



The Three Critical Dimensions of EI in 2012

By

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“The new gold standard of leadership success is one’s capacity to build and maintain meaningful relationships through human connection”. This powerful insight from leadership crusader, Lyle Winslow offers a stunning glimpse into a multitude of universal leadership truths in 2012. As a beginning point, it reminds us that the measure of our success as leaders continues to evolve. At another level, it calls us to re-examine our leadership thinking and success formula. Even more importantly and at a much deeper level, it offers us a guidepost to a higher level of leadership in all of our roles.

Creating human connection by most estimates is not only a worthwhile endeavor but also a critical leadership competency deeply rooted in emotional intelligence. While many of the foundational aspects of true leadership remain constant, today’s do-more-with-less business climate demands a higher level of emotional intelligence than ever before.

Much has been written about Emotional Intelligence since the mid-1990s when pioneers like Daniel Goleman, Robert Cooper and Peter Salovey first introduced the EI concept. At its simplest level, EI is the combined sum of an individual’s social and interpersonal skills. It also encompasses one’s ability to sense, understand and influence other people.

In the broadest context, EI competence includes such factors as self-awareness, self-regulation, interpersonal skills, motivation, influence, empathy and acceptance of diversity. While all of these have a tremendous impact on a leader’s ability to create human connection, the self-awareness factor offers the most direct pathway to recognizing the full benefit of emotional intelligence. Even more significant is that absent the self-awareness factor, leaders are unlikely to discover the human connection correlation to leadership excellence.

One of the most prevalent leadership truths today is that with very few exceptions, employees long for meaning in their work. They want to be part of something bigger than themselves and they want to believe in the future. This by my estimation is at the core of the human connection opportunity presented to all leaders.

Being self-aware while critically important to leadership success is but the first step in being able to create meaningful human connection. One of the most common barriers to creating human connection is a lack of self-regulation among the leadership ranks. Despite the fact that workplace stress is at a near epidemic level in most organizations today, leaders need to be the positive role models for navigating stress and change at every juncture. Additionally, they need to be well aware of their various emotional states and the corresponding triggers that move them beyond emotional self-control or regulation. When we as leaders neglect to manage our negative emotions, most of which are normal, we also neglect the opportunity to create meaning and purpose for our teams.

Although empathy, like the word leadership means different things to different people, one thing that is certain is that empathy arises from respect. Absent respect, it is difficult to develop a sensitivity of other's feelings, needs and concerns, all of which open the way to human connection. When employees feel respected and when their human condition is validated, they are far more likely to be engaged and hopeful.

Not surprisingly, empathy like self-awareness and self-regulation requires deliberate effort on the part of the leader. It also requires an openness to diverse perspectives and an appreciation of the fact that we all long for meaningful human connection and the sense of belonging that it creates.

As we make our way through the white-water pace of business in 2012, let us remain hopeful and committed to building our emotional intelligence. In doing so, we may just discover our true capacity to create meaningful human connection in all areas of our lives.

10 More Things You Can Do Now:

1. Invest the time to consider your core values and what you stand for as a leader.
2. Identify your different emotional states and define key drivers of each.
3. Consider how you use your influence and what impact it has on others.
4. Avoid making snap remarks and decisions – use the count to 10 rule.
5. Slow down a bit and don't interrupt – utilize an association technique to stay grounded.
6. Learn and apply healthy stress busting techniques.
7. Assume positive intent.
8. Seek first to understand – keep biases in check.
9. Resist the urge to focus solely on differences.
10. Invest 5 minutes to complete the free *EI Insights Inventory* on the WorkChoice Solutions web site @ www.workchoicesolutions.com Key words, *Learning Resources, Leadership Assessments.*

About David A. O'Brien

David is President of CT based WorkChoice Solutions, a trusted provider of leadership and team effectiveness consulting services that was founded in 2000. He works with a wide range of corporate and nonprofit clients to help bring about sustainable improvements in organizational productivity. He is also an in-demand keynote speaker on the topic of leadership excellence. His first book, *The Navigator's Handbook, 101 Leadership Lessons for Work & Life* was released in July 2008 and is available on-line and in bookstores nationwide. Additionally, his many articles have appeared in a variety of local, regional and national publications. To learn more, please visit WorkChoice Solutions on line at www.workchoicesolutions.com or contact him directly at 860.242.1070.