The Influence of Training and Development on Emotional Intelligence

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ABSTRACT

Successful leadership is about personal characteristics and human qualities that include empathy, compassion, flexibility, and influence. Today’s leaders must have the ability to adapt to an ever-changing diverse workforce, and it’s these human abilities that set apart successful leaders. The information that emotional intelligence functions on is considered emotional knowledge, which can be taught and developed thereby improving emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2004). A manager’s awareness and understanding of one’s own emotions and ability to effectively handle others’ emotions may influence the overall success of that individual within the organization (Alston, 2009; Rozell et al., 2001). By measuring emotional intelligence skills, organizations should be able to identify appropriate candidates to train and develop for future leadership positions (Vrab, 2007). This paper reinforces positive results in the literature to support the importance of a manager’s level of emotional intelligence in the training and development process (Kerr et al., 2005).

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Training, Development, Leadership Practices and Human Resources

INTRODUCTION

Successful leadership today is about how well leaders manage themselves and how well they manage others. Successful leadership is not about intellectual ability or technical expertise; it is about personal characteristics and human qualities that include empathy and compassion, flexibility, and influence. Today’s leaders must have the ability and flexibility to adapt to an ever-changing diverse workforce, and it’s these human abilities that set apart successful leaders. Emotional intelligence has become as important as, if not more important than, intellectual quotient (IQ) and cognitive abilities. Emotional intelligence can be defined as a multifunctional array of interrelated emotional, personal and social abilities which influence one’s overall ability to actively and effectively cope with demands and pressures (Bar-On & Parker, 2000). Dulewicz and Higgs (1999) define emotional intelligence as being aware of, and managing one’s own feelings and emotions; being sensitive to, and influencing others; sustaining one’s motivation; and balancing one’s motivation and drive with intuitive, conscientious, and ethical behavior.

Mayer et al. (2004) suggest that emotional intelligence increases with age. As it increases, so do amounts of relatedness, academic accomplishments, and the ability to convey inspiring and motivating thoughts. Someone with high emotional intelligence can more easily recognize, understand, and manage emotions. Leadership is defined as a process of social interaction where performance outcomes are strongly influenced by the leader’s ability to influence the behavior of their followers (Humphrey, 2002). Transformational leaders are described as leaders who improve followers’ accomplishments and success
by influencing their values and needs. Transformational leaders change their followers’ attitudes, beliefs, and values to align them with the attitudes, beliefs, and values of the organization. Transformational leaders guide their followers towards self development and higher levels of success (Bass, 1997).

Effective leadership is essential to an organization’s success; hence, the ability to identify and define effective leadership is crucial. Conventional wisdom denotes technical expertise, superior performance, and established experience translated into effective leadership. Today, successful leaders are defined by inspiring and motivating others, promoting a positive work environment, perceiving and understanding emotions, and fostering an organizational climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into successes.

Transformational leaders advocate, encourage, and support individual development while concomitantly shaping solid relationships with their followers (Horner, 1997). Transformational leaders demonstrate and define the need for change, cultivate a future vision, and marshal follower commitment to achieve exceptional results (Spreitzer, Perttula, & Xin, 2005). In study after empirical study, researchers have found transformational leadership consistently is related to leadership effectiveness (Bryman, 1992; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). Followers of transformational leaders are more motivated to perform over and above what is expected and demonstrate reverence, loyalty, and confidence toward their leader, thus performing beyond the expectations of the organization (Spreitzer et al.). In addition to the attention to current needs, transformational leaders also focus on the future needs of the employee and the organization, both short-term and long-term goals as well as long-term issues (Dubinsky et al., 1995; Kotter, 1990). Transformational leadership theory assesses behaviors that secure followers by engaging them in the process and focusing on their needs. Accordingly, effective leaders then have the ability to improve their leadership effectiveness, their follower’s ability, and organizational success (Cook, 2006).

Alston (2009) explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership practices using the Schutte Self Report Emotional Intelligence Test (SSEIT) (Schutte et al., 1998) to assess emotional intelligence of managers, and Kouzes and Posner’s (1995) Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) to measure leadership practices. Emotions play a key role in decision-making. This study supports the position that emotional stability and emotional intelligence are important factors for organizational leadership. Specifically, transformational leadership is related to emotional intelligence.

Gardner and Stough (2002) investigated whether emotional intelligence measured by the Swinburne University Emotional Intelligence Test (SUEIT) predicted leadership style measured by Bass’s (1985) Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Results supported a strong relationship between transformational leadership and overall emotional intelligence. This study provides strong evidence for the usefulness of emotional intelligence in identifying effective leaders (Gardner & Stough, 2002).

