others using fundamental EI competencies like empathy and self-awareness. And they employ up to six different leadership styles, from visionary coaching to pace-setting, fluidly interchanging them as the situation demands.

Now, at this point, you may be starting to think: "Okay, this is just another book on leadership." Well, yes, that's true but Dan Goleman and his colleagues have an enormously different take on the subject. They look at leadership in very practical terms by focusing squarely on one simple question: What emotional factors make great leaders so effective?

According to Goleman and company, great leaders have a unique ability to create emotional resonance — in their work units and throughout the entire organization. The term "resonance" refers to sounds coming from two or more sources that are synchronous, or in harmony. So in simple terms, resonant leaders create harmony by relying on proven leadership techniques to weave together both the logical and emotional sides of people to create a shared commitment that generates superior results.

The Case for Primal Leadership

The concept of Emotional Intelligence, outlined in Daniel Goleman's seminal 1997
book, Emotional Intelligence: Why It Matters More Than IQ, began a wave of interest in what it means to "be smart." Goleman relied on reams of biological and neurological research to explain how humans develop and can change and improve their "soft skills" such as empathy, flexibility, self-confidence, conflict management and collaboration.

Goleman then linked this information to other groundbreaking research relating to specific life situations, including workplace situations, in order to support his argument that emotional intelligence is far more critical than intellectual horsepower in achieving personal and organizational success.

Dan Goleman's ideas were well received by the business press and others because they were simple and accessible. In explaining how the human brain works, Goleman cleverly manages to avoid the inaccessible language of surgeons and psychiatrists. And so his work was able to reach a wide audience, especially at a time the corporate world was desperately looking for new tools and ideals to achieve ever more aggressive business goals.

Innovative concepts like strategic planning, Total Quality Management, cross-functional work teams, business process re-engineering and ISO standards had been employed throughout the 1980s and 90s, with varying degrees of success, to improve business operations and processes.

And on the human side, some organizations had begun to explore things like competency models, learning maps and performance management to define, develop and assess the characteristics of excellent employees, and to address the gap between ideal and real performance.

Yet until Goleman came along, very little attention was given to other human attributes, including those that were seen to be more connected with workers' innate personality or attitude.

As a consequence, even top performing organizations were still not running as smoothly as they otherwise might have been. Then along came Dan Goleman, whose innovative EI research seemed to mesh nicely with the emerging view that the old leadership style of "command and control," which had taken so many executives to the top of their organizations or professions, was desperately out of date.

**EI Core Competencies**

Primal leadership is rooted in the mastery of something called "emotional core competencies."

In their research, Goleman and his team analyzed emotional competency models from 188 companies; mostly large, international organizations. Their goal was to identify those competencies most often used and displayed by the organizations' outstanding leaders. They then divided these competencies into three universes:
technical skills (such as accounting or business planning), cognitive skills (such as analytical reasoning and "big picture" thinking) and general emotional intelligence.

Recognizing that technical and cognitive skills are obviously very important, the authors argue that, in most situations, emotional intelligence is at least twice as important. They back this assertion up with empirical research that shows companies with leaders who scored highest in particular EI competencies outperformed annual earnings targets by at least 20 per cent.

So what are these EI core competencies? And how do we find, nourish and develop them?

Researchers at Rutgers University’s Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, where Goleman is co-director, have developed detailed descriptors for each of the EI competencies (there are 18 in total). They are categorized along four separate domains — self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

The 18 EI competencies are summarized in the following table:

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<thead>
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<th>PERSONAL COMPETENCE</th>
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<th>SOCIAL COMPETENCE</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-Awareness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Self-Management</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social Awareness</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>EMOTIONAL SELF-AWARENESS: Reading one's own emotions and recognizing their impact using &quot;gut sense&quot; to guide decisions.</td>
<td>EMOTIONAL SELF-CONTROL: Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control.</td>
<td>EMPATHY: Sensing others’ emotions, understanding their perspective and taking</td>
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<td>ACCURATE SELF-ASSESSMENT: Knowing one's strengths and limits.</td>
<td>TRANSPARENCY: Displaying honesty and integrity; trustworthiness.</td>
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<td>SELF-CONFIDENCE: A sound sense of one's own worth and capabilities.</td>
<td>ADAPTABILITY: Flexibility in adapting to changing situations or overcoming obstacles.</td>
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<td>ACHIEVEMENT: The drive to improve performance to meet inner standards of excellence.</td>
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<td>INITIATIVE: Readiness to act and seize opportunities.</td>
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interest in their concerns.

