



Primal Leadership

Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence

by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, Annie McKee

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Take-Aways

- Great leaders lead emotionally. Leadership is not only intellectual; it is also emotional. Leaders should be inspiring.
- Leaders get a great payoff for transmitting positive emotions: upbeat workers, high morale, better productivity, satisfied customers and rising profits.
- Research into the brain shows that emotions are contagious.
- The leader's task is to create "resonance."
- "Dissonance" is the enemy of great leaders.
- Self-knowledge is fundamental to great leadership.
- Leaders must be able to control their emotions and practice "self-management."
- The "CEO disease" is the inability to get necessary facts, because people are afraid or unwilling to tell the truth to the boss.
- You can build emotional intelligence, but it takes work.
- Emotionally intelligent leaders draw strength from their values, and tend to be flexible, frank, open and informal.

Rating (10 is best)

Overall

9

Applicability

9

Innovation

8

Style

7

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Relevance

What You Will Learn

In this Abstract, you will learn: 1) Why emotional intelligence is critical to leadership; 2) How to build emotional intelligence; 3) What factors constitute competent leadership; and 4) How to define four positive leadership styles.

Recommendation

The authors of this clearly written book draw on deep research and numerous studies of psychology and neurology to show that great leadership is primarily and essentially a matter of emotional intelligence. Notwithstanding the extensive support and the documentation from academic literature, authors Daniel Goleman (author also of the classic *Emotional Intelligence*), Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee have written an intelligent, lucid, easily accessible presentation. They contend that, with practice, you can develop the critical leadership competencies of self-awareness, self-management and social/relationship skills. Although the authors may understate the difficulty of developing these abilities, *getAbstract* finds their arguments reasonable, persuasive and useful.

Abstract

Emotions Come First

Leadership is primal and emotional. Great leaders fire people up, stoke their passions and rouse their emotions. Clearly, the primal element of leadership is emotional – that is, emotions come first. Generally, leaders have two kinds of emotional impact. “Resonance” is the positive emotional affect of leadership; those who are led resonate in harmony with the leader’s emotions. “Dissonance” is leadership’s negative emotional affect; those who are led break away emotionally from the leader. Because the human emotional system is an “open loop,” people depend on others for emotional stimulus and reaction. In fact, emotions are contagious. Even when two strangers sit together, one may transmit emotions to the other without saying anything.

Emotional leadership is the fundamental task of great leaders. Emotionally intelligent leaders have a way with people, and can transmit positive or negative emotions. The payoff for leaders is greatest when they transmit positive emotions. When employees feel upbeat, they are more apt to relay their positive vibrations to customers and fellow employees. Morale rises. Customer satisfaction rises. Productivity and profits rise.

Resonance and Dissonance

Dissonance is poison, literally unhealthy physically and psychologically. Poor leaders cause dissonance many ways. The obvious examples are manipulative or tyrannical bullies who specialize in demeaning and humiliating people. Then there are outright hypocrites, who say what they don’t mean and only care about getting ahead, or the “clueless” leaders, who try to create resonance, but don’t notice that their employees are locked in negative emotions.

Leadership depends on the deepest, most ancient features of the human brain. The brain has different systems for intelligence and for emotions. Obviously, emotions are necessary to survival. However, as society has developed, people’s ability to control their emotions has become more important. Great leaders help conduct emotions into positive channels.

“Great leaders move us.”

“When a leader triggers resonance, you can read it in people’s eyes: They’re engaged and they light up.”

“The most effective leaders...use humor more freely, even when things are tense, sending positive messages that shift the underlying emotional tone of the interaction.”

“By rarely using praise and freely criticizing employees, the commanding leader erodes people’s spirits and the pride and satisfaction they take in their work – the very things that motivate most high-performing workers.”

“Defensiveness... demotivates rather than motivates, thereby interrupting, even stopping, self-directed learning and the likelihood of change.”

“When the designated leader lacks credibility... people may turn for emotional guidance to someone else who they trust and respect.”

Leadership Competence: Personal and Social

Leadership competence has “four domains” in two areas: “personal competence” consists of “self-management” and “self-awareness,” and “social competence” includes “social awareness” and “relationship management.” These competences are fundamental to good leadership.

