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Management Development

Interpersonal Skills

Applying Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

BY ROBERT K. COOPER

IF YOU'RE LIKE MOST professionals, you have a highly developed sense of the "opportunity cost" of your time. That is, you are almost always aware, subconsciously if not consciously, that the time you devote to any one thing takes time and energy away from many other things you could—and should—be doing.

In 1973, Henry Mintzberg wrote in his now-classic book, *The Nature of Managerial Work*: "The prime occupational hazard of the manager is superficiality." That's one byproduct of time pressures. Since then, how much greater such pressures on leaders, managers, and other professionals have become.

One costly consequence of the relentless demands on leaders' time is their propensity to stick as closely as possible to the realm of facts and intellect—to value only things that can be ordered, analyzed, defined, dealt with, corralled, and contained. Emotions seem leaky. They can get people riled up, and then who knows where their time and energy might go? How often have you



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FEELINGS AND USING THEM EFFECTIVELY.**

said or thought: "Let's just keep emotions out of this and deal with things rationally"?

Yet, research shows that emotions, properly managed, can drive trust, loyalty, and commitment—and many of the greatest productivity gains, innovations, and accomplishments of individuals, teams, and organizations.

Says Nick Zeniuk, a former leader of an executive team at Ford Motor Company, "Emotional intelligence is the hidden advantage. If you take care of the soft stuff, the hard stuff takes care of itself." As leaders worldwide are discovering, attention to emotions has been shown to save time, expand opportunities, and focus energy for better results.

Studies suggest that it is emotional intelligence (and the related aspects of practical-creative intelligence), not IQ or raw brainpower alone, that underpins many of the best decisions, most dynamic organizations, and most satisfying and successful lives.

Yale psychologist Robert Sternberg—who coined the term *successful intelligence*—

says, "If IQ rules, it is only because we let it. And when we let it rule, we choose a bad master." We are paying a drastic price, in our personal lives and organizations, for our attempts to separate our hearts from our heads and our emotions from our intellect. It can't be done. We need both, and we need them working together.

How often do you experience the sense of highly effective workflow and creative insight that comes when you bring all aspects of your best emotional and intellectual intelligence to your work? How often do you make it possible for others to have that experience?

A new science

Emotions are not only wellsprings of intuitive wisdom; they also provide us with potentially profitable information every minute of the day. But it isn't enough just to have emotions. You have to know how to acknowledge and value feelings in yourself and in others, and how to respond to them appropriately. People who possess such qualities are using emotional intelligence—the ability to sense, understand, and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions as a source of human energy, information, trust, creativity, and influence.

Research suggests that people with high levels of emotional intelligence (measured by EQ, the emotional-intelligence equivalent of IQ) experience more career success, build stronger personal relationships, lead more effectively, and enjoy better health than those with low EQ. People with high emotional intelligence motivate themselves and others to greater accomplishment.

Q-Metrics in San Francisco, working with thousands of executives, managers, and other professionals in the United States and Canada, has developed two nationally norm-tested, statistically reliable measurement instruments—the *EQ Map* and *Organizational EQ Map Profiles*—that address emotional intelligence and other dimensions of human intelligence at work.

The good news is that, by many indications, emotional intelligence is learnable at almost any age. As you form the various characteristics of your own emotional intelligence, you

will likely find that you also increase these powers:

- ▶ intuition
- ▶ the capacity to trust and be trusted
- ▶ a sense of integrity and authenticity
- ▶ an appreciation of constructive discontent
- ▶ the ability to find breakthrough solutions in difficult circumstances and make sound decisions
- ▶ leadership effectiveness.

In short, you will be better able to reach out and embrace the power of emotions instead of shying away from them.

On the other hand, let's face it: You're not going to strengthen your emotional intelligence very much simply by reading this article. But I believe that it can help set the process in motion. Therefore, I'd like to share a few of the strategies, insight, tools, and techniques used in my work with organizations worldwide. I've found that emotional intelligence is not only a potent force in its own right, but it's also indispensable to the success of such intellect-centered initiatives as quality control, core competencies, and value disciplines. In fact, the disappointments often experienced with those approaches can, in many cases, be attributed to a failure to face emotional challenges. Studies show that a significant part of an organization's profitability is linked to the quality of its worklife, which is based largely on trust and loyalty both within the organization and with outside people, such as customers and suppliers. Profitability is also linked to the way employees feel about their jobs, colleagues, and company.

