

SOURCE LINES

Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace: THE SOCIAL COMPETENCIES: HOW WE HANDLE RELATIONSHIPS

This is the third in a series of 4 newsletters to take a look at the work of Daniel Goleman, the author of 2 recent books: Emotional Intelligence¹ and Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace². We appreciate any thoughts and comments readers have about this series. Please contact us at our e-mail address reachus@sourceline.net and visit our Web Site at www.sourceline.net.

The first two newsletters in this series began the task of: (1) identifying the origins of the principles of Emotional Intelligence, (2) describing the basic ideas contained in the concept Emotional Intelligence, and (3) reporting the Evidenced-Based-Business-Case for why companies decide to make ongoing investments to improve the EI skills of their employees at all levels of the organization.

For example, researchers at Rutgers University at the *Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations* have been able to demonstrate “proof” that training in emotional intelligence skills have resulted in: a 50% reduction in lost-time accidents; 17% increase in productivity; drops in formal grievances; and reduced executive turnover from 50% to 6% over 2 years. Mechanics identified as having EI can be 12 times more productive than those at the bottom and 85% more productive than an average performer. Sales agents selected on the basis of certain emotional competencies outsold sales people selected using a company’s old selection procedure by \$91,370 and had a 63% lower turnover rate.²

But First Some Ancient History

Long ago in the ancient Near East there lived a man called Eratosthenes. Eratosthenes was the Director of the famous library in Alexandria. He was also an astronomer, historian, geographer, philosopher, poet, theatre critic, and mathematician.¹

One day Eratosthenes was reading through the library’s scrolls when he learned that at about noon on June 21 in the small town of Syrene, 800 kilometers south of Alexandria, sticks and poles in the ground and buildings had no shadows. Also, you could see the sun’s reflection in the bottom of the deep well in town at the same date & hour.

Now most of us would probably yawn and roll our scrolls to another story. But Eratosthenes was a curious person. He actually checked the shadows of the sticks and poles and buildings in Alexandria at noon on June 21 and found out that there were shadows. He even measured the angles of the shadows. Then he hired someone to walk from Alexandria to Syrene to measure the distance by counting the number of paces. With all that information he used geometry to calculate that the Earth was a globe about 40,000 kilometers round. Despite his “primitive” means of measuring he was off by a relatively small distance. Moreover, Earth was round. Earth was not flat. You could not sail off the edge of the Earth. Many believed Eratosthenes but boats were too small to head out across oceans. Amazingly, in the late 15th Century as the great Age of Exploration launched there were still many who believed that the Earth was flat and ar-

gued that if you sailed too far you could fall off the edge. It took about 1,800 years to “prove” that Eratosthenes was right. Still, to this day not everyone believes the Earth is round.

I thought about Eratosthenes the other day when flipping through my morning scroll. “**Emotional smarts rev up profit: Boss’s style counts for up to 30% of bottom line, says psychologist Daniel Goleman**” read a recent headline of an article in The Globe and Mail announcing the author’s Toronto visit to speak at the annual conference of Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario.⁷ Reportedly, Goleman’s speech provided data from a recent article of his in the Harvard Business Review that looks at ways that a boss’s leadership style ties to the financial indicators of a company. It was more “proof” put forward to make the **Business Case** for the need for more Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace. When I first looked at the article I wondered about what takes so long for such apparently excellent ideas to take hold and become a real part of the day to day landscape. A couple of weeks later Barbara Moses wrote: “We live in a quick-fix society. We like to think that a career or life crisis can be approached as we would a fashion dilemma—if we only had the right accessory, or the right career or job, our lives would once again be filled with passion and joy. Sadly, there is no simple solution.”⁸ I think we could substitute “business plan” into Barbara’s thought and be accurate. Despite what the Omega 8 or Max-Beta 9 Methods promise, successful organizations require experience and understanding and confidence and time and effort and persistence and solid partnerships. Short-form = Emotional Intelligence.

In the previous newsletter we reviewed the PERSONAL COMPETENCIES of *Self-awareness, Self-Regulation & Motivation*. These competencies determine how we manage ourselves - our feelings and thoughts and behaviour. The SOCIAL COMPETENCIES of *Empathy and Social Skills* determine our ability to handle relationships - to understand, appreciate, cooperate and influence others in ways good for the group and good for ourselves.

This last point is very important. Emotionally Intelligent behaviour is not just good for THE COMPANY. It is good for all of us as individuals. The same behaviours that result in improved relationships with others and improved performance at work have been identified as having the power to improve our own health and enjoyment of life. Moreover, there is medical evidence that shows our behaviour can actually benefit the health of others.³ Unfortunately, there is not room here for a thorough look at the ways in which strong relationships can improve health. Those interested in the Evidence-Based-Research about this topic are referred to Lifeskills by Virginia and Redford Williams.

