



Volunteer Vision Factsheet

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

WHY DO LEADERS NEED IT AND HOW DO THEY DEVELOP IT?

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: WHY DO LEADERS NEED IT AND HOW DO THEY DEVELOP IT?

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Emotional intelligence, or EQ, is understood to describe a person's ability to understand and manage their own emotions, while also being able to recognize and influence the emotions of others. There are four top competencies that are crucial for emotional intelligence:

1 **Self-Awareness**

The knowledge of personal strengths and flaws, and the desire to collect well-rounded feedback from all sides to continue a well reflected understanding of themselves.

2 **Self-Management**

The ability to successfully produce desirable behavior that relies on a person's emotions. This can include replacing unwanted behavior, such as outbursts of anger, with desired behavior, such as pausing to reflect and rationalize the situation.

3 **Relationship Management**

Successful relationship management leads a person to not only positively influence others, but mentor and coach people to navigate difficult situations as well. This skill is also essential for addressing conflict and having tough conversations in a productive manner.

4 **Social Awareness**

Being socially aware means to have the ability to recognize the emotions of others and how they contribute to group dynamics. A major factor in building social awareness is empathy, which leads to more effective communication with others in return.

And while arguably any of these competencies are crucial for building and managing interpersonal relationships, the combination of the four are what build the base for strong emotional intelligence that takes leadership from good to outstanding.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP

While technical skills have long been valued for leadership candidates, we have recently seen an increase in demand for excellent interpersonal skills and high emotional intelligence as well. This can be related back to the fact that leaders with high emotional intelligence have been found to outperform their less emotionally aware counterparts and therefore have re-defined outstanding leadership.

- ✘ Low **self-awareness** can cut your team's success in half, while leading to increased stress and reduced motivation among colleagues well reflected understanding of themselves.
- ✘ Leaders with low **self-management** skills tend to react to situations rather than responding thoughtfully, and therefore often struggle to manage a crisis in a calm and collected manner. This can have a significant impact on their team and colleagues, who would like to see their leader as a source of motivation and inspiration in challenging times.
- ✘ Failing at **relationship management** by avoiding conflict can have very significant effects on the company's resources, as it has been found that for every un-addressed conflict about eight hours of work time are lost to gossip and colleagues venting about their frustrations. Further, the situation also negatively impacts morale and motivation of the team.
- ✘ Leaders who fall short in their **social awareness** will struggle to build authentic relationships with their team as they will not pick up on social cues from their colleagues. This causes an inability to support the team as needed and unlocking their full potential.

STRENGTHENING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Self-Awareness

Implementing and following 360° feedback is an effective method to open eyes to new perspectives on your behavior and potential blind spots. Alternatively, actively asking trusted colleagues and peers for feedback can be a great place to start.

→ This can also be an opportunity to raise self-awareness in other aspects of life, such as at home, with family or friends, to create a well-rounded understanding of oneself.

Helpful questions or conversation starters can be:

- *I really value your opinion; would you offer some insights on how you think I managed [specific situation]?*
- *How do you think I handled [specific situation]?*
- *Do you think I chose the right approach for [specific situation]?*
- *What could I have done differently?*

Social Awareness

In order to become more socially aware, leaders should actively practice empathy, for example by asking colleagues about their well-being in informal check-ins. Enrolling in a Mentoring program can also be an effective way to practice the focus on someone else's needs and social cues.

→ Empathy is much more than acknowledging someone else's feelings: It is showing compassion for others and recognizing that their state of mind matters. This is a skill that needs to be practiced regularly, so forming new habits of checking in with others is a great start.

Here are some prompts that might help in developing and strengthening empathy towards colleagues and superiors at work:

- ✕ *What does this person's world look like outside of work?*
- ✕ *What do I know about them as a person?*
Hint: If not much comes to mind, that is a clear sign to reach out and get to know them better. Chances are high that empathy will then come much easier in the future.

Before starting a meeting with someone, ask yourself:

- *What context might this person be in right now?*
- *Is it a busy day for them?*
- *Will this meeting/project cause them stress?*
- *What is their preferred way of communication, how can you adapt to that?*

Self-Management

This skill heavily relies on resisting the urge to react instantly and pausing to explore emotions before jumping into action instead. This can be a lengthy process of unlearning and re-directing and requires the person to hold themselves accountable.

→ Empathy is much more than acknowledging someone else's feelings: It is showing compassion for others and recognizing that their state of mind matters. This is a skill that needs to be practiced regularly, so forming new habits of checking in with others is a great start.

Here are some tips to consider in heated situations:

- ✕ *Try to rationalize the situation by focusing on the facts: What exactly has happened? What is the current issue? How can it be fixed?*
- ✕ *Form the habit of taking three deep breaths before reacting to a situation that causes anger. Reminding yourself of a mantra can be helpful, such as 'This situation will pass, and there is a solution.'*
- ✕ *When bad news are shared, focus on not just angry behavior, but also on body language and facial expressions. Remaining calm and collected on the outside will help with practicing feeling calm as well.*

X *Negative emotions and anger at work can not be entirely avoided, and while outstanding leaders don't take them out at their teams, it does not mean that they need to keep it to themselves. Ranting and venting with a trusted friend or family member can be very helpful in channeling the negative emotions before letting them go.*

Social Awareness

Setting a focus on continuously monitoring the emotional climate of a team can be a great help in developing better relationship management skills.

These steps will lead the way to practicing relationship management at work:

- Taking action by addressing any interpersonal issues in the team head-on by inviting involved colleagues to an open conversation that aims to find a solution for the issue.



- Providing uplifting support during difficult periods is the basis for building lasting working relationships that make colleagues feel valued and seen. Support can come in different ways and can range from motivational speeches in a team meeting, one-on-one check-ins with team members, to initiating non-work team activities during work hours or organizing sweet treats/lunch to break up the stressful tension.



● Considering team dynamics as well as technical skill-sets when grouping team members together for a task or project is essential to promote relationship building and collaboration within the team as well. Outstanding leadership models behavior that will influence their team's behavior as well, so building teams that are diverse and respectful of each other's unique views and contributions is a great step towards ingraining relationship management into the work culture.



- Keeping an eye on team members professional development goals outside of performance reviews: Encouraging team members to grow in their role and guiding them with empathetic advice plays an important part in building trusting relationships and showing true leadership. This step can go from offering advice to becoming a mentor, or even to setting up a mentoring program across the team or organization.



Emotional intelligence is a complex set of skills that needs to be built and nurtured continuously in order to translate into outstanding leadership. Taking part in a guided mentorship can significantly improve interpersonal skills such as empathy, and social awareness. If you are interested in the opportunities mentoring offers for the leadership development within your organization, please feel free to [reach out](#) to us!