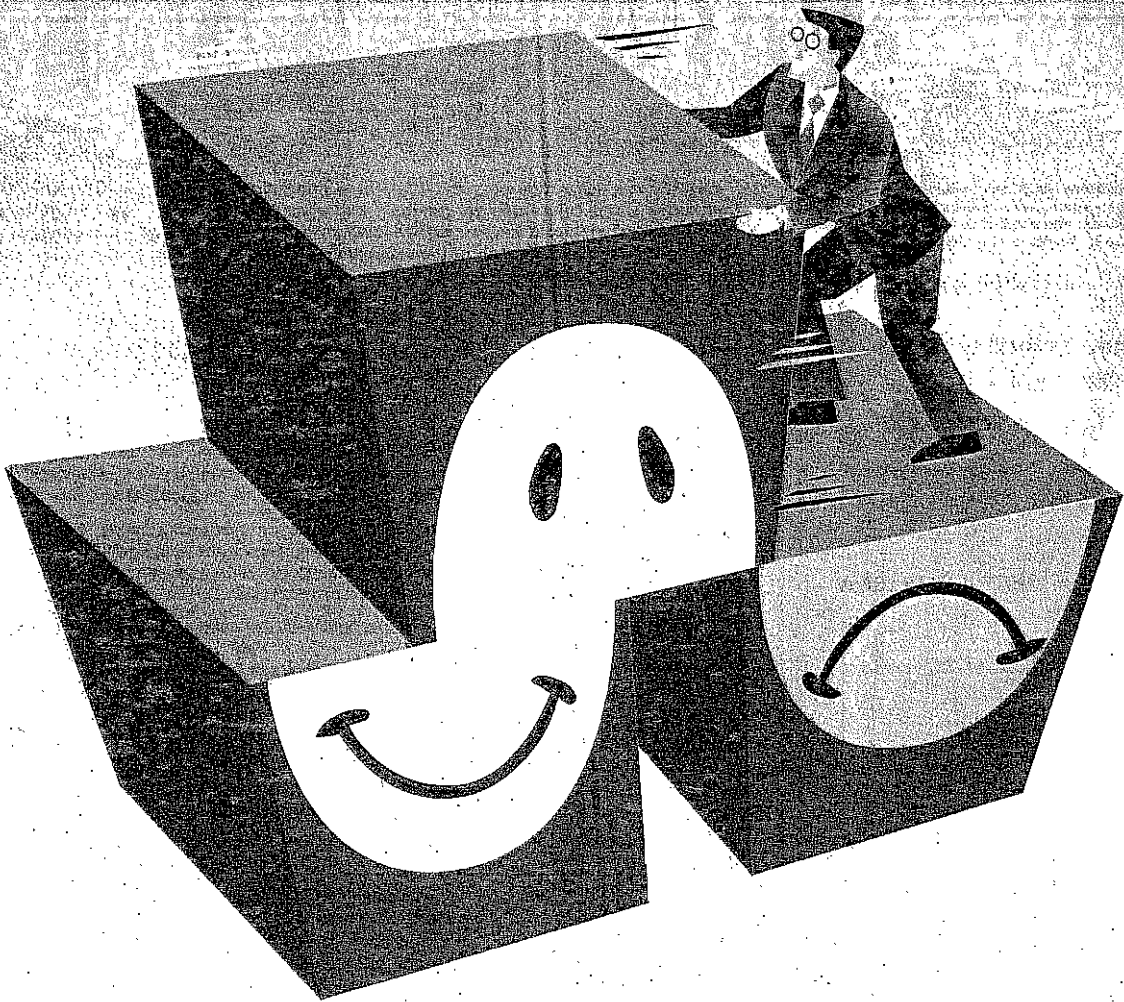


**EXECUTIVE INSIGHTS** *emotional intelligence*



# Juggling emotions

Good leaders need more than experience, skills and contacts – they must be able to understand people's feelings, writes *Jeffrey Markley*

**WHEN TRYING TO** identify what makes someone a great leader, one can look into everything from their upbringing and education to their work experience and contacts. In most cases, what really makes the difference gets overlooked. There is no mention of it in standard resumés and it's usually skirted over in personal profiles.

However, closer investigation often reveals that what sets certain individuals apart is their emotional intelligence, or EI.

Systems, processes, business models and corporate strategies all come and go, but the people who consistently stand out from the crowd are those who can build strong personal relationships and realise that it is ultimately counterproductive to regard the workplace as an emotion-free zone. After all, if a leader wants to influence, motivate, inspire or instigate change, it can only be done by understanding and appealing to rational and emotional elements.

The concept of EI really came to prominence with the publication in 1995 of Daniel Goleman's book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Now translated into 17 languages and with a reported 33 million copies sold, it put forward the theory that people have differing emotional abilities, just as they have different IQs. However, by acknowledging and developing these various emotional attributes, it is possible to become more effective in any work environment, even to the extent of creating success from failure or harmony from dysfunction.

