

CHAPTER 29

Emotional Intelligence Competencies Every Manager Must Build Today

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ABSTRACT

The managerial function in today's organisation goes beyond planning, supervising and controlling work processes. Managers today have to manage individuals of different backgrounds and working in different environments, facing pressure and struggling with issues related to performance, job security and work-life balance. Under these circumstances emotional intelligence has gained significance as a factor affecting managerial effectiveness. Emotional intelligence can be described as the ability to understand oneself, manage oneself, understand others and react appropriately. The article looks at the emotional intelligence skills managers should embrace in the modern workplace. It is a review of the literature, in particular that by Daniel Goleman, which focuses on the critical competencies of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skill. The article is not just about the concept of emotional intelligence; it's about what it looks like in real life, and why it is important for leaders, decision-making, employee engagement, and ethics. It also explores new use cases in areas of change management, workplace conflict and employee wellness. The article ends by implying that emotional intelligence is not a "luxury" ability of managerial work but an essential one in the contemporary workplace.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Managerial competencies; Self-awareness; Self-regulation; Empathy.

1.0 Introduction

For more than two decades, management education has focused on a combination of technical skill and strategic thinking/analysis. Managers received training in setting targets, allocation of resources and performance evaluation. Emotion was rarely discussed and when it was, it was usually considered as a hindrance to good decision making.

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The best manager was supposed to be non-partisan and neutral. There is evidence to the contrary from real organisational practice. The majority of the problems that managers face are not technical. They are about people – change resistance, low motivation, interpersonal conflict, stress, breakdowns in communication. From dealing with employee discontent to responding to conflict in a team or taking on the pressure from top management, managers often find themselves in emotional situations on a daily basis.

EI has emerged as a major concern in organizations that have become people-focused and complex. Goleman (1995) states that emotional intelligence is a significant predictor of success in the workplace, in some cases more important than cognitive ability. Managers with emotional intelligence have a clearer understanding of themselves, better coping with stress, and improved relations with people and are better leaders of teams.

Yet, as the world understands the potential of emotional intelligence, it is underutilised in many businesses. Others managers view attention to emotion as a weakness and lack of professionalism. This is a false assumption, which ignores the role of emotion in driving behaviour, decisions and performance, with or without awareness. The article explores the importance of EI competencies in today's managerial landscape and the impact they have on good managerial behavior.

2.0 Understanding Emotional Intelligence in Practice

Emotional intelligence is generally defined as the ability to recognize, understand, regulate and manage emotions, both in oneself and others (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). While definitions can be helpful, it is better to understand a concept by working with it day to day in the managerial context than through description alone. Emotional Intelligence in practical terms has an impact on how a manager reacts if plans go wrong, how he or she behaves in a confrontation, how he or she takes criticism and how he empowers employees during tough times. It doesn't eliminate emotion from the work place, it is about recognising emotion and managing it constructively as a manager. Goleman (1995) breathes light on five main components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill. These skills interact with each other and complement each other in a process of effective leadership. Emotional intelligence is not born with us. It is built on a combination of experience, reflection and feedback (Bradberry & Greaves, 2009) and over time managers who take a deliberate approach to developing it are better managers and better decision makers.

3.0 The Core Emotional Intelligence Competencies

3.1 Self-awareness: Understanding oneself as a manager

Self-awareness is the root behind EI. It is the ability to recognise one's own

emotions, know what triggers them and understand how they impact on behaviour. Often times it is not because managers are incompetent, but because they are unaware of their own incompetence.

An inexperienced manager might take feedback personally, misunderstand an employee's actions or might be an emotional cul-de-sac without knowing it. According to Goleman (1998), self-aware managers are able to accurately assess their strengths and weaknesses, are open to learning, and are less likely to blame the problems on others.

The awareness of self enables a manager to step back from reacting to acting on impulse. When a manager gets irritated during a meeting, he or she can react calmly instead of sharply, and this ability keeps the working relationship from deteriorating unnecessarily, while avoiding confrontation.

Ethical decision making is also facilitated by self-awareness. Understanding personal values and emotional characteristics helps managers stay on their ethical side of things when things get tough and to respond more consistently and responsibly accordingly.

3.2 Self-regulation: Managing emotional responses

Self-regulation is the ability to effectively regulate one's emotions, especially under stressful and challenging situations. Pressure from deadlines, expectations, organisational change is constant for managers and when they don't handle it emotionally it leads to impulsive decisions and strained relationships.

Emotionally intelligent managers don't try to "put out the fire," they regulate the expression of the fire. Leaders who are able to manage their emotions demonstrate stability and predictability, whereas those who respond emotionally are more apt to be "reactive," according to Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002).

Trust is based on the same ability. When managers are predictable and fair, employees trust them and feel secure. When a manager is able to deal with a difficult situation calmly, he/she sets an example for the team. Self-regulation is also a key factor in flexibility. Emotion regulation managers adjust to change more easily and are more open-minded in the face of uncertainty than those who are not.

3.3 Motivation: Sustaining performance from within

Motivation is a part of emotional intelligence which is the driving force (internal) of the individual, not the pressure (external). A purpose-driven manager is an emotionally intelligent manager who is driven to improve and to do something useful, not for reward, but for intrinsic motivation. According to Goleman (1998), such managers stay positive despite the failures, and view failure as a chance to learn and grow, but not to give up on a project. This mindset directly impacts team morale because employees will take on the attitude of their supervisor.

They are held to challenging expectations and expect continuous improvement within this type of management. Their commitment inspires employees to work and helps them stay committed; after some time, a commitment culture emerges around him.