This article's aim is to challenge you to decide that, in the course of your busy days, you can enhance your effectiveness by dealing more directly with the information, energy, and creative power provided by your own emotions and those of others.

You may be attracted to emotional intelligence because it can help heal mistrust; foster empathy and innovation; or put you more in touch with your intuition, leadership capacity, and ability to create and maintain trusting relationships. The effect of developing emotional intelligence can also be transformative. It can awaken untapped wellsprings of personal and professional growth and creativity.

Three driving forces

Over the years working with business leaders and organizations, I've studied three driving forces of competitive advantage: building trusting relationships, increasing energy and effectiveness, and creating the future. Those EQ-related capacities are often overlooked in traditional management development and similar training. Yet, I've found time and again that they prove crucial to exceptionally successful work in leadership and organizations. (See the figure.)

Building trusting relationships. This force involves developing specific ways to create and sustain an extended "trust radius" with current and potential customers, your teams, and the entire organization. It includes practical strategies to get things done at a more meaningful level in everyday interactions, while saving time and fostering loyalty in ways that are authentic and straightforward.

Increasing energy and effectiveness under pressure. This force has to do with developing specific, actionable ways to turn on the brain's "alertness switches" to increase personal and interpersonal energy and to build a foundation for exceptional attentiveness and the capacity to excel during stressful times of complexity and change. This also helps increase emotional commitment to an organization's strategic choices and vision and to recognize and value constructive discontent—the productive aspects of disagreement that can lead to superior decisions and fluid teamwork.

Creating the future. This force builds essential skills for tapping the power of divergent views, and for identifying and making the most of unique potential—the core talents and strengths in oneself and others that are rarely used as a competitive advantage. Such skills can extend individual and team capacities to find opportunities; solve problems; and make strategic, technical, and service breakthroughs.

Those core capacities are drawn together and put into action in the workplace through the framework of the Four Cornerstone Model of Emotional Intelligence, first envisioned by Ayman Sawaf, cofounder of Advanced Intelligence Technologies and chairman of the Foundation for Education

in Emotional Literacy.

The four cornerstones are

- ▶ emotional literacy
- ▶ emotional fitness
- ▶ emotional depth
- ▶ emotional alchemy.

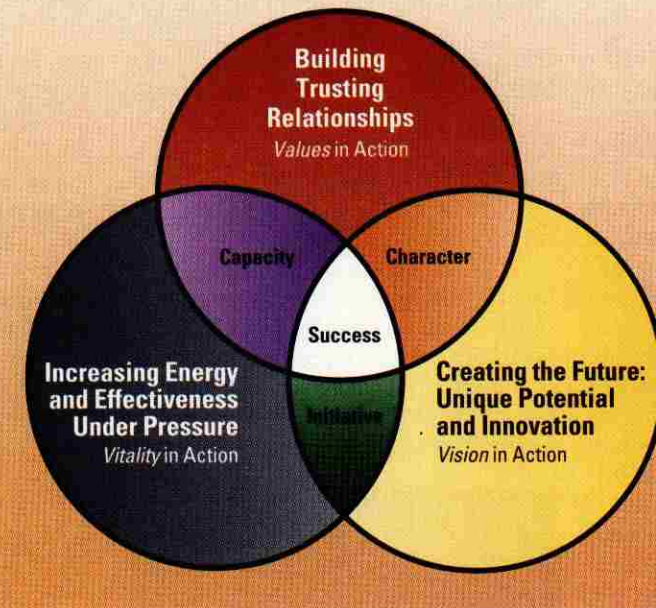
But first, it's important to discuss emotional honesty. A philosopher said: "If you look for truth outside yourself, it gets farther and farther away." We begin building, or enhancing, emotional intelligence by heeding the call of emotional honesty—remaining truthful with ourselves at the deepest level and respecting the wisdom of both our hearts and heads.

