

# LEADERSHIP – SKILLS, APTITUDE & EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

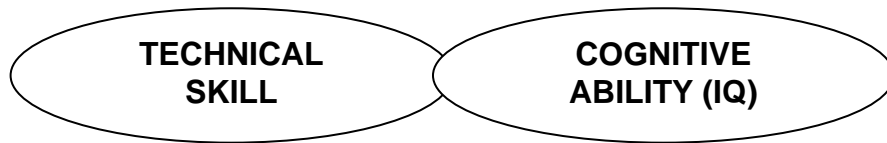
Bob Harrison  
Police Chief (Retired): Vacaville, CA  
Special Consultant: CA Commission on POST

Why do some managers succeed while others fall flat? Why do managers with the professional knowledge and intelligence to promote into positions of critical importance to their organization fail once in place? Although much of our leadership training rests on gaining the technical skills and decision-making capacity to deal with the management of a unit or division, leading people in the pursuit of company goals is another matter altogether.

In his book *Emotional Intelligence*,<sup>1</sup> Daniel Goleman developed the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) to describe the phenomena of failed management relationships in the face of intelligence and skill, as well as ways in which to discern those with the “right stuff” to succeed in leadership. Goleman’s work gives us an insight into the skills and aptitudes necessary to survive, and even thrive, in today’s organizational environment.

## The Emotional Intelligence Competencies

**Figure One** – Using one’s innate intelligence, honed through the acquisition of appropriate technical skill, the aspiring leader forms the basis for success.



Before discussing the competencies of Emotional Intelligence, it is important to note that cognitive capacity (IQ and the ability to make decisions<sup>2</sup>) and technical skills DO matter. They do not, however, comprise the sum total of what one needs to succeed. The intelligence and skill to move into a management position should be considered as foundational assets, or what Goleman terms “threshold capabilities”<sup>3</sup> of the aspiring manager. That translates to the reality facing each of us; these capacities are a necessary starting point for any aspiring leader. For that reason, most preparatory training, including seminars, police academies, and many collegiate programs give the bulk of their effort to honing the skills and cognitive ability of their student. Rather than viewing such talents as ending points in a manager’s development, EI uses them as the mortar to hold together the building blocks of intelligence beyond mere skill or competence.

## What Is EI?

Emotional Intelligence is the sum total of attributes beyond mere intellect that provides a framework of awareness and deployment as a leader. EI often determines the success or

failure of an individual in a leadership setting, providing what others have found difficult to describe as they search for the Holy Grail of leadership competency. Goleman notes four components of EI, two of which are internal; the other two being skills regarding one's relationship with others.

## The Internal Dimensions

### SELF-AWARENESS

*Emotional Self-awareness* – Being attuned to one's inner signals, recognizing how one's feeling affect job performance. Leaders attuned to their guiding values can often intuit the best course of action, seeing the big picture and dealing effectively with complex issues. Emotionally self-aware leaders are seen as candid and authentic, speaking openly and with conviction about their guiding vision.

*Accurate Self-assessment* – Knowing one's limitations and strengths, exhibiting a sense of humor about themselves. Leaders with high self-awareness exhibit a gracefulness in learning where they need to improve, and welcome critique and feedback. Accurate self-assessment allows a leader to know when to ask for help and where to focus energy.

*Self-confidence* – Knowing one's abilities with accuracy allows leaders to play to their strengths. Such leaders have a sense of presence and a self-assurance that lets them stand out in a group.

### SELF-MANAGEMENT

*Self-control* – The management of disturbing emotions and impulses, channeling them in useful ways. A leader with self-control will remain calm and clear-headed in crisis or under stress. Refraining from acting on impulses also helps others not to see a leader who falls prey to a trying situation, or who lashes out inappropriately.

*Transparency* – Living one's values in a manner that is readily seen by others. This conveys and authentic openness about one's feelings, beliefs and actions, which facilitates a perception of integrity. In leadership, it allows one to openly admit mistakes or faults, and to confront unethical behavior in others rather than shying away.

*Adaptability* – The capacity to juggle multiple demands without losing focus or energy, comfortable with the inevitable ambiguities of life. In leadership, this is seen as a flexibility and adaptability to new challenges, data or realities.

*Achievement* – High personal standards that drive an effort to improve performance for leaders those with whom they come into contact. This involves a sense of pragmatism, setting challenging goals, but also managing risk appropriately. A hallmark of this competency is one who is continually learning- and teaching- ways to do better.

*Initiative* – One with a sense of efficacy- that they have what it takes to control of their own destiny. They seize opportunities- or create them- rather than simply waiting when necessary to create better possibilities for the future.

*Optimism* – One who sees opportunities rather than threats, expecting the best in others. Their appropriately positive outlook leads them to expect that emerging circumstances will be for the better.