Empathy is the first element of the SOCIAL COMPETENCIES and includes the ability to be aware of others’ feelings, needs and concerns. One rule of thumb states that 90% of an emotional message is non-verbal. The ability to read this 90% is a skill based on our ability to step into the other person’s shoes. “Sensing what others feel without their saying so captures the essence of empathy... Without the ability to sense our own feelings—or to keep them from swamping us—we will be hopelessly out of touch with the moods of others.”² Once again, self-awareness and self-control are necessary ingredients to being able to manage our own emotional reactions to situations in order to have empathy with another. “When the emotional brain is driving the body with a strong reaction—the heat of anger, say—there can be little or no empathy. Empathy requires enough calm and receptivity so that the subtle signals of feeling from another person can be received and mimicked by one’s own emotional brain.”¹

Without empathy we remain *emotionally tone deaf* and unable to build and sustain the rapport needed in modern business and manufacturing. One un-anticipated result of the increased sophistication in communication technology is the increased importance of emotionally intelligent interpersonal connections. While the time spent in face-to-face communication has been reduced by

technology, the importance of what happens in this shorter time has multiplied.⁶

People with empathy demonstrate:

- **Understanding others:** Sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns
- **Developing others:** Sensing others' development needs and bolstering their abilities
- **Service orientation:** Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers' needs
- **Leveraging diversity:** Cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people
- **Political awareness:** Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships

**None of us
are as
smart as
all of us.**
Japanese proverb

Ongoing personal/professional development is a given in today's world of work and organizations that provide their employees the opportunity to expand their skills are better able keep their best. One study of supervisors, managers and executives in 12 large organizations identified supervisors as having the greatest direct impact on developing others.² This is certainly something to think about when allocating training budgets. The supervisor who is able to provide useful feedback and identify peoples' needs for further growth and are then able to offer assignments that provide real opportunities for skill acquisition does an enormous service for the organization. Not surprisingly being trusted was a crucial characteristic of successful supervisors. The top performers in this area demonstrate genuine interest in those they supervise and spend only about 5% of their time confronting poor performance.

A parallel ability to developing others is Leveraging Diversity. Leveraging Diversity has to do with *using our differences to advantage*. It means combining the best of what people from different countries, cultures and colours have to offer. It has to do with learning to value the differences in people and encouraging their participation and contributions. Prejudice, however veiled, creates an obstacle to trust and cooperation and kills creativity and enthusi-

asm in every corner of every business. More than ever there is a realization that "...even if people bring prejudices to work with them, they must learn to act as though they have none."¹ And not just when we think there is no one around who will be offended. Saying '*I'm only kidding*' might be sort of true. But only "*sort of*". There is always some poison in the kidding. And the poison kills energy and spirit and spreads.

It's good to know that prejudice is part and parcel of being human. It's good to know that prejudices are usually deep inside us and its is easier by far to change our beliefs than our feelings. It's also helpful to know that people are more likely to notice or remember instances that support their prejudices than information that discounts the prejudice. But, at the end of the day whatever our business, regardless of what we do or make, workplaces where people actually respect and even learn to enjoy each other's differences are more creative and productive and healthier to be in.

The second element of the SOCIAL COMPETENCIES is Social Skills which are related to being adept at inducing desirable responses in others. People with these competencies have skills of:

- **Influence:** Using effective tactics for persuasion
- **Communication:** Listening openly and sending convincing messages
- **Conflict management:** Negotiating and resolving disagreements
- **Leadership:** Inspiring and guiding individuals and groups
- **Change catalyst:** Initiating or managing change
- **Building bonds:** Nurturing instrumental relationships
- **Collaboration and cooperation:** Working with others toward shared goals
- **Team capabilities:** Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals

These are the skills for the way we work together now with the knowledge that “survival of the fittest” is not about the strongest and most ruthless individuals triumphing over the weak. It is about developing advantage by developing the group mind of the team. Trevor Cole wrote an excellent satirical piece for Report on Business Magazine in February 1999 entitled: **BAD BOSS! BAD!** “...I keep reading all this garbage. About ‘*managing*’...About how we’re supposed to be changing the way we deal with people, because it’s a time of rapid change. We have to ‘*nurture*’ people now to get the most out of them. We can’t order them to do anything any more. We have to ‘*coach*’ them. Like this is track and field or something...I want to talk about what it’s like for us. I mean, hard-driving, serious, can-do bosses...It’s not fair what some people are saying...We’re supposed to treat our employees better. Have empathy. Who are these people and where are their doctors? Shareholders want growth...Boards want growth. There’s no place for compassion in that. Business isn’t about holding people’s hands, it’s about making money. You want a fast turnaround, you cut people. Forget morale.”⁹

Trevor Cole’s Bad Boss is singing the lament of the “manipulative, jungle-fighter boss” who is being replaced by the “virtuoso in interpersonal skills” of the corporate future.² Today, for an excellent idea or innovation or product to become the seed of an excellent business, collaboration is needed. And creating

a workplace where collaboration is the norm is a bit like raising orchids.

Collaboration and the Group IQ will be the jumping off place for our next newsletter about Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace.

¹ Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ, Daniel Goleman, New York, Bantam, 1995.

² Working with Emotional Intelligence, Daniel Goleman, New York, Bantam Books, 1998

³ “The Shores of the Cosmic Ocean”, in Cosmos by Carl Sagan, Toronto, Random House, 1980.

⁴ “The Business Case for Emotional Intelligence”, Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, Cary Cherniss, Ph.D., Rutgers University, 1999, www.eiconsortium.org.

⁵ Lifeskills: 8 Simple Ways to Build Stronger Relationships, Communicate More Clearly and Improve Your Health. Virginia Williams, Ph.D. and Redford Williams, M.D., Toronto, Random House, 1997.

⁶ “Study pins down leadership competencies.” Joey Goodings, Canadian HR Reporter, September 6, 1999.

⁷ The Globe and Mail, February. 2000.

⁸ “No quick fix on road to rewriting life’s script.” Barbara Moses, The Globe and Mail, February 28, 2000.

⁹ “Bad Boss! Bad!” Trevor Cole, The Globe and Mail Report on Business Magazine, February 1999.

Web Site-Seeing

Would you like to see what the most recent budget from Ottawa will mean in tax saving for you? Then check out www.gc.ca & calculate your tax savings.

Random Thoughts

“For every complex problem there is an easy answer, and it is wrong.”

--H.L. MENCKEN

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