

Leading Into the New Decade

Here's the latest intelligence on how to sharpen your leadership skills for the new decade: develop your emotional intelligence.

by Tom Pierce

Executive recruiters have long recognized that leaders are hired for their intellect and experience...and fired for their lack of people skills. Leading into the last decade, Claudio Fernández-Aráoz, author of the 1999 Harvard Business Review article "Hiring without Firing," listed Ten Deadly Traps to explain why the wrong person gets hired. One of those traps was "Ignoring Emotional Intelligence."

Since when do **emotions** have anything to do with the *bottom line*?

That HBR article cited a study of 500 managers on three continents by the executive recruiting firm Egon Zehnder International. The key finding: unsuccessful managers, each of whom had exceptional IQ's and years of experience, had emotional intelligence deficiencies.

Emotional intelligence, sometimes called EQ to distinguish it from IQ, refers to your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage behavior and relationships.

So is EQ some touchy-feely, management flavor-of-the-month? Quite the opposite. In January 2010, a Google search for "emotional intelligence" generated nearly three million results. Emotional intelligence, first studied in the labs of brain scientists, has become a tenet of management science and practice worldwide.

Researcher-author Daniel Goleman, with Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, writing in *Primal Leadership – Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence*, defined Resonant Leadership and Dissonant Leadership:

- "When leaders drive emotions positively... they bring out everyone's best."
- "When leaders drive emotions negatively...leaders spawn dissonance, undermining the emotional foundations that let people shine."

According to *Primal Leadership*: "Quite

simply, in any human group the leader has maximal power to sway everyone's emotions. If people's emotions are pushed toward the range of enthusiasm, performance can soar; if people are driven toward rancor and anxiety, they will be thrown off stride."

What's the link between high EQ and effective leadership?

Goleman explains, "The key to making primal leadership work to everyone's advantage lies in the leadership competencies of emotional intelligence: how leaders handle themselves and their relationships."

So how do you increase your own EQ and, in turn, enhance your effectiveness as a leader? Goleman lists four aspects that define a person's emotional intelligence:

- Self-awareness and Self-management refer to personal competence.
- Social Awareness and Relationship Management refer to competence with others.

The best way to begin improving your emotional intelligence is to work with a coach qualified to help you develop your EQ plan, after guiding you through an assessment of your emotional intelligence. Good news—working on any one of the four EQ skills will tend to strengthen the other three.

Healthy leadership depends on healthy followership.

The EQ level of your employees matters. The EQ level of the person you're grooming as your successor matters. And Team EQ matters.

Team EQ? In the past few years, the concepts for assessing the emotional intelligence of an individual have been expanded to assessing an entire team, treating the team as if it were one entity. Here is a brief look at how a client in the Blue-Grass State can serve as a leadership model for organizations in the Green Mountain State.

In 2008, I asked each staff member of a Kentucky-based association to respond anonymously to questions on a Team EQ

assessment designed to measure four competencies:

- emotional awareness
- emotion management
- internal relationship management
- external relationship management

The group's "internal relationship management" score was strikingly below national norms. That low score galvanized the team members to change how they'd been interacting with each other. One year later in 2009, the team's EQ score had skyrocketed a remarkable 30 points. What caused the dramatically improved EQ and teamwork?

- The executive director first looked at his own leadership and became a more direct communicator and less of a conflict avoider.
- Because all team members shared that 2008 retreat experience and the resulting commitment to change, they each felt empowered to monitor each other's actions in positive ways.

The executive director concluded, "So is our association now emotionally intelligent? We have to be certain we never slip back into the behaviors that were eroding excellence."

Whether your New Decade's resolution is to excel in leading different generations or to excel in succession planning, work on your own emotional intelligence and your team's emotional intelligence to create a resonant and productive workplace.

Tom Pierce, a past board chair of the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber, has been leading, managing, and training people in corporate and nonprofit organizations for four decades. He founded Pierce Management Development to coach and train executives, teams, and boards—and to facilitate their critical meetings—to achieve higher levels of excellence and performance.

www.PierceManagementDevelopment.com