Leadership Success Using Emotional Intelligence as a Practical Skillset

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Teaching leaders emotional intelligence as a practical skillset creates tangible benefits to companies. Leaders with emotional intelligence are more effective at communication, leading change, client relations, team-building, and conflict resolution. Their employees are highly motivated, self-directed, and more productive. Retention of the best and brightest people in the industry will give their companies a competitive edge in the marketplace and a more robust bottom-line.

Engineering companies rely on the expertise and experience of their employees, and effective leaders in this field recognize that their people really are their greatest asset. **One of the greatest challenges for technical companies is retention**, particularly when the economy is getting stronger. Top people give their company a competitive edge, and success in these areas requires the "softer skills."

So, how does a company recruit and retain the best people in the industry? What makes a capable professional decide to stay at a company?
  » Challenging work
  » Camaraderie / loyalty
  » Growth / training / advancement opportunities
  » Engagement / interesting work
  » Flexibility
  » $$$ (Salary / benefits)
  » Appreciation
  » "Not hating the boss"
  » A sense of mission

Assuming that salaries are constrained by economic reality, the factors that will differentiate one engineering firm from another will be the ones that don't have dollar signs in them. So, if you want keep your best performers and recruit more, you need to make your company attractive on these other metrics.

Building these all comes down to effective leadership. **Effective leaders communicate well, motivate their people, guide their teams through change, and make sure that clients, team-members, and shareholders are all getting what they need.**

Do you have a concept of what that "born leader" is like? Do you feel like you yourself have many of those qualities, but that you could be even better? Do you feel like you have a "deep bench" of "born leaders" throughout your organization? Or do you need more leadership at some levels or in some divisions in your company?

A person does not have to be a "born leader" to be a great leader. Leadership capabilities can be drawn from the inside out—everyone has the capability to be a natural leader in some situation. If that person then grows in emotional intelligence, he or she can lead effectively in a wider variety of situations.

Engineering attracts a large number of analytical thinkers—they make up a high concentration of the industry's workforce.

Characteristics of analytical thinkers:
(From audience members):

Introverted	Detailed
Cautious	Blunt
Thorough	Logical
Structured / Linear	Steady
Predictable	Slow to change
Always need data	Poor communicators
Poor delegators	

While these may not sound like "born leaders," **analytical thinkers absolutely can become effective leaders.** Examples of analytical personality leadership include: Bill Gates, Eleanor Roosevelt, Albert Einstein, Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Mahatma Gandhi, Rosa Parks, Warren Buffet, Steve Jobs, Charles Darwin, Isaac Newton, J.K. Rowling, Ron Paul, and Elon Musk.

In our program, we take the "soft," "touchy-feely" aspects of interpersonal interaction and leadership theory and reframe them into a practical, teachable skillset. For the basis of understanding self and understanding others, we use **Elias Porter's Relationship Awareness Theory** and the assessment he developed, the Strength Deployment Inventory (SDI), which gets at the motivations behind people's actions, which we shorthand for practicality as MVS.

Porter believed that we are hard-wired to perceive the world a certain way, and that this hard-wiring determines what is important to us and our values. Our values determine what enhances our self-worth. This in turn affects how we behave and prefer to relate to others because **people do things that make them feel good about themselves. They act to build up their self-worth and they act to protect their self-worth.**

In Relationship Awareness Theory, every person is a blend of three primary motivational values:
  » **Blue: to nurture and care for others**
  » **Red: to be in action and to win**
  » **Green: to be self-reliant, logical, and right**
People can be grouped based on which of these values most builds up their sense of self-worth.

The SDI offers several benefits over many other professionally-used assessments. One major advantage is that the categories are memorable for ourselves, identifiable in others, and usable as part of a practical skillset. Once someone understands the three primary motivations and how they can interact in blends, they can be trained to spot them in other people, and they can be trained to interact with people in ways that enhance the other person's self-worth and motivation.

People give clues to their motivations in what they say and how they say it, what they focus on in a situation, the size of their body language, their facial expressions, and their intensity. Everything that people do, say, and even write in an email contains clues to what motivated them—what gives them that sense of self-worth. You just need to know what to look for.