Investigating the relationship of managerial emotional intelligence levels and a rating of leadership effectiveness, Kerr et al. (2005) found that emotional intelligence scores were a strong predictor of leadership effectiveness. This study involved the MSCEIT and subordinate ratings of supervisor performance in a manufacturing organization. Correlation analysis was used to measure the relationship between emotional intelligence and the employees’ ratings of supervisor effectiveness.

Increasingly, organizations are recognizing the need for emotionally intelligent individuals within the organization to ensure long-term success for the company. Emotional intelligence is recognized as more than a collection of professional abilities. It is a set of mental abilities that involves understanding, managing, perceiving, and using a person’s emotions.
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, LEADERSHIP & HUMAN RESOURCES

Early on, Kouzes and Posner (2003) asked thousands of people to name past distinguished leaders whom they admired most. Although there were many others, Martin Luther King and Abraham Lincoln made the top of the list most often. Evaluating the top chosen admired leaders, Kouzes and Posner (2002) found at least one commonality; they were historical leaders with strong values who were passionate about something they believed in. Strong leaders must have clear values and be firm in what they believe. These values motivate and guide followers to action.

A strong leader is passionate around long-term performance and the ability to be forward looking, setting a clear vision of the future while enlisting others. This vision must have depth and meaning in order for others to follow. As the level of a leader’s responsibility increases, the more proactive and forward-thinking one must be. (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

A good leader is constantly searching for opportunities to change and grow and improve. In order to achieve and sustain high performance, collaboration is key. In addition, creating a climate of trust facilitates positive interdependence. Trust is the essential element in the most effective leadership situations, as individuals pay attention to people they trust and allow their influence. As a leader, allowing others to take ownership and responsibility for their team’s success strengthens others by improving their confidence in their abilities. Leaders must intentionally let go to enable others to find their way to ultimately strengthen, grow, and progress.

An effective leader must also have the ability to recognize a good job and to outwardly appreciate others for a job well done. Thanking and praising employees or individuals publicly for encouraging and nurturing a mutual regard for their accomplishments encourages individuals to give their personal best. It is important to recognize individual contributions to effectively get results. Outstanding leaders focus on four essential components to effectively motivate their employees: focus on clear standards, expect the best, pay attention, and personalize recognition (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

A review of the literature on the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership behavior discloses a number of empirical studies have been conducted on this relationship: Alston (2009), Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002); Gardner and Stough (2000); Barling et al. (2000); and Palmer et al. (2001), to name a few. Goleman et al. assert it is the level of a leader’s understanding of the powerful role emotions play in the workplace that separates the best leaders from the rest. The higher one goes in an organization, technical skills and cognitive ability become less important while emotional intelligence becomes increasingly so. It is competence in emotional intelligence that distinguishes top performers in leadership (Goleman, 1998a, 1998b). Leaders that demonstrate more emotional intelligence than their peers outperform and advance quicker in their careers (Bar-On & Parker, 2000; Higgs & Rowland, 2002). J. M. George (2000) deems not only are feelings an integral part of leadership, it is the multiplicity of mood and emotion that influences leadership effectiveness. “Leaders are obviously human beings with the full range of emotions potentially available to them” (M. George, 2006, p. 1032).

J. M. George (2000) proposes emotional intelligence may contribute to leaders’ foresight in their organization by using their emotions to boost their thought process regarding internal challenges and opportunities. Leaders will be better equipped to use positive emotions to facilitate improvements and influence followers so that they are receptive to change and supportive of the leader. In addition, leaders high in emotional intelligence will have the ability to manage their emotions and followers so that followers are secure and optimistic about where they are going and their personal contribution to the organization. Vrab (2007) posits that individuals with strong emotional intelligence skills assert higher levels of transformational leadership proficiency, consequently leading to higher performance.
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE & TRAINING

The information that emotional intelligence functions on is considered emotional knowledge, which can be taught and developed within individuals, thereby improving emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2004). Many practitioners and scholars believe that emotional intelligence can be improved upon through development and training programs (Cherniss & Caplan, 2001; Clark, Callister, & Wallace, 2003; Kerr et al., 2005; Sosik & Meegeran, 1999; Sy & Cote, 2004).

Positive results in the literature also support the importance of a manager’s level of emotional intelligence in the training and development process (Kerr et al., 2005). Mayer, Perkins, Caruso, and Salovey (2001) state that it is conceivable to expect that one could increase a person’s level of emotional functioning by teaching individuals about emotional intelligence and emotional reasoning.

The ability to address underlying feelings and emotions is essential to effective leadership (Mayer & Caruso, 2002). Organizations should encourage and support training programs regarding aspects of emotional intelligence/emotional quotient, transformational leadership, and performance. Doing so will allow team members to learn shared leadership skills on the job, gain emotion-based skills to enhance and improve self-learning, develop leaders as mentors, and assess and develop emotional competencies throughout the organization (Sosik & Meegerian, 1999).

