Managing New Work Through Emotional Intelligence (EI)

8.1 Introduction to Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence or EI is the ability to understand and manage your own emotions, and those of the people around you. For leaders, having emotional intelligence is essential for success. In the New Work concept, it is crucial that managers and superiors have the skills, especially as the freedom and physical distance to employees can be long. Leaders with high emotional intelligence create more connected and motivated teams. The skills people with emotional intelligence possess make them effective managers. Some include the ability to inspire others, personal integrity, communication skills and comfort with building relationships, among others (Helmold, 2020).

EI has become one of the key elements when it comes to leadership (Higgins & Dulewicz, 2016). One thing we know for sure is that it is a trait that can be measured and developed. But what exactly is it and how does it influence the concept of leadership as we know it today? Emotional intelligence has to do with one’s ability to both recognize and control their own emotions, while harnessing said emotions appropriately to have the most optimum reaction as situations dictate. It also has to do with one’s awareness of and sensitivity towards others’ emotions. EI is therefore an important characteristic for anyone at any level of an organization but it is particularly important for those who occupy positions of leadership. A leader’s emotional intelligence can have sweeping influence over their relationships, how they manage their teams, and all in all how they interact with individuals in the workplace. Figure 8.1 outlines the leadership attributes associated with EI.

*To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.*

_Eleanor Roosevelt_
8.2 Self-Awareness

Self-awareness means you are always fully aware of how you feel, and you understand the effect your feelings and your actions can have on the people around you. A self-aware leader maintains a clear picture of their strengths and weaknesses, and despite their position of authority and power still operates from a mindset of humility.

8.3 Self-Regulation

Self-regulation prevents you from abusing your privilege of leadership to attack and/or stereotype others and making hurried or whimsical decisions that compromise your values. It calls for you to keep control of your emotions and how they affect others as well as stay committed to personal accountability.

8.4 Motivation

Self-motivated leaders work consistently towards their goals, motivate their employees and they have extremely high standards for the quality of their work. They develop a healthy emotional connection to the results they seek from their efforts, harnessing them to drive them forward without being obsessive.
8.5 Empathy

Empathy is what allows you to put yourself in other people’s shows and consider their unique perspectives. This is very important when it comes to successfully leading a team or organization.

Leaders with empathy actively support the career and personal growth of their team members, offer criticism without crushing the recipient, and solicit regular feedback from their employees. Such leaders are what it takes to motivate employees to perform above expectations.

8.6 Social Skills

Leaders with good social skills are great at communication, which comes in very handy when it comes to getting their team pumped about a new project or objective.

They are emotionally intelligent enough to receive both good and bad news with the same clarity of mind and this makes their subordinates confident enough to update them on anything.

Leaders with good social skills are also great at planning, effecting and overseeing major changes in the workplace as well as resolving any arising disputes fairly and promptly.

8.7 Benefits of Emotional Intelligence on New Work

Having a culture that is not emotionally intelligent can actually have a negative impact on productivity, performance, and absenteeism, to name a few. These negative impacts eventually lead to a breakdown in culture and ultimately have an effect on the bottom line (Goleman, 2020). Some benefits of emotional intelligence at the workplace include:

8.7.1 Better Teamwork

Employees with higher emotional intelligence naturally work better as a team for several reasons. People who are more emotionally intelligent are better at communicating than others. They are open to sharing their ideas and listening to other people’s ideas as well. Similarly, they are less likely to take complete control since they can also think of others.

Emotionally intelligent employees value their coworker’s input and ideas and are more likely to trust them as well. When they have to work in a team, they are considerate, thoughtful, and respectful, which is ideal for any employer.
8.7.2 Better Workplace Environment

A workforce that is made up of emotionally intelligent employees helps boost morale in the workplace. The company culture also tends to be much stronger when the office is full of staff who respect and get along with one another. What’s more, the office becomes an area where people enjoy what they do as well as enjoy the company of the people they work with.

8.7.3 Easier Adjustments

Companies should never stay stagnant. A company is more likely to experience change when their employees are focusing on ways to improve both themselves and the company. Even though employees usually know that changes within an organization are what is best for the company, that doesn’t mean everyone will be open to it.