The self-management competences are:

- **“Self-control”** – This is the ability to control negative emotions and channel them in positive directions. Self-controlled leaders stay calm under fire, think clearly even in a crisis, and remain unflappable and imperturbable. They steadfastly convey these emotions to others.
- **“Transparency”** – These leaders walk the talk. They do as they say. They are authentic and without duplicity. When they make mistakes, they admit that they are at fault.
- **“Adaptability”** – Adaptable leaders adjust to change without panic. They understand that organizational life is ambiguous and in flux. They are flexible and regain their balance quickly on shifting ground. If the facts change, they change their minds.
- **“Achievement”** – Achievement-oriented leaders constantly stretch to attain new goals and achieve higher, more difficult objectives. Yet, they are realists. They calculate risk and return, and then pragmatically set achievable targets.
- **“Initiative”** – Leaders with a sense of initiative seize success. They reach out and take it, instead of waiting for it. They don’t let red tape stop them. When rules don’t make sense, they bend or even break the rules. They make their own opportunities.
- **“Optimism”** – Optimistic leaders are positive and see the upside in any situation.

The self-awareness competences are:

- **“Emotional self-awareness”** – Be aware of your emotions and how they affect your behavior and performance. Emotionally self-aware leaders know their values, and often intuitively know the best way to handle a situation. They are forthright, frank and unafraid to say what they feel. They talk with true conviction.
- **“Self-assessment”** – Self-aware leaders usually know their strengths and weaknesses. They have a sense of humor. They’re comfortable with, and even welcome, constructive criticism. They are willing to learn and humble enough to ask for help.
- **“Self-confidence”** – Self-aware leaders know when they are in an area of personal strength. They don’t shy away from hard assignments. They welcome the challenge.

The social awareness competences are:

- **“Empathy”** – Empathetic leaders tune into others’ emotional signals. They listen, pay attention and understand. They get along with people from various backgrounds.
- **“Organizational awareness”** – These leaders are politically savvy, and can read the power landscape and the social lay of the land. They sense which political forces are in competition and why – and they know each player’s strong and weak points.
- **“Service”** – These leaders nurture a climate of service and satisfaction by being excellent servants to those around them.

The relationship management competences are:

- **“Inspiration”** – Inspiring leaders build resonance in people by having a contagious vision and a mission that everyone shares. They lead by example.
- **“Influence”** – Influential leaders know what to say or do to convince others to follow them. They can persuade, engage, get necessary buy-ins, and build and use networks.

“Leadership development that works [depends upon] self-directed learning: intentionally developing or strengthening an aspect of who you are or who you want to be, or both.”

“To begin – or sustain – real development and emotional intelligence...first engage the power of your ideal self.”

“Developing a new leadership style often means fundamentally changing how one operates with other people.”

“In any human group the leader has maximal power to sway everyone’s emotions. If people’s emotions are pushed toward the range of enthusiasm, performance can soar.”

- **“Developing others”** – Leaders with this competence can cultivate other people’s abilities. They show a real interest in others, and make good coaches and mentors.
- **“Change catalyst”** – These practical, strategic leaders see what change is necessary, and aren’t afraid to rock the boat. They are potent advocates who speak the truth, even if the boss doesn’t like it.
- **“Conflict management”** – Conflict managers can air differences and similarities. To find a compromise, they acknowledge the conflict and emphasize common interests.
- **“Teamwork and collaboration”** – Team players foster an ambience of cooperation and collegiality. They respect others and are available to help.

The Leadership Styles

Emotional intelligence defines six leadership styles. Four are positive, create resonance and enhance performance. Two are negative and at high risk for dissonance. The positive styles are:

1. **“Visionary”** – Leaders with a visionary style get people to work together toward a shared vision. This extremely positive style works best when necessity demands fresh vision and a clear, new direction.
2. **“Coaching”** – These leaders connect individual and organizational goals. They stay positive and are good at improving employee performance.
3. **“Affiliative”** – These leaders bring people together. Their talents are very useful when fissures occur in teams or when stress frays the bonds that unite employees.
4. **“Democratic”** – These leaders make it clear that they want and value participation and feedback. This style builds consensus and gets people to support initiatives. It is very useful in getting good information from employees.