How often have you observed a performance problem, miscommunication, or breakdown in trust but done nothing to address it? How often have you relied on what I call, "cash-register honesty"—keeping your hand out of the till and putting in your eight hours while things went on around you that you felt weren't right? The most effective leaders I've worked with find that unacceptable and commit instead to emotional honesty, which means listening to the deep voice of your own truth.

Without a doubt, people at every organizational level are hungry for direct, emotionally straightforward interactions. In the *Dilbert* comic strip, Scott Adams has made a career of lampooning what nearly all of us experience in the workplace: vapid corporate-speak with no guts and no emotionally honest message. We may laugh at the cynicism in *Dilbert*, but we might wonder whether we should be soul-searching instead. Emotionally bankrupt communication devalues all of us. It presumes that we are almost infinitely manipulable, if only those in power can put the right spin on things. The vaccine against such depersonalization is to know and champion the enduring qualities for which we are genuinely respected.

For decades, some of our finest leadership thinkers have been telling us to keep the emotions in organizational life and to learn how to value

EXECUTIVE EQ: THREE ESSENTIAL DRIVING FORCES OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE



and manage them effectively in ourselves and others. Such business scholars include Chris Argyris, Abraham Zaleznik, Henry Mintzberg, Gary Hamel, and Michael Hammer, among many others. Peter Senge, director of the Organizational Learning Center at MIT, issues his own warning to those who would rely on intellect alone: "People with high levels of personal mastery...cannot afford to choose between reason and intuition, or the head and heart, anymore than they would choose to walk on one leg or see with one eye."

In what ways do you feel most valued by other people? Think of a co-worker or your boss. What, specifically, could he or she do that would make you feel worthy and respected in your work? It might be supportive words, honest feedback, performance incentives, financial rewards, or an open acknowledgment of your contributions.

Here's a practical EQ exercise: Jot down the names of the four people at work who are most vital to your success. Next to each name, write two specific ways that you think he or she feels most valued by you. If you showed those people your notes, would they agree? My experience has been that the answer would be no. Despite such "common-sensical" in-

sight, most people don't know how to answer the question in this simple exercise. Day after day, we operate on the assumption that others feel valued by us and that they somehow realize how much, and in what ways, we appreciate their presence and efforts. In reality, they rarely ever know.

You can test this exercise right now. Pick up the phone or walk down the hall and tell someone who is important to the success of your work two specific ways you value him or her. Then, ask this question: "What are two specific ways you feel most valued by me at work?" If you do that sincerely and wait quietly for a truthful response or

dialogue, there's a good chance you will learn something important and open the door for a meaningful discussion.

Over time, as trust deepens, it's likely that others will reciprocate and become more attentive to how people around them feel valued. That shift in awareness can extend throughout an organization to its customers and the community.

Emotional literacy

The first of the four cornerstones, emotional literacy, involves developing a clear and useful vocabulary for emotional literacy and recognizing, respecting, and valuing the inherent wisdom of feelings. Emotional honesty, emotional energy, emotional feedback, and practical intuition contribute to emotional literacy.

Among the leaders putting such EQ-related capacities into action is the CEO of British Airways, Colin Marshall. He has made emotional honesty a centerpiece of operations, meeting up to 20 times a year with groups of 25 managers. He says that at each meeting, he spends two or three hours talking openly about various aspects of the business. That commitment on Marshall's part is serious—he has made it a point to promote people with emotional honesty

who have challenged the system.

To experience some of the dynamism of emotional honesty personally, you can conduct an emotional intelligence self-audit over several days. Monitor your thoughts and feelings. Are you honest with yourself? How deep is your honesty? Are you paying careful attention to gut feelings or have you—by habit or training—schooled yourself to ignore them?

As you observe some of the results of your self-audit, you will begin to discover what holds up and what doesn't, who is really trustworthy and who isn't, what means the most to you, and which among your many time-consuming work tasks matter less than you thought or not at all. As you make those discoveries, you will develop and access intuitive knowledge in ways that are unique to you.

