

Inspiring Action with Emotion

Effective management comes from both the head and the heart

BY CHRIS OBST

IN 1996, *NEW YORK TIMES* SCIENCE writer Daniel Goleman brought a whole new concept to our attention in his bestselling book, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*. He argued our emotions play a much greater role in thought, decision-making and individual success than was commonly acknowledged.

Goleman defines “emotional intelligence” as “a set of skills, including control of one’s impulses, self-motivation, empathy and social competence in interpersonal relationships.” Emotional intelligence, or EI, describes a capacity to perceive, assess and manage one’s own emotions and the emotions of others. Our EQ, or “emotional quotient,” is how one measures emotional intelligence.

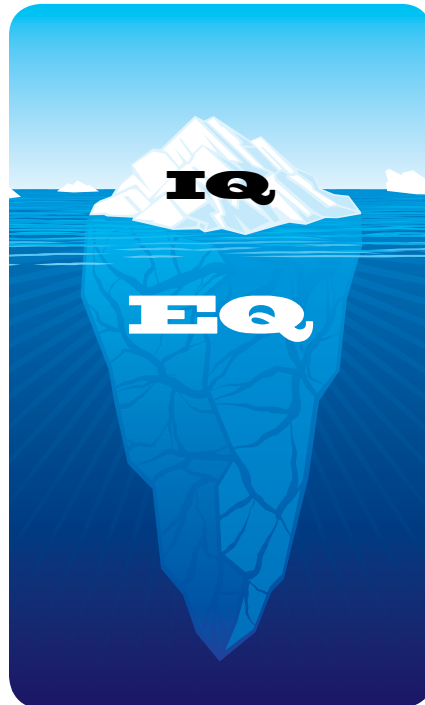
Now, almost 15 years later, EI and EQ have become staples of the language of human resources and executive leadership.

As a coach to managers and executives, I welcome this new spotlight on the emotional side of leadership. While gathering information is an intellectual activity, effective change requires an emotional connection. In my work with clients I often explain it as “getting out of your head and into your heart.”

To be an effective leader, having a plan and being able to articulate it to the troops is only half the battle. To really engage the mind, body and spirit of your charges, you need to inspire them. And true inspiration isn’t limited to rational thought – you need to reach them emotionally to get their best efforts, creativity and commitment.

Think for a moment about the team you are leading. How would you rate their level of commitment and enthusiasm for their goals at work? Would they run through a wall to get the job done? Are you getting their best ideas? How many of them are going above and beyond and really adding value?

To see some real action from your team, lead by emotive example. Get them excited



about the next quarter by showing them *your* excitement. Get them serious about meeting a quota by showing them *you* are serious. Draw out and harness their emotional energy by feeding them some of your own. Authentic, positive and powerful emotions have a contagious and uplifting effect on people, especially now in an increasingly wired workplace.

Many of us struggle with showing our emotions at work, having been conditioned to leave our emotions at the door. Promotion to a managing role is often a reward for cerebral accomplishments, but managing people isn’t strictly an intellectual pursuit.

For different and similar reasons, members of both sexes can struggle with showing emotions at work. For both it boils down to wanting to appear strong, tough and business-minded. But managing people and managing change requires emotional engagement, and

great leaders know how to engage emotionally with the people they lead.

Successful leaders don’t compel people to work for change with their policy analysis or their rational arguments; they compel people with emotions. They find creative and authentic means of relating to people on an emotional level. And they express their passion, their excitement, their concern – their emotions – in ways that stir an emotional response in the people around them.

History is filled with inspiring examples – take Gandhi or Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who used speeches, stories, events and even music to evoke a response. Think about the leaders who have inspired you. Was it what they said? Or how they said it?

The key is to share, but to share selectively. Emphasize high-powered, positive emotions like commitment, excitement, enthusiasm and desire. Highly charged negative emotions, such as anger, frustration and criticism, need to be kept in check and not shared with the team, unless disengagement or all-out revolt is on your agenda.

Emotion at work is a powerful stimulant – especially when focused and directed toward a goal. What could you and your team achieve this year once you tap into your own emotions and stimulate a positive emotional response in the people you lead? **BCB**



As principal of Core Dynamics Group, Chris Obst has fulfilled the role of management consultant and coach to a range of businesses since 1999. As a member of the Human Performance Institute, energy management is one of his special areas of interest and one that he shared with Microsoft’s top performers in Paris last year. www.coredynamicsgroup.com