The negative leadership styles are:

5. **“Pacesetting”** – Pacesetting can build resonance, but is so often misapplied that its results are usually negative. Pacesetting leaders demand ever-higher standards from their employees. The best leaders exemplify these standards. However, excess pressure can cause anxiety and uneasiness. All too often, this leader achieves a very temporary improvement in performance, followed by loss of good people.
6. **“Commanding”** – The commanding leader takes charge and brooks no disagreement. While this may be appropriate during a severe crisis or in a failing company that demands a turnaround, it is easily abused. Commanding bosses are anachronisms. No one really wants to work for them. In an economy that demands hiring the best people, the commanding leadership style is hazardous to your organizational health.

“The Five Discoveries of Self-Directed Learning”

You can teach yourself the competences of a resonant leader. Embark on your course of self-directed learning focused on making five discoveries. This process of discovery takes you through finding your:

1. **“Ideal self”** – Who do you want to become? Values are important in your search for your ideal self. Note the values that should matter, but determine if you have reached your genuine drive or if you are paying lip service to a given value. For example, think of the consultant who, “lists ‘family’ as a dominant value, but still spends five days a week away.” Pay attention to the values you actually practice, which probably are governed by your underlying philosophy. Are you a pragmatist, an individualist or a humanist?

“Leaders execute a vision by motivating, guiding, inspiring, listening, persuading – and, most crucially, through creating resonance.”

“To be in tune with others’ vision, you have to be open to others’ hopes and dreams.”

2. **“Real self”** – Determine who you are now. Be aware of self-delusion. Discover the truth about yourself. Ask others to help you. It is extremely difficult – and critically important – for leaders to get accurate information about themselves.
3. **Agenda for learning** – How can you bolster your strong points and narrow the gap between what you are and what you want to be? Understanding your real self and your ideal self is important, because your passion for learning depends on how avidly you want to be your ideal self. Life becomes a learning adventure. Set flexible, feasible goals that strengthen your assets and match your style of learning.
4. **Ways to experiment** – Try new ways of acting, thinking and feeling until you master them. In a sense, you are rebuilding your brain and changing the way you react to stimuli. This takes constant practice. The brain you have, and the reactions and habits you already developed, are the product of a lifetime. Changing them involves much more than simply learning what you need to do. Think of how you will act in situations where your present leadership style is ineffective. Mentally rehearse to set the stage for your performance.
5. **Working relationships** – Develop relationships of trust and mutual support to make it possible to change. It is lonely at the top. Leaders need people who can help them.

Emotional Intelligence and Organizations

Becoming an emotionally intelligent leader is not enough. An emotionally intelligent organization needs the same competences that characterize an emotionally intelligent leader. The process of cultivating organizational emotional intelligence is similar to the effort of creating personal emotional intelligence. Thus, the organization’s leaders must consider the ideal organization, the real organization, the organization’s “learning agenda,” forms of experimentation and productive relationships. Of course, building an emotionally intelligent organization requires emotionally intelligent leaders. As you go through this process:

- **Show respect** – Many things may change, but the leader must know that the center holds. The trick is to know what can and must change, without damaging the organization’s central core, which cannot possibly change. To establish this solid foundation, the leader must have profound respect for other people’s autonomy.
- **Make haste slowly** – Go slowly. Listen and take the time to build a culture that will make intense change possible.
- **Be introspective** – Look within to discover the vision. See emotionally.
- **Be attuned** – The difference between alignment and attunement is that attunement is heartfelt. People may align with abstractions, but they attune with vision.
- **Exemplify your standards** – Show, don’t tell.
- **Pay close attention to systems** – They matter. Rules, regulations and organizational practices must support the change you hope to achieve.
- **Know the power of myths** – Learn how to manage the organization’s legends, stories and symbols.

About the Authors

Daniel Goleman co-directs the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations at Rutgers University. **Richard Boyatzis** teaches and chairs the Department of Organizational Behavior at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University. **Annie McKee** teaches at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.