Or go a powerful step further with EQ Morning Notes—a simple, yet intriguing, process. For a few weeks, get up five minutes earlier than usual. Go to your favorite, well-lit spot; sit quietly; listen deeply; and, with pen and paper in hand, get out of your head and into your heart. As you reflect openly on your life and work, write a few pages each day, no matter how random or rough your ideas. The key is to just write, bypassing your mind's ever-present censor and critic.

By the end of the first week, you will likely feel a bit lighter and more energized after you finish writing. You will start to feel prepared to be more open, honest, and creative throughout the day. After about three weeks, you may have increased your emotional literacy significantly.

Only by getting—and staying—in touch with our inner voices can we develop a deep source of knowing beyond our thoughts. That is the realm of emotional intelligence. You will find that much of the truth about your life and work is inside of you, not outside.

Emotional fitness

Robert Galvin, the CEO of Motorola who oversaw its transformation from a sleepy appliance maker to a high-tech powerhouse, often credited his father's influence for his own ability to turn around a corporate culture. "My father imposed on me the greatest discipline," Galvin said. "He trusted me."

Trust is one of the key characteristics of the second cornerstone of emotional intelligence, emotional fitness. It includes authenticity, resilience, renewal, and constructive discontent. Those qualities illuminate our personal values and character, and the feelings that enliven and drive them. Through them, each of us forges his or her authentic place in the greater scope of life and work. Few things matter more to a successful professional or leader.

Trust, which is often a casualty of our unwillingness or inability to face up to emotions, has become a central competitive issue, not only among companies but also among nations. Says Tom Peters, "Technique and technology are important, but adding



trust is the issue of the decade." In addition to Motorola, some of America's most successful companies have built their market strength and profitability on a foundation of trust—such as, Southwest Airlines, Nordstrom, and Ritz-Carlton hotels. Wal-Mart's CEO David Glass has said that founder Sam Walton was able to move forward with optimism, and admit and correct mistakes, largely because he had so much trust in others.

In 1993, W. Edwards Deming said: "Trust is mandatory for [the] optimization of any system. Without trust, there can be no cooperation between people, teams, departments, divisions. Without trust, each component will protect its own immediate interests to its long-term detriment, and to the detriment of the entire system." In *Beyond Reengineering*, business strategist Michael Hammer says that the overhead of distrusting or wary relationships is enormous.

Trust is more than a good idea or attitude; it's an actionable emotional strength—something we must feel and act upon. When we trust ourselves, extend trust to others, and receive it in return, it becomes the glue that holds relationships together. It also frees up honest dialogue. A lack of trust prompts us to spend a lot of time and effort protecting, inspecting, doubting, checking, and weighing instead of doing work that is creative, collaborative, and value-added.

In a recent interview in *Strategy & Business*, Minoru Makihara, president of Mitsubishi, emphasized the immense value of trust networks. Leaders in organizations of all shapes and sizes are beginning to realize that the price of mistrust is steep and can be lethal to an enterprise's future. Trust has economic value. We can measure its impact on the bottom line in a variety of ways.

In a recent survey of multinational corporations, the *Economist* concluded that many firms are beginning to resemble networks of far-flung alliances and that trust is becoming a pivotal issue. But how can we hope to move groups when we can't connect as individuals?

Whether for an individual, a team, or an organization, trustworthiness is built and sustained on a foundation of honest and appropriate disclosure, believability, and credibility. There's evidence that business trust depends, first and foremost, on making emotional contact with people. Whether it's a product, service, or relationship, nearly everyone "buys" based on their emotions and justifies afterwards with facts.

Without trust, innovation falters and vanishes. That's the finding of several business analysts, including Manfred Kets de Vries, professor at INSEAD, who says, "If there is no sense of trust in [an] organization, if people are preoccupied with protecting their backs...creativity will be one of the first casualties."

Without trust, leaders feel compelled to draw up procedures in great detail, even for simple transactions—unlike some Japanese companies that ensure agreements are limited to one or two pages by using such trusting phrases as, "details to be worked out later, if the need arises." Such companies know that working out details

later is a win-win for all parties. Without such trust, companies waste time and often surround themselves with attorneys. That prompts management to assume (erroneously) that employees need even more rigid supervision and that they can't work successfully without being monitored.