Employees with higher emotional intelligence, however, find it easier to adjust and tend to embrace the change and grow with the company. This personality trait also tends to be contagious, thereby having a positive effect on other employees.

8.7.4 Greater Self-awareness

People who are emotionally intelligent know their strengths and weaknesses. They can take feedback and use it to grow and improve as a person. Managers are used to dealing with people who become defensive when they receive constructive feedback, which can lead to frustration and get in the way of productivity. Other times, employees have a hard time understanding their limitations.

People with high emotional intelligence are self-aware and therefore know what they are capable of achieving in a certain amount of time while others tend to overpromise and under-deliver.

8.7.5 Greater Self-control

Emotionally intelligent people know how to handle difficult situations. Whether it is dealing with a superior who doesn’t like the quality of your work or a client who is unhappy, there are bound to be situations at work that are not easy to deal with. In these situations, it’s important to stay calm and avoid an emotional outburst.

People with high emotional intelligence know that acting irrationally or negatively will only cause the situation to escalate. They can practice restraint and display their emotions in a controlled manner only when it is called for.

Many companies have yet to realize the significance of hiring for emotional intelligence. As a result, there are many companies out there with teams that do not
feel valued. Hiring emotionally intelligent talent can help your organization stand out among competitors.

By focusing on each person that makes up the team, you can gain a competitive advantage over other companies who are wondering why their team members don’t get along or lack motivation.

Now that you understand the benefits of emotional intelligence at the workplace, you can take a look at your existing talent and see who displays the traits previously mentioned. You might want to think about giving them leadership roles, if they aren’t in one already. When choosing an employee to handle a project or team, fight the urge to pick the one with the most experience and try going for the one with the highest emotional intelligence instead.

Finally, update your interview process. While questions about education, experience, and technical issues are still important, think about adding questions that allow a person to show their emotional intelligence. Watch how they answer these questions and think about them when you’re choosing who to hire. By doing so, you’ll have a team that stands out from the rest in no time.

8.8  Case Study: Coworking Area at Deutsche Bahn

Deutsche Bahn (DB) is opening its “everyworks” coworking area at Berlin Central Station to all travellers, commuters and station visitors. Interested parties can immediately book a job at short notice via an app and bill to the minute.

“Flexible, self-determined work is becoming more and more important these days. Our coworking offer is our answer to the rapidly growing demand and changing office models. We are convinced that everyworks will also be well received in the Corona period. Berlin Central Station as a location is ideal as a central, highly frequented mobility hub. In the future, we want to offer coworking at other stations”, said Dr. Meike Niedbal, Head of “Smart City” at DB Station & Service AG.

DB’s first coworking offer offers around 300 workplaces on 1500 square metres of office space on the tenth floor of Berlin Central Station. The entrance is on Europaplatz. Customers use their own end devices, but can borrow different charging cables if necessary. WLAN is available on the entire area. For undisturbed phone calls, there are telephone boxes as a retreat. Particularly concentrated work is possible in the so-called focus area.

The “everyworks” app can be downloaded free of charge from the Apple Store and Google Play Store and enables access to one of 115 workstations that can be booked flexibly with just a few clicks. After successful registration, customers can book a so-called minute seat. At the opening it costs 16 cents per minute. Check-in takes place on the ground floor. Visitors are given 5 min on their time account to find a suitable seat. Coffee, tea and water are included during the stay. In addition to the minute seats, customers can also rent meeting rooms equipped with screens and whiteboards. There are also around 150 additional workplaces available for long-term tenants. Minute Seat users have access to the area from 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and the coworking area is open around the clock for office tenants. Of course, DB
has taken extensive measures to protect against Corona in the coworking area, including a reduced occupancy of the workplaces. Coworking at train stations is a project of the “Smart City” initiative at DB. Smart City aims to provide environmentally friendly offers for a sustainable city and good networking of transport infrastructure and mobility. In the long term, further coworking offers are to follow at central train stations (Fig. 8.2).

References

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