"A leader… has the ability to get other people to do what they don't want to do, and like it."
– Harry Truman

Definition of Emotional Intelligence
Emotional intelligence allows us to control our own emotions so that others can control theirs. In our program, we focus on:

Five Foundations of Leadership
  » Understanding self
  » Understanding others
  » Communicating to motivate
  » Well-defined personal vision
  » High integrity

Teaching leadership requires growing emotional intelligence (understanding of self and others), teaching people to make behavior choices that produce the desired result/outcome, and communicating to motivate. We strongly believe **everyone has the capacity to be an effective leader.**

Giving feedback
Most American professionals don't give enough feedback to their people, and what they do give is sometimes given in the wrong way or at the wrong time. If given correctly, both positive and negative feedback leave the person feeling respected, valued, and with a strong motivation to work hard to make sure that they do even better on their next assignment.

General Guidelines: Giving Negative Feedback
  » Remember that most people want to do the right thing
  » Show appreciation for the parts done well
  » Never personalize the criticism.
  » Avoid the word "you" as much as possible. (e.g., "YOU really dropped the ball…")

» If possible, give negative feedback privately (without an audience)

» Focus discussion on the improvement needed or on solutions

» Always focus on the problem or issue, not the person

» Provide outside information as a reference point wherever possible, e.g. "We have new information that…"

» Be as sincerely patient and calm as possible

» In our program, we teach participants to use borrowed relating styles as appropriate when communicating—talk to them in ways that connect with their MVS (Red, Green, Blue, Hub, blend)

» Avoid any discussion of blame – demonstrate a **"no failure, only learning experience"** attitude

General Guidelines: Giving Positive Feedback

» Be a cheerleader for your people.

» Find ways to encourage your associates and co-workers.

» Encourage people to encourage each other.

» Back people up. Build people up.

» Say thank you frequently.

» When you understand MVS, you can choose your words to reinforce the other person's self-worth by borrowing their relating style – use words that are meaningful to them, but not necessarily to you.

» Give praise in private. Give praise in public.

» Use both verbal and written praise.

» Let your praise of your people be heard by clients.

» Use direct and indirect praise.

» Be sincere in giving praise – insincere praise designed to manipulate people will undermine your integrity as a leader.

» Avoid sarcasm.

» Avoid word choices that include the word "but" –, e.g. "You did a good job, but…"

» Watch your timing and the emotional condition of others, so that it lands right the first time. Praise given at the wrong time may be seen as insincere, manipulative, or simply not heard.

Growing Confidence

Self-doubt can be crippling. People with a healthy sense of confidence are more effective, can course-correct from missteps more quickly, are considered more charismatic by others, and people are more likely to buy-in to the ideas they propose. People WANT to follow a confident leader.

Building Confidence by MVS

Blues are motivated by being helpful and supportive, so their confidence comes from frequent positive feedback (people letting them know they have been helpful), reading body language, and knowing they have been accepted (criticism given the wrong way often shuts them down).

Red-Blues (the blend between Blue and Red) get their confidence from knowing someone else is behind them as cheerleader.

Reds are motivated by being in action and winning.

Red-Greens confidence comes from their own feelings of being an expert and analysis of some of the information or from an expert opinion (someone whose competence they trust has done the analysis).

Greens confidence comes from logic and solid analysis of the data. To build their confidence, ask them to get it right, and then give them time to think.

Blue-Greens get their confidence from thorough thinking; they work to get it right enough to please.

Hubs get their confidence from understanding the situation, group involvement, and getting consensus.

Communication

The way we communicate – sending information to others and receiving information from others – has a tremendous impact on our ability to motivate people to action or to change their thinking and behavior. Communication problems rank at the top of employee frustrations. The issue is a perceived lack of communication with managers. One study found that 90% of managers rate their own communication skills as good or excellent, while only 35% of their employees rate those manager's communication skills as excellent.

