

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

Author: Ivaylo Iliev

Abstract: Modern management is largely a management of people and not so much of resources and processes. This alone makes concepts like leadership and emotional intelligence quite relevant in modern management. The following text clarifies how emotional intelligence affects leadership behavior, considering it as the development of a collective sense of the important goals and tasks, as well as the ways to achieve them; convincing others of the importance and significance of their work and behavior; generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, optimism and trust in group members who cooperate; courage when making non-standard decisions and when it is necessary to introduce changes; creating and maintaining meaningful identification with the organization. All of this can be aided by emotional intelligence.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence; Leadership; Organizational behavior

JEL: M12, M54

Introduction

Emotional intelligence is a concept that is gaining tremendous popularity both in the public sphere and in academic research. It is also increasingly associated with the study of leadership, as a key factor in identifying and creating future leaders. People with a high level of emotional intelligence have a strong ability to understand emotions (both their own and those of other people), express their emotions with restraint and influence at an emotional level, as well as promote adaptability, effectiveness in communications and other activities.

1. UNDERSTANDING LEADERSHIP

In turn, leadership ranks among the most studied and discussed topics in management sciences. There are a variety of approaches to treating and understanding leadership. For example, Jacobs and Jacques (1987) define leadership as "The process of giving a goal (a direction that makes sense) to collective efforts leading to its achievement". Gary Yukl (2002) defines it as "The process of influencing others to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how to do it effectively, and also the process of facilitating collective efforts to accomplish shared goals." Robert Dilts (2002) definition builds on the described picture of influence by setting an ultimate goal: "Leadership is the ability to influence others to achieve a goal... and create a world to which people want to belong."

According to Ralph Stogdill (1974), „there are as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it “, therefore it is necessary to summarize the common elements between them.

Bearing in mind that there is no universally accepted view of leadership, it is possible to single out basic elements that are touched upon in different theoretical concepts in order to define an extended definition:

- development of a collective sense of the important goals and tasks, as well as the ways to achieve them;
- convincing others of the importance and significance of their work and behavior;
- generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, optimism and trust in cooperating group members;
- courage when making non-standard decisions and when it is necessary to introduce changes;
- creating and maintaining meaningful identification with the organization.

Researchers are constantly analyzing what leaders like, what they do, how they motivate their followers, how styles interact with situational conditions, and how they can make major organizational changes. With the exception of the earliest theory (of the great man), all of the others involve a concern for employee emotions in one way or another.

Whether the two concepts have points of contact, whether and to what extent one is a prerequisite for the other remains a matter of differing opinions among researchers. Some prominent theorists of emotional intelligence and leadership, such as Daniel Goleman (1998) and Robin Sharma (2011, cited by Stoyanova), claim that emotional intelligence is 90% of a leader's success. According to them, it is the key difference between average leaders and exceptional leaders, a claim that still lacks scientific justification. A number of studies also emphasize that "soft skills" and emotional intelligence are essential for success in most organizations (Abraham, 2006; Sigmar, Hynes, & Hill, 2012; Serrat, 2017).

2. IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONS

However, it is indisputable that people have feelings and emotions, regardless of the position they occupy in the organizational hierarchy. In order to be able to influence these emotions, leaders must be able to know them and to some extent manage them. Much leadership research describes what leaders are like, what they do, and how decisions are made. In the classic organizational literature, there is a relative lack of attention to the role of emotions in the leadership process, as the cognitive orientation dominates. In the modern world, however, the number of studies related to the role of feelings and emotions in human and organizational matters is increasing. This suggests that they can be seen not only as an additional factor, but as playing a much more central role in the leadership process.

Feelings influence the decisions people make (Paunov, 2012). When people are in a positive mood, their perceptions and evaluations can be more favorable, they are more likely to remember positive information, they are more self-confident, and they are more helpful to

others. Positive moods have been found to increase the flexibility of task categorization and facilitate creative thinking. On the other hand, negative moods can encourage deductive thinking and more critical overall evaluation.

Rational decisions are best made by people who can abstract from their personal feelings. It is generally accepted that human decisions are not purely rational and emotions play a large role in making them (Yukalov, 2022). On this basis, neurological research suggests that feelings are necessary to make good decisions (Rock, 2009). Feelings are inextricably wrapped up in the way people think, behave and make decisions. In this regard, Joseph (Forgas, 2001) Forgas' AIM (Affect Infusion Model) provides a useful framework for understanding the conditions under which an affective state is more likely to influence decision making. Specifically, AIM suggests that affect is particularly likely to influence judgment early in the information processing process when decision makers are faced with a complex task or ambiguity and uncertainty exist. Furthermore, the model suggests that affect is likely to influence decisions when decision makers resort to heuristic methods of problem solving.

A person's behavior is largely the result of emotions that he may not be aware of. Very often, cognitive processes are also motivated and strongly influenced by this same emotional sphere. The importance of emotions, feelings and moods in leader-follower relationships in the context of organizational behavior cannot be ignored.

