

The Leader's Individual Attributes - Emotional Intelligence



For Leadership positions Emotional Intelligence competencies account for **up to 87%** of what sets outstanding Managers apart from the average.

Daniel Goleman

Starting with the publication of Daniel Goleman's book on this subject in 1995, Emotional Intelligence has become one of the trendy concepts in the business world. When the *Harvard Business Review* published an article on this topic in 1998, it became one of the most popular articles read and reprinted by the publication in the last 40 years.

What is Emotional Intelligence (EI)?

In a nutshell, EI is the capacity for recognising, understanding, controlling and using our own and others' feelings and emotions to enhance our interactions and results. Here are some of the key hypothesis and principles of EI, according to Goleman¹:

- Human beings have the equivalent of two minds — one that thinks and one that feels
- Our brains operate like an “open-loop”, being influenced by our interactions with others, which influences us both physically and emotionally
- Strong emotions interfere with clear thinking; anxiety undermines the intellect.
- We should aim to find the right balance between reason and emotion
- Feedback is the currency of emotional intelligence in management
- Cultivating emotional intelligence is a cost-effective management imperative

More and more studies reveal that **EI** is the key to excellence in Leadership and Management. People with high **EQ** are better liked, more co-operative, more trusted, more motivated, more optimistic and better at handling conflicts. In the case of managers with low levels of EI, however, many employees consider that the negative influence of their boss is the worst aspect of their job.

One shouldn't conclude that cognitive intelligence is not important. In most cases, one needs a degree of cognitive intelligence (IQ) to reach a particular level (qualify for a job, obtain a degree, learn new skills etc.).

What the EI experts claim is that once you are admitted to an MBA, for example, what matters in terms of how successful you will be compared to your peers has less to do with IQ differences and more to do with social and emotional factors. To put it differently, it is more important to be able to get along well, motivate and work well with colleagues and subordinates, than it is to have an extra 10 or 15 IQ points.

Cognitive and Emotional Intelligence are not opposing competencies. They work separately, and it is possible for someone to be intellectually brilliant but emotionally incompetent. This can cause problems both in the personal and professional lives.

Goleman describes four major domains of EI, divided into two categories²:

Personal Competences: how we manage ourselves:

1. **Self-Awareness** — our ability to observe and acknowledge our various internal states. It is an unbiased state that allows us to self-examine our reactions, even during intense emotions. As Goleman demonstrates, *"Self-awareness - often overlooked in business settings - is the foundation for the rest. Without recognizing our own emotions, we will be poor at managing them, and less able to understand them in others"*³.
2. **Self-Management** — managing and optimising how we employ our emotions is one of the major challenges faced by any leader. Once mastered, self-management *"allows the mental clarity and concentrated energy that leadership demands, and what keeps disruptive emotions from throwing us off track"*⁴.

Social Competences: how we manage and expand our relationships

3. **Social Awareness** — Represented by empathy. The more self-aware we are, the more skilled we become at reading the feelings of others. Rapport, the root of great relationships, arises from the capacity for empathy. Those who can read others' feelings are better adjusted, more popular, outgoing and sensitive, and they make great leaders.

Another important component of Social Awareness is a leader's ability to express their ideas and feelings in a way that is relevant and meaningful to others. *"EI leaders spread emotions in the positive register; they move people by articulating a dream they hold that elicits optimism, or compassion, or a sense of connection..."*⁵

4. **Relationship Management** — involves all the previous domains of EI, and consists of the various tools used by a leader, such as collaboration, conflict management, influencing, motivating or developing other people. As Goleman emphasizes, *"Relationship skills allow leaders to put their EI at work"*⁶

I will end with a quote from Peter Drucker, which highlights why it is important to train our Emotional Intelligence, starting with self-awareness and self-management:

" All management books, including those I have written, focus on managing other people. But you cannot manage other people unless you manage yourself first. The most crucial and vital resource you have as an executive and as a manager is yourself; and your organization is not going to do better than you do yourself".

[Check out our article on Character as part of a leader's individual attributes.](#)

[1] - for an excellent introduction in the subject of Emotional Intelligence and leadership, we recommend D. Goleman's book *The New Leaders - transforming the art of leadership into the science of results*" (Time Warner Paperbacks, London, 2003)

[2] - ibid, pg. 47

[3] - ibid, pg. 37

[4] - ibid, pg. 57

[5] - ibid. pg. 61

[6] - ibid. pg. 66

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