

# Emotionally intelligent leadership



Achieving excellence as a leader is all about that rare combination of hard logic coupled with excellent soft skills, and the ability to balance these appropriately in any situation to achieve high performance. According to the Centre for Creative Leadership, when 'star' performing leaders were compared with average ones, nearly 90 per cent of the difference was attributable to emotional intelligence (EI) factors rather than cognitive abilities.

Although the concept of EI has been around since the 1920s, it was Daniel Goleman who shone a spotlight on it in his book *Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. In his book, Goleman identifies five crucial skills of EI, which present a completely different definition of what it means to be smart. These are: self-awareness, managing emotions, harnessing emotions productively, reading emotions (empathy) and handling relationships. In work he carried out at the EI Research Centre, Goleman identified that the ingredients of excellent performance was 70 per cent EI and 30 per cent IQ. Covey supports this in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*: "Research shows convincingly that EI is more important than IQ in almost every role and many times more important in leadership roles."

Companies that consistently beat the market excel in both dimensions of capability and capacity. However, most organisations excel in capability (process, technical skill, systems), but are weak in terms of capacity (purpose, leadership, cultures, ideas, energy). EI sits firmly in the capacity camp and is often overlooked in favour of building capability through skills development.

In fact, research suggests that EI is twice as important as technical skills and IQ in maintaining excellent performance and can be the defining factor of great leaders. This is why EI is still relevant after 17 years - at a time when it's all about 'more for less' with training budgets cut and time at a premium - developing EI is crucial and pays dividends in terms of ROI. Organisations are increasingly seeking to improve leadership performance and shape leadership style by developing EI.

Being emotionally intelligent is about managing behaviour to become personally effective (self awareness) and interpersonally effective (awareness/empathy with others). When measuring EI, we look at the roots underpinning behaviour and address underlying attitudes and habits. This leads to insight into how emotions and

behaviours impact performance, effectiveness, leadership and relationships with others at work and in life. Having an awareness of how we respond to a certain situation means we can change our thinking, emotional state, behaviour and attitudes.

Global pharmaceutical, Sanofi, has developed a programme for emerging leaders, which is founded in EI. EI profiling was used to ensure the programme cohort contained individuals with the capacity to become strong leaders, and became a fundamental thread throughout the programme as an indicator of high performance. Building and accelerating EI resulted in heightened self-awareness and an ability to create high-performing teams. At the end of the programme, shifts in key EI criteria included: an increase in self awareness of 50 per cent; 60 per cent saw a positive shift in 'awareness of others' score; and 60 per cent experienced an improvement in emotional resilience. Deborah Holmes, Head of People Development at Sanofi commented: "Participants demonstrated substantial shifts in leadership capacity, EI and in the scope and scale of their roles and responsibilities. They found that the EI assessment enabled them to develop a greater understanding of themselves and others, empowering them to approach commercial challenges differently."

Relationships are the fundamental unit of value creation in an organisation: it's not about people, it's the relationships between them that matters. Developing emotionally intelligent leaders allows them build a combination of skills, attitude and habits to better manage business relationships. This is achieved through an individual's ability to recognise and regulate emotions in themselves and others, and to use this understanding to manage thinking and behaviours. When emotional and relational capacity is developed, leaders build a common ground and trust within their teams because effective leaders have a high belief in others and get the best out of people through forming close bonds. Ultimately this means leaders are better able to succeed in an increasingly high-pressure environment.

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