3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND LEADERSHIP

Having emotional intelligence in leaders not only leads to awareness of one's own emotions, but also to using those emotions in functional ways. First, emotions can be useful in terms of directing attention to pressing issues and determining what should be the focus of attention. Second, emotions can be used in the selection of alternatives and decision-making – EI enables leaders to anticipate the emotional consequences of certain events occurring, and this can aid in decision-making when choosing between multiple options. Third, emotions can be used to facilitate certain types of cognitive processes.

Based on existing leadership concepts in the literature, five specific elements of effective leadership were identified. The realization of each of the specific activities can be assisted by the presence of emotional intelligence.

3.1. Developing of a collective sense of the important goals and objectives

The first of these elements of leadership is *the development of a collective sense of the important goals and objectives, as well as the ways to achieve them*. The goals and tasks in question are long-term, strategic, those that usually refer to the vision that the leader has for his activity or for the entire organization. Emotional intelligence can contribute to developing a compelling vision for your organizations in a number of ways. First, leaders can use their emotions to improve information processing of challenges, threats, problems, and opportunities presented by their organizations. Leaders are often faced with a large amount of information characterized by uncertainty and ambiguity. From this information, they should chart a course for their groups or organizations.

Research relating positive moods to creativity suggests that when leaders are in a positive mood they can be more creative and therefore more likely to create a compelling vision (Isen, 1987). Leaders who possess a high level of emotional intelligence will be better able to capitalize on their positive moods and emotions and deliver major improvements in the functioning of their organizations. Not only a compelling vision is enough, but also how they will communicate it in the organization so that it is well received. By assessing the feelings of followers, invoking their knowledge of emotions, leaders can exert influence so that they gain responsiveness and benevolence toward their goals.

3.2. Convincing others of the importance of their work

The next element is related to *convincing others of the importance and significance of their work and behavior*. In order to instill in employees, the importance of organizational activities, leaders must ensure that their followers are aware of the main problems in the company's activities as well as the potential opportunities. At the same time, they should increase their belief in their own abilities, to successfully overcome problems and to deal with emerging challenges. Leaders must understand and influence the emotions of followers so that they are aware of the seriousness of the issues (Chen, 2019). Leaders with high emotional intelligence are adept at managing emotions and will be able to instill this in their followers.

3.3. Generating and maintaining enthusiasm, confidence, optimism and trust in the group

To improve performance in an organization, it is important to *generate and maintain enthusiasm, confidence, optimism and trust among cooperating group members*. In order for leaders to create and maintain enthusiasm and confidence, they must be able to assess how their followers feel and be aware of how they can influence those feelings. They must be able to distinguish between the emotions their followers actually feel (their "true" feelings) and the emotions they express.

The role of a leader in organizations often leads to very fast-paced work, keeping up with multiple and changing demands and high levels of stress. Not only must leaders meet these multiple demands, but they must also find constructive solutions to conflicts that arise, while generating and maintaining a sense of cooperation and trust. High levels of emotional intelligence also contribute to what Epsine (1990) and his colleagues call constructive thinking, or the ability to solve problems with minimal stress. Constructive thinking can lead to the formation of creative ideas for settling disagreements, which turn problems into win-win solutions and ensure cooperation and trust throughout the organization. Because leaders who possess a high level of emotional intelligence are better able to understand and manage their own emotions, they may be more willing to engage constructive thinking to build and maintain high levels of cooperation and trust.

3.4. Courage when making hard decisions

Very often the definitions also mention the important role of leaders in implementing organizational changes. This is also the next element, namely *courage when making non-standard decisions and when it is necessary to introduce changes*. When leaders know how to manage their emotions, they may be able to use this to improve decision-making. They

can direct their attention to the urgent problems that need immediate attention and thus soberly arrange their priorities. Emotional intelligence allows leaders to effectively use emotions in decision-making and to manage emotions that interfere with effective decision-making. When they know how to manage their emotions, they will be able to think of alternative scenarios and avoid unwanted affect influencing their decision making.

Emotional intelligence can contribute to a leader's ability to successfully bring about change in an organization. The degree to which a leader accurately perceives and is able to influence followers' emotions related to knowledge or skills leads to the leader's ability to make big changes (Wasielewski, 1985). Some people find it difficult to determine how others feel, while others find it difficult to respond to the feelings of others. It is unlikely that both of them will make significant changes in the organization. On the other hand, people who can accurately gauge the feelings of others and respond to and sometimes change those feelings will be more productive and are much more likely to be able to effectively overcome resistance to change and transformation. An important aspect of emotional intelligence is responding to changes in others' emotions, requiring leaders to also know the causes of those emotions.

3.5. Creating and maintaining engagement and identification with the organization

Last but not least among the elements that a leader must meet is the *creation and maintenance of a meaningful identification with the organization*. An organization's identity derives from and is a consequence of its culture. Through organizational culture, the organization develops the collective identity that is embodied in the members of the organization. The role of leadership in the development of organizational culture is also important. Increasing technological progress suggests that work in general will become less routine in the future. Less routine work is more difficult to observe and to directly control, and hence organizations may become increasingly dependent on culture as a mechanism of influence. Culture development is an expression of organizational identity, and thus, may become increasingly important to effective leadership.