ORGANIZATIONAL AWARENESS: Reading the currents, decision networks, politics at the organizational level.

SERVICE: Recognizing and meeting follower, client or customer needs.

compelling vision.

INFLUENCE: Wielding a range of tactics for persuasion.

DEVELOPING OTHERS: Bolstering others’ abilities through feedback and guidance.

CHANGE CATALYST: Initiating, managing and leading in a new direction.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT: Resolving disagreements.

TEAMWORK & COLLABORATION: Co-operation and team building.

As described above, the EI core competencies are divided along four domains.

Self-Awareness

Of the four domains, superior self-awareness is particularly vital to great leadership. Without self-awareness, leaders cannot understand their emotions and the impact they have on the decisions they make or the effect they have on the people around them. Because the decisions of self-aware people mesh with their values, they usually find their work energizing and whenever people gravitate in their work to where their true pleasure lies — they perform at their absolute best.

Self-aware people also find time to reflect quietly which allows them to think things over rather than react impulsively. They also gather feedback about themselves through 360 reviews and often enlist the support of a coach to help gain additional insights and hone their self-awareness.

Self-Management

Self-management, the second of the four categories, involves controlling one's disruptive or negative impulses. It means displaying honesty and trustworthiness to those with whom one interacts, being adaptable to changing situations, and having a readiness to take action when an opportunity arises.

Displaying an optimistic outlook and possessing internal standards of excellence are also key elements of self-management. If you're not naturally optimistic, try acting as if you are. Experiment with new behaviors. This will feel very unnatural at first, like putting on someone else's clothes, but stick with it. The key to learning new habits lies in practice. Great athletes spend most of their time practicing and relatively little time performing, while most executives spend no time practicing and all of their time performing.
With sufficient practice, self-management becomes automatic, and then your mental energy can be freed up for practicing new modes of leadership.

Social Awareness

With respect to social awareness, the most important component is empathy (i.e. that ability to sense the emotions of others, understand their point of view, and take a genuine interest in their concerns). For primal leaders, having a developed sense of social awareness means possessing a well-honed ability to read the politics and emotional climate of the organization as a whole.

Many good leaders are empathetic when calm, but when stressed they tend to tune people out. To combat this problem, we need to acknowledge this fact if it's true for us and then develop a strategy to deal with stressful situations more effectively. One executive profiled in this book found this strategy helpful in overcoming his tendency to dominate when under stress. Whenever he began to feel upset, he followed these four steps:

1. Step back, listen — don't jump in.
2. Let the other person speak.
3. Get some objectivity. Ask yourself: "Is there a sound reason for my objection or am I jumping to conclusions?"
4. Ask clarifying questions, rather than ones that may sound judgmental or hostile.

This new process allowed him to empathize and listen, gather more information, understand it more clearly and have a rational discussion. He didn't have to agree with the other person, but he now gave them a chance to make their case.

Relationship Management

Finally, relationship management concerns a leader's ability to provide the group with a compelling vision, to influence and persuade, and to provide feedback and guidance. Good relationship management is demonstrated by a leader's capacity to initiate and manage change, resolve disagreements and build effective work teams.

At the heart of relationship management is authenticity. When you are attuned to your own vision and values, when you can steady your own positive emotional range and tune into the emotions of the group — you can find common ground and build rapport.

Goleman and his team stress that even the most outstanding leaders will not exhibit all 18 EI core competencies, and the competencies they master may not even cross over all four domains. Nevertheless, the authors stress that new competencies can be learned, and that individuals can continue to build on them — eventually being able to move effortlessly between the four domains — through concerted practice over time.
Building EI Competencies

Building EI competencies requires a different kind of learning.

While there is clearly a genetic, innate component to our EI, aspiring leaders can take steps throughout their lives to improve their emotional competencies. Furthermore, according to the authors, developing one’s EI does not require one to build a proficiency in all 18 core competencies. Having a solid base of strength in five or six of the 18, ideally spread over the four domains, is sufficient.

The research that Primal Leadership is based upon confirms that the way humans learn leadership skills is quite different from the way they learn technical and analytical problem-solving skills, strategic thinking and product knowledge. The latter subjects involve cognitive processes that engage that logical microchip in our brain, the neo-cortex. These sorts of leadership skills can be learned and applied relatively quickly.