Unless we deepen and expand trust actively in our work relationships and organizations, we shall suffer from the lack of genuine community. That can inhibit people from pursuing economic opportunities. The economic cost of that is losing what sociologist James Coleman called, "social capital"—the ability of people to trust each other and work together for shared purposes in groups and organizations.

Francis Fukuyama, senior analyst for the Rand Corporation, calls it the "radius of trust." It expands based, in part, on a combination of believability and spontaneous sociability—an aspect of emotional intelligence indicative of one's ease in talking with strangers and embracing differences with openness instead of rigidity. It has to do with perceiving differences as sources of possible connections and ideas that may prove valuable. Fukuyama asserts that shame, anger, and pride are the byproducts of a search for recognition—shame when we fail to live up to our own standards, anger when others don't recognize our worth, and pride when we are recognized for our contributions.

Here's a simple, yet useful, way to extend your trust radius: Write down the names of the people you trust unconditionally, and draw a circle around the names. Keep in mind that you either trust or don't trust. On the level of emotional intelligence, there is nothing partial or conditional about trust. Next, place a star beside the names of the people inside the circle who work with you.

Ask yourself this question: How much more effective, creative, and successful could I be if more of the people who work with me were inside my circle of trust? Jot down the names of the four people you feel are most vital to your success at work. Next to each name, write two specific ways to build greater trust with that person. Over the next several days, seek out each of those people and

initiate a discussion about trust. Find out how trustworthy they feel you've been and what, precisely, the two of you could do to increase and maintain greater trust. Notice that all of those actions begin with you rather than you trying to change others' behavior.

How genuinely and fully available do you make yourself to people who spend time with you? I suggest making a small change in your everyday interactions. The next time that you have to meet with someone and you sense there won't be enough time to do justice to the issue at hand, find a nearby spot to sit down and talk. The human brain is, apparently, programmed to perceive standing conversation (in which one person is poised to flee) as less genuine than seated talk.

■ *Our emotions
contain our
histories—every
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every experience,
deep understanding,
and relationship
in our lives* ■

Next, say, "I have x minutes (not, "I *only* have x minutes") to spend with you right now. If you need more time, tell me and I'll schedule a follow-up meeting."

When I first tried that approach, I was concerned that my schedule would be jammed with appointments from people taking me up on the offer. However, as communication scientists have also discovered, I found that, in most cases, the opposite was true. By being clear about time constraints and committing yourself to achieving a shared understanding (even if that requires additional meetings), you make people feel valued. Consequently, they tend to make the most of the limited time they have with you and are less likely to insist on additional meetings to get your attention. You've shown that they already have it.

If you're genuine about your acces-

sibility and attentiveness, others will trust you and think that you stand out from the management crowd. That perception is crucial for high-performance leaders. Without it, they get a relentless undercurrent of resentment that makes both sides stressed, mistrustful, and less productive.

Emotional depth

The first two cornerstones—emotional literacy and fitness—deal with the breadth of emotional intelligence. They have to do with developing and applying the energizing power of emotional intelligence in a range of circumstances. The third cornerstone, emotional depth, has to do with these actions:

- ▶ calling forth your core character
- ▶ identifying and advancing the unique potential and purpose that define your destiny
- ▶ manifesting commitment, drive, initiative, conscience, and accountability
- ▶ applying integrity
- ▶ increasing your influence beyond authority, rank, and title.

Learning, the most effective way to influence others without having or exercising control over them, is one of the principal organizational challenges of the decade, according to Ronald Heifetz, director of the leadership program at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government. In essence, that challenge represents what emotional intelligence, at its best, creates. It is about perceiving, learning, relating, creating, prioritizing, and acting in ways that take into account emotional influence rather than relying solely on command and control, logic and intellect, or technical analysis.

According to some researchers, our emotions, as much as or more than our minds, contain our histories—every chapter and verse of every experience, deep understanding, and relationship in our lives. Emotions make up who we are, and they enter our human system as a source of energy that radiates and resonates. In Latin, *emotion* means "the spirit that moves us." That energy is the transmitter and recorder of all feelings, thoughts, and interactions. It determines what we dream and buy and what we're drawn to, believe in, and commit to.