Rozell, Pettijohn, and Parker (2001) explored emotional intelligence as a predictor of performance, proposing that the declaration of viability will lead to the creation and use of an assessment tool to be used in the selection process of managers as well as the formation of management improvement and development programs for organizations. Rozell et al. (2001) propose emotional intelligence may identify those skills that are necessary components to success, therefore pin-pointing those that are lacking in managers that need to be developed in order to effectively generate improved performance in the workplace. Results indicate that emotional intelligence may have an association and connection to success, hence inferring that emotional intelligence should be integrated into management development programs. A manager’s awareness and understanding of one’s own emotions and ability to effectively handle others’ emotions may influence the overall success of that individual within the organization (Alston, 2009; Rozell et al., 2001). By measuring emotional intelligence skills, organizations should be able to identify appropriate candidates to train and develop for future leadership positions (Vrab, 2007).

Researchers recognize that leadership is an integral part of everyday existence; therefore, discovering the attributes that are specific to successful leadership then becomes the unrelenting endeavor. Interpersonal skills have become an essential component to effective leadership (Goleman, 1998b). Leaders today must have the ability and flexibility to adapt to an ever-changing workforce. These human abilities, including emotional intellect, set people apart as successful leaders.

A large body of research signifies that effective leaders repeatedly use their emotional intelligence competencies to drive leadership performance, thereby moving their organizations forward (Cherniss & Caplan, 2001; Goleman, 1998a; Mayer et al., 2004. Rozell et al. (2001) explored emotional intelligence as a predictor of performance, proposing that the declaration of viability will lead to the creation and use of an assessment tool to be used in the selection process of managers as well as the formation of management improvement and development programs for organizations. Rozell et al. found emotional intelligence may identify those skills that are necessary components to success, therefore pinpointing those that are lacking in managers that need to be developed in order to effectively generate improved performance in the workplace. Additionally, Goleman’s (1998a) findings support that developing emotional intelligence competencies in existing employees, or finding individuals that possess these skills, only will enhance an organization’s bottom line.
CONCLUSION

Companies are continuously searching for strategies to strengthen leadership abilities in the organization. Today, organizations are searching both inside and outside the firm in order to maintain a competitive advantage.

Effective leaders use their emotional intelligence to not only manage themselves but to effectively manage and direct others within the organization as well as the organization itself. Emotional intelligence has a significant effect on leadership; therefore, higher levels of emotional intelligence could help improve leadership performance and leadership effectiveness. Emotional intelligence can be improved upon with training and development. Therefore, training programs within the organization could have a positive effect on leadership and leadership performance, hence driving the organization to organizational success.

Emotional intelligence also is considered and functions as emotional knowledge, and knowledge can be taught and developed within individuals, thereby improving emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2004). Many practitioners and scholars believe that emotional intelligence can be improved upon through development and training programs (Cherniss & Caplan, 2001; Clark et al., 2003; Kerr et al., 2005; Sosik & Megerian, 1999; Sy & Cote, 2004). Therefore, for leaders already employed in the organization, companies can focus on creating or gearing training and development programs toward improving levels of existing leaders’ emotional intelligence.

Additionally, organizations should encourage and support training programs regarding aspects of emotional intelligence/emotional quotient, transformational leadership, and performance. Doing so will allow team members to learn shared leadership skills on the job, gain emotion-based skills to enhance and improve self-learning, develop leaders as mentors, and assess and develop emotional competencies throughout the organization (Sosik & Megerian, 1999).

Leaders must design strategies to improve desired organizational outcomes, for example, reduced turnover, employee commitment, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behavior. Since it is difficult to assess a leaders’ level of emotional intelligence during the interview process, it would behoove organizations to create an assessment tool that focuses on an applicant’s knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA’s) to include a measure of emotional intelligence to increase the probability of successful person/job fit for the organization. Effective selection of employees in a leadership role involves using criteria and predictors of job performance.

REFERENCES


**Author Biography:**

**Dr. Barbara Alston** earned a Doctorate in Business Administration with a concentration in Human Resources from Nova Southeastern University. She holds a Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Business Administration from Averett University in Virginia. Barbara is currently a Region Manager with Paychex, Inc. in Orlando, Florida. In addition, she teaches graduate business courses at Nova Southeastern University and APUS. With over 25 years of management & leadership experience, she brings a wealth of business knowledge, business management and leadership skills into the classroom.

**Dr. Claudette Chin-Loy** completed her doctoral degree in business Administration at Nova Southeastern University, H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business, with a specialization in human resource management. She has been teaching business and management courses for the past twelve years with number of universities, and currently works at the H. Wayne Huizenga School of Business. She has collaborated on research in the areas of organizational culture, knowledge management and change, as well as modern competitiveness in the twenty-first century.