The learning of leadership and emotional skills, on the other hand, takes place in the more primitive limbic region of the brain. This part of the brain learns slowly. Here you usually have to erase deeply ingrained habits and response patterns before you replace them with new, more functional ones. Good leaders therefore acquire their emotional competencies over time.

With this in mind, Goleman and his colleagues prescribe a five-point approach to learning emotional competencies:

1. Identify your Ideal Self – articulate a long-term vision for yourself — how you want to be and what you want to be able to do;

2. Assess Your Real Self – examine how you currently behave, and how others experience dealings with you;

3. Develop a Learning Plan – the Plan should include the competencies you wish to focus on and where you will learn and practice them (e.g. in an interactive training workshop, on the job, within your family, in a community volunteer capacity);

4. Practice your new habits/skills over and over again – Given time you will drive your new competencies into your subconscious and make them your new default behavior.

Some people may feel a bit vulnerable when trying out these new, even strange, behaviors so the authors stress that you when working on your new leadership skills you practice in a safe environment with people you feel comfortable with.

Leadership Styles

Drawing on first-hand research that involved almost 4,000 executives, Goleman,
Boyatzis and McKee have identified six leadership styles that use the 18 EI competencies in different and creative combinations to create resonance within an organization. Each style is useful in a variety of situations, though some are probably less versatile or useful than others. Similarly, each is capable of contributing to organizational resonance, but they all have certain drawbacks that we need to be mindful of.

According to the authors, an individual may exhibit all six leadership styles, but it is the masterful ability to apply the right one at the right time that is the hallmark of Primal Leadership.

Listed here in descending order of impact in creating a climate of resonance, the six key leadership styles of Primal Leadership are:

**Visionary Leadership**

The visionary leader creates resonance by moving people towards shared dreams. According to Goleman and his team, this particular style of leadership tends to be most successful when change clearly demands a new vision or a wholly different direction. Of all the styles, when applied correctly, this is the most powerful.

By seeking to remind employees of the larger purpose of their work, and how it fits into the overall success of the company, or perhaps even how it benefits society at large, the visionary leader lends a grander meaning to what might otherwise be thought of as mundane tasks. Workers then come to see the company's objectives as being aligned with their own personal best interests, resulting in more inspired work.

Powerful as it is, though, the visionary style doesn't work in every situation. It fails, for instance, when a new leader is working with a team of experts who are more experienced than she or he — and who might view a leader trying to expound a grand vision as pompous, or out-of-step with the situation at hand. This kind of misstep can create cynicism, which is a breeding ground for poor performance.

(1) Inspirational leadership, (2) transparency, and (3) empathy are the key EI competencies associated this leadership style.

**Coaching**

The coaching leader creates resonance by connecting what his or her employees want for themselves with broader organizational goals. What does effective coaching look like in a leader? According to the authors, coaches help people identify their personal strengths and weaknesses, and tie them to their personal and career aspirations. They encourage employees to establish long-term development goals, and help them to conceptualize a plan for reaching those goals, while being explicit about where the leader's responsibility lies and what the employee's role will be.
By linking people's work to their long-term goals, good coaches keep people motivated. It should be noted, however, that proper coaching requires an enormous investment of time in one's employees, because only by genuinely getting to know people on a deeper, personal level can leaders begin to forge the development goals and links described above.

Not surprisingly, coaching works best with employees who show initiative and crave personal development. On the other hand, when executed poorly, well-intentioned coaching can easily slide into a form of micromanagement or excessive control of one's employees.

For example, leaders who are pacesetters — focused intently on high performance — often think they are coaching, when actually they're just telling people how to do their jobs. Their single-minded results focus sometimes keeps them from delving into employees' long-term goals and aspirations in a meaningful way, and the employees, in turn, may come to believe that their leader sees them only as tools to get the jobs done, not as people.

The key EI competencies underpinning this style are (1) developing others, (2) emotional awareness, and (3) empathy.

**Affiliative Leadership**

The affiliative leader builds resonance by connecting people to each other. While this style of leadership tends to have less impact on organizational effectiveness than the visionary or coaching styles, the authors still believe it is a good technique to develop. It is most useful, they say, in healing internal rifts in a team, motivating employees during stressful times, or building connections between employees with vastly different work backgrounds and/or cultures.

Joe Torre, a man who's been called the heart and soul of the New York Yankees, is someone who epitomizes the affiliative leadership style. As the manager of that venerable baseball club in 1999, Torre was credited with winning yet another World Series by helping to soothe the psyches of his players as they went through the pressure cooker of the drive to win the championship. In a profession often filled with notorious examples of unruly tempers and insensitivity, Torre stands out as an exception, exemplifying and underscoring the values of teamwork and collaboration.