3.4 Empathy: Understanding people, not merely managing tasks

Empathy is the capacity to understand the feelings and perspectives of others. It is essential to communication, to the resolution of conflict and to the development of employees. Managers lacking empathy tend to concentrate on tasks and outcomes while overlooking the human concerns that determine whether those outcomes are achieved.

Goleman (1995) emphasises that empathy strengthens trust and engagement. Employees who feel understood collaborate more readily and contribute more fully. Empathetic managers listen actively, and rather than disregarding the emotions expressed to them, they give those emotions a hearing.

Empathy is particularly valuable in workplaces where employees come from varied cultural and social backgrounds, since a manager alert to such differences is better able to lead a diverse team. Empathy does not preclude difficult decisions; it ensures rather that decisions are taken with an awareness of their human consequences.

3.5 Social skill: Managing relationships and influence

Social skill comprises the capacity to communicate effectively, to manage relationships and to influence others. Managers who possess it build networks, resolve disputes and foster collaboration. Goleman et al. (2002) argue that socially skilled managers create favourable emotional climates that support teamwork. Influence grounded in emotional intelligence proves more durable than control exercised through authority, since it rests on respect rather than compliance. In practice, social skill enables managers to resolve difficulties diplomatically, to state expectations clearly and to motivate employees without recourse to coercion.

4.0 Emotional Intelligence in Decision-Making

Decision-making is commonly presented as a rational process, yet emotion exerts substantial influence upon it. Fear, overconfidence, frustration and enthusiasm each shape managerial judgement. Emotionally intelligent managers recognise these influences and adjust accordingly. Goleman (1998) argues that emotional awareness improves the quality of judgement, since managers alert to their own emotional state are less likely to decide hastily or from bias. Emotional intelligence allows managers to hold analytical reasoning and human consideration in balance, which produces more ethical and more sustainable outcomes.

5.0 Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Style

Emotional intelligence bears heavily on leadership style. Emotionally intelligent managers tend towards participative and supportive approaches, and they encourage open communication and trust. Goleman et al. (2002) demonstrate that the emotional conduct of leaders directly influences organisational climate. Strong emotional leadership builds loyalty, creativity and engagement, whereas leadership insensitive to feeling generates apprehension and disengagement, and performance suffers accordingly.

6.0 Emotional Intelligence and Contemporary Organisational Challenges

Contemporary organisations confront remote working, accelerating technological change and elevated levels of workplace pressure. Emotional intelligence assists managers in meeting these difficulties by fostering resilience and understanding (Goleman, 2013).

Remote working, for instance, reduces the emotional signals ordinarily available in face-to-face contact. Emotionally intelligent managers compensate through more deliberate communication and closer attention to the welfare of their employees. Emotional intelligence is likewise connected to ethical leadership, since it raises awareness of the emotional consequences of decisions.

7.0 Developing Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence develops through self-reflection, feedback, coaching and sustained practice. Bradberry and Greaves (2009) emphasise that its improvement is a continuing exercise rather than a discrete achievement, and organisations that invest in developing it cultivate healthier cultures of leadership.

8.0 Emerging Applications of Emotional Intelligence

Although self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill remain the foundations of effective management, the changing nature of work has generated new emotional demands. These require managers to apply emotional intelligence in more nuanced and context-specific ways, and understanding these emerging dimensions helps managers remain effective amid organisational change.

8.1 Emotional intelligence in change management

Employees commonly experience apprehension, doubt and resistance when organisational change is introduced. Well-designed change initiatives fail where emotional

responses go unaddressed. During restructuring, the adoption of new technology or revisions of policy, managers play an essential part in helping employees through the adjustment. Emotionally intelligent managers recognise that resistance to change is generally emotional rather than rational. They do not dismiss concerns but listen to them and acknowledge the anxiety employees feel. Goleman (1998) observes that such acknowledgement reduces defensiveness and builds trust. Where managers communicate change clearly and with empathy, they are considerably more likely to secure support and commitment. Change management is therefore a matter of emotional reassurance and psychological support as much as of strategy and scheduling.

8.2 Managing workplace conflict

Conflict is intrinsic to organisational life, since differences of opinion, personality and objective are unavoidable. Managers lacking emotional intelligence tend either to avoid conflict altogether or to address it in ways that aggravate it. Emotional intelligence enables managers to approach conflict calmly and objectively. Empathy allows a manager to hear differing perspectives; self-regulation prevents escalation; social skill supports constructive dialogue rather than the imposition of a solution. Goleman et al. (2002) argue that conflict handled with emotional intelligence strengthens relationships rather than damaging them. Where managers treat conflict as an opportunity for mutual understanding rather than as a confrontation to be won, teams emerge stronger and more cooperative.

8.3 Emotional intelligence and employee well-being

Employee well-being has assumed considerable importance in contemporary organisations given rising workloads and pressure. Employees experiencing strain frequently turn first to their immediate manager.

Emotionally intelligent managers notice the early indications of strain, such as withdrawal from engagement or uncharacteristic irritability, and empathy allows them to respond supportively rather than critically. Attending to an employee's emotional equilibrium does not diminish performance standards; it is frequently what allows those standards to be restored.

Emotionally supportive leadership has been shown to improve job satisfaction and to reduce turnover (Goleman, 2013). Managers who attach importance to well-being contribute to healthier and more sustainable workplaces.

9.0 Conclusion

Emotional intelligence is a competency that managers in contemporary organisations cannot do without. Technical capability alone is insufficient to address the

emotional and relational demands of modern working environments. Managers who lead with self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill are better placed to act effectively and ethically alike.

Emotional intelligence is accordingly a requirement of managerial success rather than an optional accomplishment. Managers who develop it build stronger teams, healthier cultures and organisations capable of operating sustainably.

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