"The problem with communication... is the _illusion_ that it has been accomplished."
- George Bernard Shaw

Causes for Communication Problems
» Misunderstood tone or body language
» Poor timing
» Lack of shared frame of reference
» Depersonalized communications (email)
» Focus on method vs. message
» Consider communication as one-way process

We recognize people are different, but communicate with others the same way we like to have people communicate with us. However, that style might not be a good fit. The ultimate goals for communication are to build support and acceptance for our ideas or plans, have people internalize our message, and move people into action. We need to remember that understanding is intellectual, but acceptance, support, and commitment are emotional. Truly effective communication needs to connect at a motivational, emotional level—so that it matters to them.

"A leader's job is to look into the future and see the organization, not as it is, but as it should be."
- Jack Welch

Implementing Change
As leaders, we are constantly challenged to change mindsets and motivate people to change their behavior. How we approach people and how we present ideas have a major impact on our effectiveness as leaders. People with different MVSs consider different things and have different concerns when presented with a new idea or recommendation.

Blue
» Is this really necessary?
» Is the person considering the people impact?
» What are this person's personal agendas for doing this (if any)?
» Does this idea or change make sense now for this group of people?

Red
» What's the bottom line? What's the win?
» Is this the best product or supplier? If not, why should I be interested in a second rate solution?

» How does this interfere (become a barrier) with what I am doing now?

Green
» What is the technical credibility of the source? Greens will stop listening if the source seems illogical.
» Is it logical and is it supported by data or analysis?
» Is it consistent with what I know or am doing now/have done in the past? A new way of doing things may make them start thinking: "So, I've been doing it wrong up until now?"
» What do I need to do to analyze the data?

Hub
» How does this fit with the situation?
» How can I improve on this idea?
» How can I integrate this idea?
» What do other people think? Is there agreement or buy-in?
» Will I be able to provide input?

Red-Blue
» Will this benefit my group?
» Can we achieve it successfully?
» What do I need to do to make it succeed?
» What do others need to do to make it succeed?

Red-Green
» What's in it for me?
» Does the person have expertise/credibility in the area and know what she/he is talking about?
» What do the experts think and do they support this idea?
» How do I get this right the first time?

Blue-Green
» What are the risk factors?
» What has not been considered that should be?
» Is there a plan? Has it been thoroughly thought through?
» What happens if it fails?
» Is this fair to all?
» Am I being forced/coerced/pushed or do I have the opportunity to think this through for myself?

People view change very differently, and knowing where their points of concern and points of resistance are means we can proactively address

them to speed up their buy-in, minimize their resistance to our ideas, and avoid creating conflict.

The Jennings Group has a four-stage change management process that we teach in our leadership course that allows leaders to implement change more effectively in their organization. Again, this requires applying an emotional intelligence skillset.

Factors To Remember In Leading Change
» People, organizations, and systems have negative inertia and naturally resist change.
» Change creates stress and conflict.
» Most people would rather not change if they don't have to. Only a few types of people find change exciting. Most find it stressful and resist change.
» People can change what they do and how they act or interact, but it is their choice.
» People can only change themselves. At best we can motivate others to choose to change how they behave. And that includes changing ourselves.
» Changing behavior requires learning new things and unlearning old things—"the traditional way" or "the way it always has been done."
» When people choose to change, they change the way they see other people or whatever system they are working with (changed mindset), and then they change the way they relate to other people and the system (changed behavior). This means that each person will experience change differently.

» A key to getting people to choose to change their behavior is helping them manage their stress and keeping them in their comfort zone. Anticipate potential issues and head them off proactively.
» Leaders are more effective leading change if they control their own stress reactions—this requires emotional intelligence.
» Always remember, we are trying to get people to change their behavior, not who they are.

Almost anyone can do well as a manager or leader when things are going well. Conflict is a real test of our leadership skills. When leaders understand the dynamics of what causes conflicts, can recognize how the conflict is experienced by each participant, and know how to keep themselves under control when facing conflict situations, they can deal effectively in these situations. Remember that emotional intelligence is a skillset that allows us to control our own emotions so that others can control theirs.

We at The Jennings Group offer a unique approach to leadership development, in that we teach it as a practical skillset that is separate from management skills. **Graduates of our program are able to take any management or leadership theory they choose and they will know how to implement it from a people perspective.**

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