Strong beliefs are often so because they have emotional content and reference. Trais and Bayer (1993) suggest that the essence of organizational culture exists in ideologies that are shared. It is defined as relatively coherently interrelated strands of emotionally charged beliefs, values, and norms that relate to some people and help make the world meaningful to them. The authors also argue that cultures are intertwined with emotions and allegiance to identification with cultures stems from people's emotional needs rather than a rational point of view (Trais&Bayer, 1993). Violation of norms and values in a culture results in strong emotional reactions, because cultures actually provide organizational members with socially acceptable ways to express their emotions. In this line of thought, managing organizational culture is, in a sense, managing emotions. This suggests an opportunity for leaders to convey to followers that collectivity is important to organizational norms and values.

Conclusion

Leaders' effective use of forms of organizational culture is highly dependent on the elements of emotional intelligence—being aware of their feelings, knowing the reasons for those feelings and how they change over time, being able to express feelings, and are able

to evoke feelings in others, and even with a tacit knowledge of how and why emotions are tied to cultural forms. Emotional intelligence means not only being able to manage one's own feelings, but also being able to manage the moods and emotions of others. This is of particular importance to leaders throughout the business world. Being able to excite and enthuse other people, or make them feel wary and attentive, is an important means of interpersonal skills and an expression of social influence that is of utmost importance to leaders. To be able to manage the moods and emotions of others, they must be able to appreciate and express emotions, use them effectively, and show good awareness of them.

References

1. Abraham, A., 2006 , The Need for the Integration of Emotional Intelligence Skills in Business Education. *The Business Renaissance*, 1(3)
2. Chen Q. , Kong Y . , Niu J . , Gao W, Li J and Li M . , 2019 , How Leaders' Psychological Capital Influences Their Followers' Psychological Capital: Social Exchange or Emotional Contagion. *Front. Psychol.* 10:1578. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01578
3. Dilts, R. 2002, *Visionary Leadership Skills*. MetaPublications, CA, p. 17
4. Epstein S., 1990, *Cognitive-experiential self-theory.*, L. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality theory and research.*, Guilford Press, New York, pp. 165–91
5. Forgas, JP, 2001 , The Affect Infusion Model (AIM): An integrative theory of mood effects on cognition and judgments. In LL Martin & GL Clore (Eds.), *Theories of mood and cognition: A user's guidebook* (pp. 99–134). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
6. Goleman, D., 1998, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, New York: Batam Books
7. Isen, A., 1987, Positive affect, cognitive processes and social behavior, L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 20, San Diego, CA, Academic Press, pp. 203–53
8. Serrat , O. , 2017 , Understanding and Developing Emotional Intelligence. In O. Serrat, *Knowledge Solutions* (pp. 329-339). Singapore: Springer
9. Sigmar, LS, Hynes, GE, & Hill, KL (2012). Strategies for Teaching Social and Emotional Intelligence in Business Communication. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(3) 301-317.
10. Stogdill, R. , 1974 , *Handbook of Leadership: A Survey of the Literature*, NY: Free Press, , p. 259
11. Trice H., Beyer J., 1993, *The cultures of work organizations*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall,
12. Wasielewski, P., 1985 , The emotional basis of charisma. *Symbolic Interactionism*, pp. 207–22.
13. Yukalov, VI , 2022, Quantification of emotions in decision making. *Soft Comput* 26, 2419–2436 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00500-021-06442-5>
14. Yukl, G. , 2002, *Leadership in Organization*, Prentice-Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 2002, p.7
15. Jacobs, T. & Jacques, E. , 1987 , *Leadership in Complex Systems*. In: J. Zeidner (Ed.), *Human Productivity Enhancement: Organizations, Personnel, and Decision Making*, NY: Praeger, p. 8
16. Paunov, M., 2012, *Choveshkata emotshionalnost v povedenskite nauki i praktikata na upravlenieto*, http://unwe-yearbook.org/uploads/Yearbook/Yearbook_2012_No3_M%20Paunov.pdf, p. 70
17. Rock, D., 2009, *Quiet Leadership: Six Steps to Transforming Performance at Work*, HarperCollins e-books

18. S toyanova, R., 2011, "Robin Sharma: Dobriyat lider vduhnovyava i motivate",
https://econ.bg/%D0%9D%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8/%D0%A0%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%B8%D0%BD-%D0%A8%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%BC%D0%B0-%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%B1%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%8F%D1%82-%D0%BB%D0%B8%D0%B4%D0%B5%D1%80-%D0%B2%D0%B4%D1%8A%D1%85%D0%BD%D0%BE%D0%B2%D1%8F%D0%B2%D0%B0-%D0%B8-%D0%BC%D0%BE%D1%82%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0-_l.a_i.206342_at.1.html