

THE **IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP** WITH **EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Maya Angelou, an American author and poet, once said this, “I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

Lilian Wu takes a closer look at how this ties in with the new wave of leadership with Emotional Intelligence (EI) or Emotional Quotient (EQ).



If feeling is what is best remembered, then the same can be said of leadership, especially in today's competitive global environment. Leadership has been commonly defined as a process where a person influences a group of people or organisation to accomplish a common goal. To qualify as a good leader, you need to have the necessary expertise and technical skills to lead the organisation. However, to be a truly great leader, it takes exceptional skills to communicate and manage people effectively. In other words, you need EI or EQ.

What Leaders Need To Succeed

In a research done by the Carnegie Institute of Technology, it was found that 85 percent of our financial success is due to 'human engineering' skills (personality and ability to communicate, negotiate and lead) while only 15 percent is based on technical skills. The case of Johnson & Johnson further proves the link between a company's financial performance and leadership that possesses EQ — the ability to perceive, assess and manage one's emotions and those of others. In a global study¹ that was conducted on 358 managers across the Johnson & Johnson Consumer & Personal Care Group (JJC&PC Group), results show that the best performing managers were also the ones who were more "emotionally competent". Randstad's World of Work Report 2012/2013, which canvassed opinions from 1,315 people (including 625 leaders) in Singapore, also showed a similar trend: analytical and technical skills are rated as far less important than leadership and other skills when maintaining competitiveness in the next five years.

When Dr Mike Gosling, Emotional Leader Coach, did a doctoral thesis² on the emotional intelligence of managers in Singapore in 2006, he pointed out that "managers who want to be emotionally intelligent leaders have a responsibility to exercise emotional leadership in their interactions with others, assisting them in gaining emotional knowledge and nurturing emotionally intelligent behaviour."

Martin Tan, Co-founder and Ex-

ecutive Director of Halogen Foundation Singapore, clearly illustrates this point when he had to negotiate the differences that had arisen among his staff at a restaurant he co-owned with his wife at Plaza Singapura.

"At Tea Cosy, I often have issues between the kitchen staff and the service staff. One wants the food to be served hot, the other wants to ensure that the customer enjoys his or her appetiser without feeling rushed to finish it because the main course is served." Mr Tan shared.

"There was once where anger flared. I sat both parties down individually first to understand their perspectives and subsequently getting both to sit down together to work through the differences. Having EQ allowed me to manage the emotions of both parties." he added. "It allowed me to have a conversation about the pain points for both of them and find common ground so that they continue to be good friends and colleagues. It's always satisfying to see issues being resolved amicably where both parties are willing to work through their differences."

Why EI Works

"Effective leaders use Emotional Intelligence in their leadership to achieve buy-in, trust and commitment," Dr Granville D'Souza, Regional Director of 6 Seconds SEA Pte Ltd and author of two books, *EQ from Inside Out* and an upcoming title *The EQ Leader*, explained.

"If this is done effectively, they can better marshal the inner resources to influence, communicate and convince others. Quite often, we learn tactical skills [and] strategies that are cognitive in nature. These can never be understated. However, when these are executed without sensitivity to the other person's feelings and devoid of empathy, it can come across as transactional," he observed.

Dr D'Souza then went on to elaborate, "I have witnessed leaders who are very sharp and they are quick to whip out their thoughts, ideas and strategies to solve problems but they do this without considering people's feelings. This happens very often when sales departments clash with operations. Sales oversells and

operations cannot meet such promises to the customers. Sales leaders then rebuke operations for incompetence and indifference."

When this happens, the two teams will cease to see themselves as part of the organisation with a common goal. Resentment will brew and the company often ends up paying the price in terms of poor

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Professor Sattar Bawany
Master Executive Coach
Executive Development Associates

sales performance, wasted time and opportunities, as well as loss of customers. The company’s reputation takes a hit and leaders who persist in their old ways may find themselves becoming a liability to the companies they serve.

Low EQ & No Action

Dr Karol Wasylyshyn, Adjunct Professor of Clinical Psychology at Institute for Graduate Clinical Psychology at Widener University and author of *Behind the Executive Door: Unexpected Lessons in Managing your Boss and Career*, shared a story of how one of her clients refused to accept the 360-degree report that she had compiled based on feedback from his company.

“He was very self-focused and very narcissistic. The only thing he really cared about was his relationships with the people at the top and looking good,” described Dr Wasylyshyn.

After her client confronted his leadership team about the report in a meeting, he was later told behind closed doors that if he did not make

an effort to change his behaviour, his retirement would be accelerated as he was close to retiring then.

“And he would not hear of it, his defences were so strong and that was what happened,” she commented. “They accelerated his retirement and they put someone else in the job.”

“It starts with the intention. Leaders have to decide that they need to evolve in that way,” Dr Wasylyshyn concluded.

Mr Tan shares the same view, “The will to have EQ has to do with whether we care enough about our staff or colleagues. If a leader does not care about people or their well-being, they typically lack the ingredient to have high EQ.”

Having low EQ does not mean things cannot get better. As long as there is the intention and motivation to improve, a company can still be taken to new heights even when things seem bleak. Chade-Meng Tan, best-selling author of *Search Inside Yourself*, shared the story³ of Patagonia, a company that makes outdoor clothing and gear. Casey

Sheahan, the CEO, had wanted to lay off people during an economic downturn as he thought that was the only solution available to him. His wife, Tara, then asked him, “Are you making this decision out of fear or out of love?”

When Casey realised that he was acting due to fear, he decided not to lay off people and this decision eventually paid off when the company achieved record sales the year after. Imagine what it would have been like had Casey gone through with the layoffs. He would have to spend extra time and money to hire new people and train them properly.

“Even when it is ‘obvious’ that you have to fire people, if you see things in an emotionally intelligent way, it turns out that it may not be the only solution. There may be other creative solutions that enable better outcomes,” said Chade-Meng.

What EI is Not

While being considerate of other people’s feelings is a key trait of being emotionally intelligent, Dr Granville stressed that EI is not about being ‘nice’. “Leaders should demonstrate emotional competence and lead with ‘Love’ which refers to a strong affiliation and coaching leadership style with care and humility, instead of using ‘Fear’ which refers to a coercive leadership style,” said Professor Sattar Bawany, Master Executive Coach of Executive Development Associates. “Flexible leadership, however, involves being able to adapt your leadership style according to the situation and the state of the team.”

It is clear that EI is the critical currency that sets a leader apart from his peers and propels an organisation to success. Of course, there are exceptions where leaders who lack EQ are tolerated because they bring in the results. But the minute a major crisis hits the company, when people’s emotions are at their most turbulent, it is the wise leader who will seek to improve their EQ to keep up with their company’s changing needs with a softer touch and more creative solutions. ■

1. Cavallo, K. & Brienza, D. (2001). Emotional competence and leadership excellence at Johnson & Johnson: The emotional intelligence and leadership study.
2. Gosling, M (2006). The Emotional Intelligence of Managers in Singapore
3. <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article.cfm?articleid=2992>