



# Mpowerment Matters

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Management Mpowerment Associates

Forward to a Colleague



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Emotional intelligence is not a new concept. It is well accepted and many studies have confirmed that emotional intelligence is a key element in the success of most leaders. So, why is it ignored by much of corporate America? By healthcare organizations? Law firms? Some organizations have just not figured out what leadership is all about. They have not recognized that leadership is, in fact, a journey; and that great leaders are developed with purpose and with intent.

It is possible to isolate and measure those attributes and competencies that great leaders exhibit, including emotional intelligence. And most importantly, those areas that are not strengths can be developed as part of the leadership journey.

I have recently become a *Hallmarks Certified Coach*, which allows me to use a fabulous assessment tool, the *Hallmarks of Excellence in Leadership*, that truly and accurately measures the attributes exhibited by outstanding leaders. Individuals and teams can then go through the development process in those areas that require strengthening in a very focused manner. I would be happy to discuss the tool and the process with you.

Developing emotional intelligence is, along with leadership integrity and a commitment to learning and personal growth, part of mastering your core, a start on the journey to becoming an impactful leader.

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## **Managing with Emotional Intelligence: The Power of Empathy**

The business community has embraced the concept of emotional intelligence and its importance ever since Daniel Goleman's best-selling book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998). But the challenge that lies ahead is to demonstrate that such competencies can be acquired, and that they significantly impact performance.

Up to 90% of the difference between outstanding and average leaders is linked to emotional intelligence. "EI" is two times as important as IQ and technical expertise combined, and is four times as important in terms of overall success.

Yet many leaders continue to be reluctant to address anything "emotional" when it comes to business, even when the word "intelligence" is tacked on behind it.

### **What is Emotional Intelligence?**

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize your own feelings and those of others, and the ability to motivate yourself and others, as well as to manage your own emotions and those of others. Essentially, there are four competencies:

1. Understanding yourself, or self-awareness
2. Managing yourself, or self-management
3. Understanding others, or social awareness
4. Managing others, or social skills

Emotional intelligence increases when people commit themselves to building practical competencies in the context of every day situations. Nothing can be more powerful than developing empathy skills during everyday conversations on

the job.

Empathy starts with self-awareness, in that understanding your own emotions is essential to understanding the feelings of others. It is crucial to leading others.

Lack of empathy is a primary cause of interpersonal difficulties that lead to poor performance, executive derailment, and problems with customer relationships.

Empathy is poorly understood by those who need it most. Many hard-driving managers lack a propensity for empathy because they assume it's for more "touchy-feely" types. Some very intelligent leaders are walking around blindly using only their powers of reasoning and wondering why everyone doesn't see things their way.

Research by the Center for Creative Leadership has found that the primary causes of derailment in executives involve deficits in emotional competence, and in particular, these three primary ones:

1. Difficulty in handling change
2. Not being able to work well as a team
3. Poor interpersonal relations

Without an adequate capacity to understand the other's point of view, managers lack sufficient flexibility for change, cannot work well with team collaboration, and cannot relate well with the very people that affect the results they are trying to achieve.

### **What is Empathy?**

Empathy can be defined as the ability to see things from the other person's point of view. Goleman defines it as the ability to read other people. Empathy means that you can recall the same feelings of others based on your own memories.

What does this have to do with running a business, managing a company and dealing with bottom-line performance issues? Obviously, if managers were to take the time to listen with empathy at everything that was said, nothing would get done. Managers and leaders must keep focused and guide people to goal completion.

According to Goleman, empathy represents the foundation skill for all the social competencies important for work:

1. **Understanding others:** sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns
2. **Service orientation:** anticipating, recognizing and meeting customers' needs
3. **Developing others:** sensing others' development needs and bolstering their abilities
4. **Leveraging diversity:** cultivating opportunities through diverse people
5. **Political awareness:** reading the political and social currents in an organization

Success depends a great deal on having focus, being able to persevere, and being able to concentrate. But focus alone can result in undesirable consequences if not counterbalanced by empathy. Focus alone will not result in the fulfillment of goals. Focus and empathy will.

Empathy skills involve paying attention to other people - things like listening, attending to needs and wants of others, and building relationships. When empathy skills are high, one is more likely to inspire the troops. When a manager understands his/her people and communicates that to them, he/she is more liked and respected. When a manager is respected, the people they lead are more likely to go the extra mile. Empathy and focus need to be balanced, and when they are, managing skills are optimally effective.

Both managers and employees need empathy in order to interact well with customers, suppliers, the general public and with each other. Managers need it even more when they are assigning a task to someone who won't like it; when offering criticism to someone who predictably will get defensive; when having to deal with someone we don't like; when dealing with employee disputes; and when giving bad news such as telling someone that they won't be promoted or that they're being laid off.

The first step in dealing with any negativity is to empathize. The next step is to focus back to the goals and the tasks at hand.

At the outset empathy involves real curiosity and a desire to know or understand. There is a genuine interest in what the person is saying and feeling. You cannot have empathy without asking questions. Some typical ones are:

1. "Can you say more about that?"
2. "Really? That's interesting. Can you be more specific?"
3. "I wasn't aware of that. Tell me more."
4. "I'm curious about that.let's discuss this in more depth."
5. "Let me see if I understand you correctly.here is what I hear you say."

Managers and leaders who are high in empathy skills are able to pick up emotional cues. They can appreciate not only what a person is saying, but also why they are saying it. At the highest levels, they also understand where a person's feelings might come from.

Those that do not have empathy have a tendency to misread the other person. They do not ask questions to clarify. They do not pay attention to non-verbal cues. Those people who are analytical by nature will listen to the words, facts and figures and completely miss the real message of what is being said.

If we remember that only 7% of the message is carried in the words and the rest is in the non-verbal cues, then listening to the content of what is being said may actually be misleading.

Like all the emotional competencies, it is better to practice empathy skills with an experienced coach who can monitor and give effective feedback. Empathy skills are learned experientially, that is, practiced in the field in real-time.

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