

Emotional Intelligence for Both Leaders and Employees



By
Lori Beth Long

Have you ever walked into a business and felt a negative, toxiclike mood hanging in the air, permeating the entire organization? Very often, this negativity begins with the boss. A leader's mood can energize or deflate an entire organization. As far back as 1938, Chester Barnard launched the contemporary field of organizational behavior and leadership studies. He explored how a leader sets the tone and models the behavior for the rest of the organization. Barnard discussed the best leadership providing "consistency in a changing environment." Since then, the concept of "emotional intelligence" has evolved, uncovering the connection between an executive's emotional maturity and his or her financial performance. A cranky and ruthless boss creates a toxic organization filled with fear, anxiety and negative underachievers who ignore opportunities; an inspirational, inclusive leader fosters a healthy, trusting environment for employees to learn and take on new challenges. The final link in the chain is performance: profit or loss.

Four Effective Solutions

There are four effective solutions to help leaders develop emotional intelligence:

1. Self-Awareness using a 360-degree Assessment. This instrument is like a compass, obtaining feedback from many directions – superiors, employees at the same level and subordinates. It highlights the inevitable gaps between an executive's self-perception and the perception of others – called blind spots. The goal is to close the gap.

2. Act "As If" Managing one's mood is the ability to consistently control emotions and act with honesty and

integrity. Effective leaders do not let their occasional bad moods seize the day; they use self-management to leave it outside the office.

3. Visualization. When people picture themselves behaving a particular way in a specific situation, it is much easier to duplicate that scene in real life. This form of "mental rehearsal" is widely accepted in many arenas.

4. Coaching. None of us can improve our emotional intelligence or change our leadership style without help from others. One-on-one coaching sets goals and action plans for change. It can uncover the real issues which are affecting people's moods and inevitably, his or her productivity.

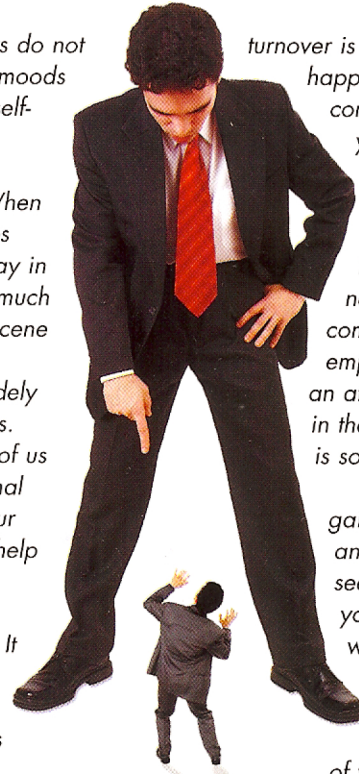
Benefits to Employees, too

These strategies are useful not only for leaders of organizations, but for all employees. It is tempting for managers to want to get rid of a problem by firing an employee with a bad attitude. However, the issues can usually be resolved in coaching the employee, with the support of the organization. The bottom line is that it will save the company money when employee

turnover is reduced and people are happier. The average cost to a company replacing a \$50,000 a year employee is \$75,000 (hiring costs, down time, learning curve time, which can take up to a year). Helping employees make necessary change exemplifies a commitment and loyalty to all employees, which in turn creates an atmosphere of trust and security in the workplace – which we know is so very important to employees.

These strategies help people gain objectivity. I like to use the analogy of the movie theater. To see any situation in life clearly, you have to sit in the audience watching the movie. If you're in the movie, you have myopic vision – you can't see behind you, way ahead of you or peripherally. When you're in the audience, with objectivity and perspective, you can see the whole picture!

— Lori is an executive consultant and life coach with Corporate Consultants & Coaching. Lori was a psychotherapist in private practice for 17 years. She uses this extensive experience in her work as a business consultant and as a coach, helping people clarify and achieve career and life goals. She can be reached at P: (954) 608-1731



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