Many of us are inclined to exter-

nalize problems and insist others have to change. But the external system that many people complain about actually exists within us. We are, in effect, transmitters and receivers of energy and values. Emotions are the currents of energy that arise in us, activate our values, and shape our perceptions and behaviors—which then emanate outward and influence others.

Research at the University of Maryland psychophysiology laboratory, the Institute for HeartMath, and other institutions, suggests that every cell in the human body responds to each emotion and spoken word and that the heart's feelings can be measured—from up to five feet away, in fact. In a dialogue, the listener is not only absorbing the message and responding intuitively to the speaker but is also, in a sense, connected to or one with the speaker. We have a responsibility to respect that interactive power of feelings.

Emotional intelligence expands through an ongoing process of understanding and applying the first two cornerstones, and then exploring emotional depth through a variety of practices. They include the kind of mentoring and coaching programs supported by CEOs Robert Eaton at Chrysler and Lew Platt at Hewlett-Packard and the initiatives designed and implemented by Gayle Holmes's Minneapolis-based company, MenTTium, cited by the U.S. Department of Labor as a model for mentoring programs.

Along those lines, you can try to make your own corporation more of a community. According to research conducted by organizational strategists Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, when people are asked to react to the word *corporation*, they express feelings and images of authority, bureaucracy, rigid rules, machines, and a military chain of command. The word *community* evokes volunteerism, barn raisings, personal responsibility, teamwork, and fun. Executives like Michael Dell, founder of Dell Computer, try to engender and elicit such feelings by emphasizing the importance of community—people opting to be part of a whole.

Most of us grew up believing the adage that we can do anything we set our minds to. That notion is linked to

the nearly constant drive to spend much of our time focusing on and trying to fix our weaknesses, while letting our strengths and talents take care of themselves. Yet, both views can sabotage our work and lead to chronic frustration.

Long-term studies by Stanford Research Institute and the Gallup Organization on more than 250,000 successful men and women indicate that each of us has a unique potential defining our destiny. When we ignore that and focus on our perceived inadequacies and weaknesses, we feel trapped and dissatisfied.

No matter how hard we try, none of us can do everything exceptionally well, but each of us can do some things better than 100,000 other people. Yet, few organizations take those facts into account when devising op-

■ *No one wakes up excited to make an extra penny or an incremental improvement* ■

erational strategies or conducting business. Think about how many otherwise bright professionals check the best of themselves and their talents and passions at the door each day when they go to work. They just go through the motions according to a job description or CEO's expectations. What organization can afford to allow that to continue?

We must recognize and develop our strengths and talents while monitoring and managing—rather than trying to fix—our vulnerabilities. The essence of emotional depth is this: There's more in human life and work than rigid, time-worn theories allow. There's more depth and wisdom in what we feel and in our hearts' images of our unique potential. You might begin by identifying two of your most significant strengths and talents that are rarely, if ever, called upon in your work. What are two of the greatest hidden strengths and talents of each of the people who work with you? Imagine the benefit of valuing and capitalizing on such attributes openly.

David K. Hart, ethics professor at Brigham Young University, says, "Work is the opportunity to imprint what is unique about us upon the outside world. Human beings have an imperative need to leave the stamp of themselves on the world."

Emotional alchemy

If you apply the first three cornerstones of emotional intelligence—emotional literacy, fitness, and depth—you can experience growth and progress. You can become more energized, effective, and trusting in your relationships. You can be more at home with who you really are.

You'll also be poised for a much-sought-after advance, because the fourth cornerstone of emotional intelligence is alchemy—a blending of forces that enable us to discover creative opportunities and transform lesser ideas into greater ones. In sad juxtaposition to Hart's assertion to leave our stamp on the world, most of us have come, of necessity, to view life—and organizational life in particular—as an unending procession of problems to be solved, short-term goals to be met, reports to be read or written, employees to be motivated or placated, and customers to be satisfied or retained. Most problems come to us by way of "the system"—some source outside of ourselves. We feel lucky if we can deal with them at all, even superficially.