To be sure, though, Torre is no softy. He's firm with reprimands when needed. But he's also open about his own feelings with those he leads. This openness is a hallmark of the affiliative leadership style. Torre and other affiliative leaders like him, strive to keep people around them happy in order to build and maintain team resonance.

The two key EI competencies in this case are (1) empathy and (2) developing relationships. Particularly when combined with the visionary approach, the authors believe these two styles can be a very potent combination.
Democratic Leadership

The democratic leader values people's input and builds commitment through participation. This leadership style's positive impact tends to be strongest when consensus is needed to move forward, or when employee input is vital to success. By demonstrating how much worker input is valued, the leader gains employee commitment.

According to the authors, the democratic leadership style works best when the leader has a good general idea about what direction to take, but wants help on the specifics from able employees.

This seems to have been the case, for example, with Louis Gerstner Jr., who became chairman of IBM in 1993 when the company was teetering on the brink of death. As an outsider to the computer industry, Gerstner relied heavily on democratic leadership techniques by turning to seasoned colleagues for advice.

In the end, though he had to cut $9 billion a year in expenses and lay off thousands of employees, Gerstner led a sensationnally successful turnaround and charted a new strategic course for his company. Looking back, Gerstner mused that many of his day-to-day decisions had been based on "getting some good advice from my colleagues who knew a heck of a lot more about IBM and this industry than I would ever know."

While the strengths of a consultative and democratic leadership approach are obvious, the authors do point out that there's a potential downside to this style — the possible appearance of weakness or indecision, particularly in times of crisis where swift action is required. But on balance, the authors see great benefits in relying on the advice of more experienced colleagues when you are unsure how to proceed.

The key EI competencies at play here are (1) listening and (2) collaboration.

Pace-setting Leadership

The pace-setting leader is known for his or her ability to articulate challenging and exciting goals, and this can sometimes build organizational resonance. But, more often than not this style of leadership has a negative impact on organizations because of poor execution.

The pace-setting leadership style is most appropriate for getting high quality results from a motivated and competent team, but it can easily backfire when skills and motivation are lacking, so it is best applied in small doses. This leadership style is very common amongst leaders who are themselves obsessed with doing things better and faster, and who believe strongly in measuring performance through hard indicators and other data.

For the pace-setting leader, (1) drive and (2) initiative are the two most important
EI competencies at play.

Command and Control Leadership

An old school command and control leader can soothe fear by giving clear direction in an emergency. But outside of organizational crises, the authors believe that this style is not effective except with problem employees.

Perhaps more to the point, the authors note that "a hard-hitting but heartless" manager can often achieve initial results but just as often fail to sustain them as employee goodwill vanishes. What often emerges in the workforce instead, is a pernicious combination of false bravado, thoughtless compliance and open resentment. The bottom line — be very careful when using this particular leadership style.

For the command and control leader, (1) Influence, (2) achievement and (3) initiative are the key EI competencies to master. But, be sure to also mix in healthy doses of (4) self-awareness and (5) empathy to help yourself from going astray when using this leadership style.

Developing the requisite EI competencies and knowing which leadership style to apply in a given situation is the cornerstone of Primal Leadership. "But," say the authors, "always remember that any strength, when overused, can easily become a weakness. So think of a flock of geese in flight: the lead goose always knows when it is time to drop back and let someone else lead." And by practicing your EI competencies on a regular basis and listening to those around you in a truly meaningful way, so will you.

Conclusion

The exciting new ideas articulated by Dan Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee in Primal Leadership represent enormous opportunities for organizations and for those who seek to lead them. And the energy and care with which the authors have validated their research data through work with hundreds of leading organizations over the past 15 years suggests this is a business trend "with legs," and not just a "fad du jour."

Embarking on EI development, for oneself and one's organization, can rekindle enthusiasm as new ideas are embraced and new techniques are mastered. Such rekindling can ignite great passion and drive.

But before we get too passionate about changing our organizations overnight, in their parting words, Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee warn us not to bite off more than we can chew. "Don't be afraid to break the rules," they say, "but don't scare people away either." Taking a balanced, measured approach is the real ticket to creating lasting organizational resonance.

So with that in mind, keep practicing and developing your core EI competencies
and, before you know it, you'll be well on your way to becoming the kind of visionary leader that even you would want to follow.