There are seven skills that form an effective emotional intelligence model. They are:

#### SELF-AWARENESS

People considered to have a high degree of emotional self-awareness are generally more in tune with their own moods and feelings. They know what is most likely to make them feel distressed, content, or anything in between, and understand how those feelings will affect their thought processes, decisions, behaviour and overall performance. In addition, they recognise how their own shifts in mood can have a direct impact on fellow team members or other colleagues and contacts.

#### EXPRESSION

However, simply being in tune with one's emotions is not enough. It is also important to express these emotions appropriately. In many organisations, this is frowned upon, and leaders in particular are expected to disguise or dissimulate their true feelings. Of course, there is absolutely no need to discuss every concern, fear or aspiration with your team. However, if you're having a bad day or wrestling with a major decision, there is nothing wrong with mentioning how you feel. When dealing with others, remember too that your body

## WEEK 1 | The seven facets of EI

language and tone of voice are already likely to be showing how you feel. Therefore, if you happen to mention that something is going well or badly, it won't cause any great surprise. Being more open may win extra support or sympathy.

#### AWARENESS OF OTHERS

The skill that directly complements expression is being able to read the non-verbal emotional cues of other people. Thus, a leader will know purely by observation that an employee is annoyed, frustrated, satisfied or upbeat. They will also detect when someone is getting bored with a specific role or distracted by

running over them endlessly in your head. If a deadline is missed or an account lost, the best approach is to deal with the issue just once and then move on with a positive outlook. Anything else is a sign of poor self-management in a leader and does nothing to help other members of the team.

#### MANAGEMENT OF OTHERS

If employees feel optimistic and positive about their work environment and what they can accomplish, much more gets done. A leader at any level can create this kind of mood by communicating and interacting in a way that motivates and engages others. In part, that involves

## WORDS of inspiration

"The emotions aren't always immediately subject to reason, but they are always immediately subject to action"

WILLIAM JAMES

AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER AND PSYCHOLOGIST, 1842-1910

external or family concerns. This degree of alertness and sensitivity makes it easier to address a problem or anticipate difficulties. It also helps in matters of timing so that, for example, if someone is having a tough day, the boss can give a word of thanks, rather than a misplaced reprimand.

#### REASONING AND DECISION MAKING

What you know about yourself and others is known as emotional insight, and it is used when thinking through an issue or reaching decisions. It prevents us from being too impulsive, and prompts us to take account of personal feelings and the concerns of others before concluding anything or opting for a certain course of action. In business, for example, it is often best not to hire someone strictly based on their CV and performance in interviews. Instead, it helps to ask various interviewers how they "felt" about the candidate, and to balance these emotional factors with the more rational ones.

#### SELF-MANAGEMENT

If you can regulate your own emotions, it becomes much easier to put behind you events that have caused stress, frustration or worry. Generally, there is no benefit to be gained from brooding on issues or

introducing new perspectives and getting others to think differently, especially if there are any persistent problems encountered in the workplace.

#### CONTROL

At some point or other, everyone is likely to be pushed to the edge by certain circumstances at work. However, the person with a high level of EI can spot the warning signs or likely triggers, and will have the self-discipline not to fly off the handle. For example, they may have trained themselves to concentrate on one difficult task when they sense they are getting upset, or have realised that the best thing is simply to take a short break from the office.

Whatever the technique, it will be one that helps to avoid unnecessary conflict and contributes overall to achieving a positive outcome in a challenging situation.

Some people appear to be naturally gifted in matters of emotional intelligence. Others may see its importance, but are not applying the skills effectively in the workplace. However, the latter group now has every chance to put the seven facets of emotional intelligence into practice and thus improve their decision making, relationships, behaviour and general performance.

## Alternative insight

#### NOT WHAT, BUT HOW

Professor Albert Mehrabian, who began his career of teaching and research at the University of California, Los Angeles, was a pioneer in the understanding of interpersonal communication in the 1960s. He established the theory that in a normal conversation, 7 per cent of the meaning is conveyed in the words that are spoken, 38 per cent is described as being paralinguistic i.e. in the way the words are used, and 55 per cent of the meaning is from facial expression. When related to emotional intelligence, this theory is particularly useful in explaining the importance of meaning, as distinct from words. Other people don't just pay attention to our words, but also to the tone of voice, level of energy, eye contact and physical posture. Remember, it's not always what you say that counts, it's how you say it.

#### USING EI TO LEAD

The emotionally intelligent leader consistently demonstrates three key attributes – awareness, adaptability and articulation. The first (awareness) relates to mood, needs, desires and aspirations, and knowing what's important to you and others. The second (adaptability) allows for changing emotions, behaviour and actions. To be effective, though, it depends on having a genuine awareness of the people around you. The third (articulation) makes it possible to deliver a message relevant to a particular audience and connect with them on a rational and emotional level.

#### TAKE THE TEST

Over the next several weeks, Executive Insights will expand on the seven skills that define emotional intelligence to help you achieve more at work and in other areas of your life.

One important facet of emotional intelligence is that it can be improved through practice. A great way to start is by completing a simple questionnaire. If you would like to check your own EI score, go to [www.classifiedpost.com/executiveinsights](http://www.classifiedpost.com/executiveinsights) and follow the instructions.



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