Others view life as more than a series of problems. Such people see life and work a way to express their uniqueness, and they're not going to miss the chance. Such companies as 3M and Disney find ways to give wings to employees' dreams. When Netscape cofounder Jim Clark left his position as chairman of Silicon Graphics in 1992, few people expected his dreams to pay off. Clark recalls thinking: "Boy, if this doesn't work, people are going to think I'm the stupidest person alive." But it did work, and now he's one of the richest people alive.

When most of us talk about change, we usually mean incremental change—the result of a rational, sequential analysis and orderly planning, driven primarily by intellect. But incremental change is short-term, limited in scope, and tends to be re-

versible. That is, we don't risk much because we can abandon it and go back to the old ways of doing things—called “the slow death dilemma” by Robert Quinn of the University of Michigan business school.

In contrast, many successful leaders are unwilling to compete in the future based solely on incremental change and the mindset and limitations that go with it. Instead, they envision and commit to transformational change. They continually question assumptions and don't behave in fixed ways when they run up against the status quo. They challenge it, perceive the deeper obstacles, and find ways to transcend them. They have the courage to take creative risks. They allow themselves and others to make mistakes and explore new territories. Sometimes, they fall flat on their faces. But they get right up and keep exploring wholeheartedly. They know that the future isn't something we wait for; it's something we must help create, actively and passionately. Emotional intelligence plays a vital role.

Michael Eisner, chairman and CEO of the Walt Disney Company, says: “Being in connection with our emotional depths is critical to releasing our most powerful and creative forces. Denying this deeper level leads to disconnection. In effect, people lose touch with aspects of who they are. The result tends to be vulnerability, fear, and denial, as well as superficiality, falseness, and a mistrust of intuition—all of which can get in the way of deep, creative expression. Fear of criticism and lack of acceptance are primary reasons people censor their feelings and intuitions and shut down their depths.... Trusting our deepest intuition and instincts may mean overriding contrary research, peer pressure, conventional wisdom, or intimidation.”

Peter Drucker recently referred to the practice of relegating the best people to a problem-fixing mode as a “deadly business sin.” He says that only by pursuing opportunities actively can we have growth. In some organizations, the leaders never venture into unknown territory. They avoid new product or service ideas and try to squeeze every last penny from downsizing, cycle reduction, and resource shifting—not that those are bad ideas.

It's just that no one wakes up excited to make an extra penny or an incremental improvement.

When people are asked to rate how they feel—“most engaged” or “most enthusiastic” to “least engaged” or “least enthusiastic”—regarding their range of tasks, they rate most highly designing, discovering, developing, producing, or selling something new. Not statistical process control. Not writing reports. When given the chance and with new learning, most of us love to stretch and listen to our inner sense of possibilities. We love to spark or exude a passion about shaping or influencing the future in a meaningful way.

The Zeigarnik Effect, coined 30 years ago, refers to the premise that



the moment we reach closure on a project or issue, creativity shuts down. It's over with. “But that's how we get things done around here.” True, but probably not your best work. When you do something exceptional, you almost always stop being an administrator. Something grabs your attention and you start caring about what the project or challenge is *really* about. You feel energized, and you begin holding yourself and others accountable for creative input and making a best effort. You stretch, exploring new ground until the last possible minute. It's likely that you have more fun than usual even though you're sweating the timeline. In nearly every case, you end up creating something great or learning something valuable.

In 1950, Richard Carlton, CEO of 3M, said, “Our company has, indeed, stumbled onto some of its new products and services. But never forget

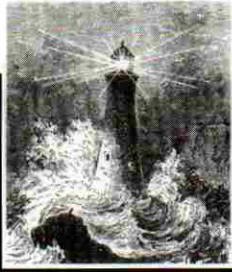
that you can only stumble if you're moving.” It's that drive for progress that has infused 3M with the spirit to sense opportunities and solve problems that other companies haven't recognized, resulting in such innovations as waterproof sandpaper and Post-it notes. Each idea began, not with a thorough plan or rigorous analysis, but with a gut hunch. In effect, they began with emotional intelligence. At 3M, employees are encouraged to follow their intuition and even defy their bosses. They hear stories of many such victories, including the one about how current CEO Desi DeSimone repeatedly tried and failed to kill a project that became the successful product, Thinsulate.

