



Emotional Intelligence for Business Leaders

Monica is lost in her thoughts. A new, exciting project landed on her desk last month. She is aware that, for the previous year, Alex and Dan have been waiting for something interesting to work on... something different from their routine day-to-day activities. (After all, work in the Quality Assurance dept can be pretty repetitive!). Without any hesitation, she assigned the new project to them.

Yesterday, she called for a project review: Alex and Dan presented to the entire team. She felt satisfied with the progress. She also assumed that her team was satisfied.

She was wrong.

Later in the evening, Celine (the oldest member of the team) approached her cautiously. According to her, Dan has been troubled for quite some time --- he does not receive timely support from the other project stakeholders involved (from different departments). And Alex feels a bit guilty as he has not been able to give his 100% to the project, owing to certain recent personal troubles at home – he has been quiet and a bit distracted at work.

Monica is completely taken aback. A hundred questions plague her mind --- How did she fail to read the room? Did she miss any obvious signals? And is she so unapproachable that Alex and Dan couldn't walk up to her and talk to her...?

Monica starts wondering about the implications: on the collective morale, on her relationship with the team, and on the outcomes of this new project.

Who is an 'Emotionally Intelligent Leader' ?

According to Prof. Daniel Goleman, this is a leader who understands & manages their own emotions, as well as recognises and acknowledges the emotions of their team. These leaders can spot how people are feeling and respond in helpful ways.

They create spaces where team members feel safe to speak up. They listen well, show that they care, and make decisions after incorporating both 'facts and feelings'.

Areas Where Leaders Can Apply Their 'Emotional Intelligence' Everyday

Handling Conflicts

Emotionally Intelligent leaders help team members work through disagreements by recognising 'core feelings behind the conflict' and facilitating calm conversations.

Giving Feedback

They deliver constructive feedback in a way that's actionable and helpful, making sure that the receiver doesn't feel hurt.

Navigating Tough Times

During crisis periods, they stay calm and help their teams feel confident that "we will get through this together!"

Making Decisions

They care about 'how decisions affect people', not just whether the decision makes logical sense. They invest time & energy to obtain a proper buy-in from everyone!



Who is a 'Self-Aware' Leader ?

Self-aware leaders know their own emotional strengths, weaknesses, and values. They think about how they behave and react to situations. They know what makes them thrilled or frustrated. They ask for honest feedback from others and reflect on it to improve themselves. They understand how their moods and behaviours affect the team. When they make mistakes, they admit it openly.

Self-aware leaders stay calm during difficult times. They don't react instantly – they choose how to respond to situations.



Modern-day Emotional Intelligence Abilities for Leaders

According to Professor Daniel Goleman, one of the founders of this concept.

Self-Awareness

This involves knowing your own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses. Today's leaders need to take time to reflect on their feelings, especially when work /life gets busy and stressful.

Self-Management

This is about handling your emotions well, staying calm under pressure, and being honest with others. Leaders need to use this skill in their everyday life not only at the workplace but also at home.

Social Awareness

This includes understanding other people's feelings and reading the room. Modern leaders need to pick up on how people feel, whether in face-to-face meetings or conversations.

Social Skills

Leaders need to build good working relationships - both 'in person' and 'in virtual meetings'. They help team members work well together, resolve conflicts, and find ways to motivate people with different needs.

Is EI still Relevant in the World of AI?

Yes, experts agree that emotional intelligence is more important than ever in today's AI-driven world.

While AI can process data and automate tasks, it cannot truly understand or connect with people on an emotional level.

As technology handles more routine work, the unique human abilities to build trust, show empathy, inspire teams, and navigate complex social situations become even more valuable.

Leaders with strong emotional intelligence can:

- **Help team members** adapt to technological changes with less fear and resistance
- **Make ethical decisions** about how and when to use AI tools
- **Provide the human connection and understand** that people still need empathy, even in digital workplaces
- **Bridge the gap** between technical solutions and human needs
- **Create workplaces** where creativity and collaboration flourish alongside technology

As AI becomes more common in our work lives, **the leaders who stand out will be those who integrate technological expertise with the emotional intelligence to lead productive teams with sensitivity and purpose.**



Conclusion

Emotional intelligence makes the difference between an average leader and a great one.

Monica's story is a familiar recurring pattern for many of us: even seasoned leaders can miss how their team members are feeling. By working on self-awareness and social awareness, leaders like Monica can improve their approach.

Being an emotionally intelligent leader doesn't mean always being happy and smiling. **It is a leadership approach focused on ensuring that teams feel seen, heard and understood.**

In a world where more and more tasks are getting automated, this human skill is one of the leader's most valuable assets.



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