

HARNESSING THE POWER OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP



by Sonia Singh | SS International LLC

Sam has the training, the education, and experience to perform her job well as a manager. She's a problem solver, an expert in running operations, and is well liked by her staff and peers. She is generally a positive, warm, understanding person that people are comfortable talking to. However, she still struggles to influence those around her. She begins to wonder if she's cut out to be a manager after all.

Sam intuitively knows the importance of emotional intelligence (EI), but is missing some critical elements. Emotional intelligence is one of the best predictors of personal and professional excellence. EI accounts for 58 percent of performance in all types of jobs. Your emotional intelligence is the foundation of many critical skills including the way you communicate, resolve conflict, make decisions, and engage with others.

“*While cognitive intelligence is important, it only serves as a baseline.*”

It may get you a seat at the table, but it's your EI that will continue opening doors for you and help you

move through conflict smoothly.

High emotional intelligence can help an individual manage stress and overcome problems easily. Our level of EI directly impacts the quality of our lives through how it influences our behavior and relationships with others. According to a survey by TalentSmart, 90 percent of top performers were high in emotional intelligence.

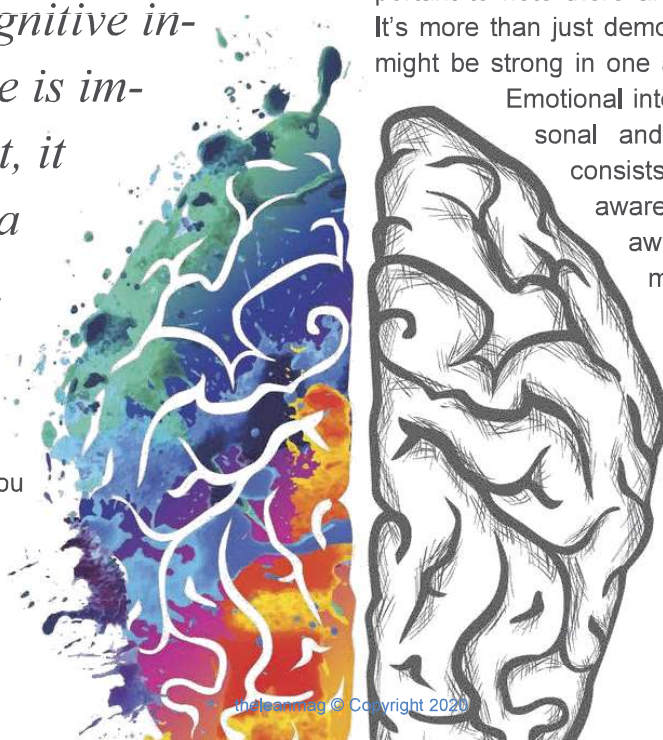
“*There is a close relationship between success and level of EI.*”

Although many business leaders are now discovering the importance of emotional intelligence, it's important to note there are many dimensions involved. It's more than just demonstrating empathy. Someone might be strong in one area and struggle in another.

Emotional intelligence is comprised of personal and social competence, which consists of four domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management.

Self-Awareness is the ability to recognize your emotions and their impact on your performance and relationships. It's the first step to building EI.

(continues next page)



By recognizing what you're experiencing in the moment and why, you can take charge of how you want to express yourself.

While most people can easily recognize their macro emotions (i.e., good, bad, positive, negative, happy, angry, etc.), true power stems from understanding your micro-emotions.

Underneath anger, for example, there might be a feeling of resentment, frustration, or hurt. By pinpointing the micro-emotion, it becomes easier to process and move through it.

To create self-awareness, spend time daily practicing self-reflection and ask yourself high quality questions. This will help you connect with your emotions, understand how others may perceive you, and help you make informed decisions.

The question to ask is, "*What am I experiencing right now and why?*"

Self-Regulation is the ability to shift your emotions as needed, and not allow them to control your behavior. Think about how well someone stays calm under pressure. It's the ability to adapt to any given situation. It's important to note that self-regulation is not the same as being unemotional.

“*Emotions can be powerful motivators or disruptive detractors.*”

Self-regulation is the ability to process your emotions without letting them dictate your behavior. For example, a manager may be worried about the uncertainty of the organization but does not have to transfer that anxiety to his staff. Leaders who excel in this domain are not easily thrown off by a setback. They are able to take control of a challenging situation with confidence and move forward. At the same time, someone can take their frustration with a stagnate situation and use it to drive positive change.

To build competence in this domain, practice observing your micro-emotions without judgement. Create time and space to understand the emotion and how you want to respond.

The question to ask is, "*How can I process this emotion and move forward?*"

Social-Awareness is your ability to empathize and sense others' emotions in the moment. A leader with strong social-awareness is able to read a room and adjust their approach accordingly. Because they're politically savvy, they can easily navigate through an organization. They take interest in the people around them. Socially-aware leaders take the time to understand people's needs, concerns, and emotions. They tend to ask great questions to create insights in others. They show genuine interest in understanding people. Because of this, often they excel in meeting the needs of their clients or stakeholders.



One of the best ways to develop social-awareness is by listening.

Giving someone your full attention and being completely immersed in the present moment not only reassures other of your sincerity, but it helps you understand them better. One of the best gifts we can give someone is the gift of our time and genuine interest.

The question to ask is, "*What are others experiencing around me and why?*"

Relationship Management refers to the ability to collaborate, communicate effectively, resolve conflict, and maintain strong relationships.



A leader who shows strength in this domain can easily influence behavior of others.

(continues next page)



They are able to coach and mentor others. They invest their time in developing people. They use their strong communication and coordination skills to facilitate dialogue and engage their clients, staff, and other stakeholders.

To build this competency, focus on being more present. Minimize distractions, ask high quality questions, and find common values to share. By understanding their perspective, you can use the language of your audience to build trust and help them move through a challenge.

The question to ask is, *"How can I take my emotional experience and that of others to manage our interactions successfully?"*

While Sam is great at most of these capabilities, she struggles to establish and maintain healthy boundaries. Giving critical feedback is not her strength and she often avoids conflict. Because of this, issues remain under the surface and continue to fester. One team member could derail the progress of the entire team if this isn't addressed. In fact, we see this happen often; because one employee's disruptive behavior is allowed to continue, good employees become resentful or worse, leave the organization all together. Interestingly, other leaders may be excellent at giving direct feedback, holding people accountable, and cutting through team conflict. But they might lack in their ability to show empathy and connect with others, which can make inspiring others a challenge.

Emotional intelligence is not binary. The truth is that people have different levels of EI. One leader may be strong in man-

aging their own emotions, but struggle with understanding others.

Another may be strong in connecting and building trust with others, but struggles to inspire others to excellence.

“ *It's about creating balance and recognizing where you might need to shift your attention.* ”

The good news is the competencies within the four domains of emotional intelligence can be developed over time with practice. A great place to start is with a self-assessment, a 360-assessment, or working with a coach to help you identify your strengths and gaps.

References:

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Dr. Travis Bradbury ■