By training and experience, many managers feel compelled to push for closure in meetings and interactions. They've learned 100 ways to override disagreements and stifle discontent. In fact, many have come to view getting through their agendas as progress. It's a visible sign of movement and doing important management work that, as we can see from the managers all around us, is what managers do.

That notion of progress is largely illusory. Many of us work long hours and generate reports. We have meetings, make plans, and react to problems, receiving praise and confirmation from those around us. But at what level are we actually leading or creating anything?

Are we listening to our gut instincts and actively seeking out disconfirmation of preset perspectives? How often do we deliberately refrain from premature closure and insist on keeping projects in process; stirring things up; and searching for unexpected insight, connections, and possibilities?

We all can be better positioned to face what others also face, but with sharper instinct and greater creative engagement. We can respond differently and innovatively because we aren't stuck in time. We can develop exceptional tolerance for ambiguity and leave things “in play,” creatively speaking. We can accomplish objectives and still stay open and imaginative. And we can encourage such capabilities in others, especially if we bypass the tendency to label possibilities and challenges as “right” or “wrong” and “good” or “bad.”



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When developing a creative idea, many of us fail to take into account the Zeigarnik Effect. When things get hectic or uncomfortable, we become impatient. We push for early closure and settle for less than the best possible solution. What might have been a huge success ends up mediocre, or worse. Or a competitor jumps in and gets it right.

To a large extent, what we're seeking in business and life isn't "out there." It isn't the latest trend or technology; it's inside ourselves. It has been there all along, but many of us haven't valued or respected it, or used it as brilliantly as we are capable of.

At its essence, a meaningful and successful life requires being attuned to what is beneath the mental analyses, appearances, control, and rhetoric. It's in the human heart, which isn't just a pump. It radiates. It activates our deepest values and ability to learn and create, transforming our values and ideas from things we think about to what we live.

One of the foremost challenges facing leaders and organizations is how to learn and lead through emotional intelligence and reasoning instead of through abstract ideas and analysis. How to lead through relationship instead of rote, authenticity instead of role, discernment instead of habit, and essence instead of surface.

This much we know: Success in the knowledge era has become, in the words of John Seely Brown, vice president and chief scientist at Xerox Corporation, "as much about the spirit of the enterprise as the economics of the business; as much about the positive energy it unleashes as the positive cash flow it creates."

Business has become the most powerful institution on the planet. The dominant institution in any society must take responsibility for the whole. It must lead the way, by example, into the future. Every decision made and every action taken must be viewed in the light and context of that kind of responsibility. Admittedly, we still lack many of the answers. Yet, we can't deny that it's high time to start asking more of the essential questions.

According to systems thinking, the deeper structures or habits of which we're unaware hold us hostage. Review the pattern of your life and work:

As pressures, uncertainties, and change come at you from all sides, are you calling more than ever on your emotional intelligence? Or do you still worship at the altar of intellect—memorized facts, technical analysis, and reductionistic reasoning?

Ask yourself this question: Which capabilities am I developing and emphasizing, counting on in my career, using to lead my team or organization, and investing myself in? That's far from an idle question. There's a great chance that your answer will determine your future. No person or organization has yet captured the full, life-affirming potential of emotional intelligence. But the examples in this article can provide us with glimpses of the possibilities.

Each aspect of emotional intelligence becomes a tributary. The more tributaries you open, the more powerful the force of their combined flow. At their strongest, the forces of emotional intelligence put you in tune with your deepest, natural understanding so that your thoughts and actions integrate all you have known, all you are, and all that you might become. That is called *confluence*—the drawing together of your disparate talents, purposes, and capabilities into an indivisible whole. Mahatma Gandhi captured the essence of confluence when he said, "You must *be* the change you wish to see in the world."

Another great leader, Nelson Mandela, used his inaugural address to challenge us to face the possibilities that emotional intelligence holds: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us."

If we were to wholeheartedly develop and apply our emotional intelligence in leadership and organizations—and honor the greatness in ourselves and in each other—how bright would be the light that we bring to our work and to the world? ■

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