

NATIONAL POST

Wednesday, February 7, 2007

Emotional Intelligence Key to Good Leadership Ray Williams

Gone are the days when employees were content to trade hard work for wages, and an executive or manager could use authority to motivate. The workplace has undergone radical changes, from globalization to the dramatic decline in job security. In *The New American Workplace*, James O'Toole and Edward Lawler provide a comprehensive view of the state of the workplace. And their picture underscores the importance of having emotionally intelligent leaders to achieve productivity and workplace harmony.

Decades of research has established that three major human needs can be satisfied by gainful employment: the need for basic economic security, the need to do meaningful work and the need for supportive relationships. While the relative importance of each of these needs varies drastically from worker to worker, all three must be satisfied before most people will agree they have a "good job."

One significant change in the workplace is the freedom individuals have to structure their career paths. As a result, responsibility for career planning and skill development is shifting from the employer to the employee. Employees are making choices based on upon personal fulfillment and passion, rather than economic security and loyalty to the company. In addition to changes in leadership, employees have been placed in positions of self-management and are held accountable for their performance. Many are required to work in teams to accomplish organizational objectives.

The relationship between management style and worker performance is the most striking change in the new workplace. There is plenty of evidence to show that people leave organizations not because of their job, but because of a poor relationship with their boss.

Numerous surveys suggest more than 50% of employees lack motivation to improve their performance. In one study, 40% of workers were reported as being unable to co-operate with colleagues. The same study showed at least 20% of entry-level employees as lacking self discipline and good work habits.

Meanwhile, author Sydney Finkelstein points to managers' problems with emotional intelligence, not technical

expertise, as the main cause for failure. And in *The Leader of the Future 2*, editors Frances Hasselbein and Marshall Goldsmith, examine the wisdom of some of the most recognized thinkers of our day. Among observations about necessary leadership behaviors were:

- The need for leaders to focus on employee's strengths, not weaknesses;
- The ability to lead knowledge workers to improve productivity, which requires more sophisticated skills than managing production workers;
- The ability to engage with the passion and dreams of employees.

According to Daniel Goleman, psychologist and author of *Emotional Intelligence, Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, and other experts, emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to monitor one's own feelings and emotions as well as other people's, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions.

These experts argue that emotion is inseparable from the workplace setting. Emotionally intelligent leaders challenge their team to work toward increasing team effectiveness and performance, facilitate interaction among its members, build interpersonal trust and inspire team members to implement an articulated vision.

Emotional intelligence enables leaders to accurately appraise employees' emotions and effectively portray their own emotions and predict emotional reactions in various scenarios. These leaders recognize that emotions are useful in the influence of behavior and cognition of others.

Researchers have shown that emotionally intelligent individuals who are self-motivated feel more secure in their ability to control and influence life events. Positive emotions, such as enthusiasm or cheerfulness, are considered to be contagious in various ways. Conversely, negative emotions such as anger, expressed by the team leader, are detrimental to team effectiveness. The emotionally intelligent leader taps into a well of moral obligation and commitment to get team members to meet their productivity peaks.

Emotional intelligence is directly related to performance—especially team performance. Emotionally intelligent team members recognized there are established norms that dictate the level of emotional intensity allowed. They are keenly aware of their emotions and that of others, and manage their emotions effectively. The team leader serves as a motivator of collective action, and facilitates social relationships among team members.

The information economy with predominantly knowledge workers demands leaders with superior emotional intelligence to drive employee performance and business results. These leaders and their teams are better able to handle the stress and high-pressure interactions that come with the added demands of the new workplace, and the end result is the organization benefits by having reduced burnout, turnover and workplace conflict.



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