## The External Dimensions

### SOCIAL AWARENESS

*Empathy* – One who is attuned to a wide range of emotional signals, allowing them to sense the perceived, but unspoken, emotions in a person or groups. In leadership, it creates relationships where persons listen and can grasp the other person’s perspectives readily. Empathy enhances understanding across the spectrum of diverse personalities or cultures one may encounter in any organizational setting.

*Organizational Awareness* – The capacity to detect crucial social networks and read key power relationships. This enhances one’s ability to become politically astute and understand the forces at work in an organization or community, and also fosters the capacity to discern guiding values and unspoken rules.

*Service* – The ability to keep relationships with those served on track, monitoring the satisfaction of others in relation to the intended effect. One aspect of this competency would be a spirit of selfless in addressing the needs of persons in a leadership relationship.

### RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

*Inspiration* – One who creates a sense of resonance with others, sharing a compelling vision or shared mission in a manner that engages those who must work to fulfill the future. Inspirational leaders embody what they ask of others, offering a sense of common purpose beyond the daily grind.

*Influence* – One who is persuasive and engaging, finding the right appeal for a given listener to enhance buy-in for the future. This is perhaps the core relationship task for any successful leader as they work to develop reciprocity in their work relationships.

*Developing Others* – One who shows a genuine interest in those around them, working to enhance the capacity and talents of others. A key underlying competency is the ability to trust, which is necessary for any developmental delegation of work. A strong developer can give timely and constructive feedback, and focuses significant energy to mentoring or coaching those around them.

*Change Catalyst* – One who can recognize the need for change, challenge the status quo and champion new courses of action. They can make a compelling argument for their proposition and find practical ways to overcome barriers. The most effective change catalyst can create a sense of urgency, gather those necessary to envision the future, then work to create a vision of how that will look to those involved.

*Conflict Management* – This competency addresses the need to understand different perspectives, to draw out all parties and to seek common ground for all involved. It sees problems from an interest-based perspective rather than one of conflict and limited resources. An effective conflict manager surfaces conflict, acknowledges feelings and views of all sides and redirects energy toward a shared ideal.

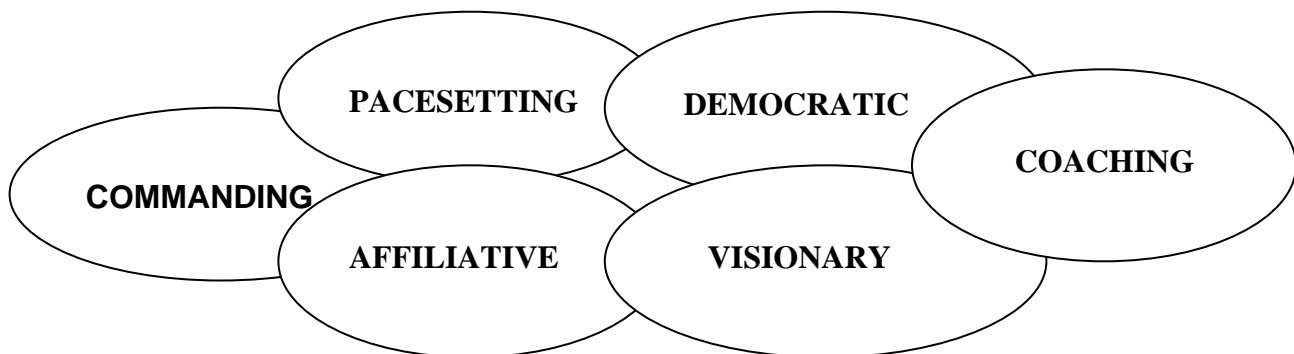
*Teamwork & Collaboration* – One who generates an atmosphere of friendly congeniality and who models respect, helpfulness and cooperation with others. In leadership, teamwork builds active enthusiastic commitment to the collective effort, enhancing spirit and identity.

*Derived from: Primal Leadership (Harvard Business School Press 2002), Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis & Annie McKee*

### **Emotionally Intelligent Leadership**

Beyond the requirement of Emotional Intelligence, Goleman sought to answer the question of how best to get results as a leader. Recent results of random sampling of over 3,800 executive worldwide found six distinct styles of deployed leadership.<sup>4</sup> Using the foundational concepts of Emotional Intelligence as a basis for using these leadership styles in their most appropriate settings can form the basis for enhanced results in the work environment. Goleman likens the use of styles as an array of clubs in a golf pro's bag. Over the course of a round, a golfer will use different clubs depending on the challenge faced, the environment of the shot, and the desired result. In much the same way, an effective leader will select seamlessly from amongst the six leadership styles to achieve positive results.

**Figure Three** - The Emotionally Intelligent Leader will use a synthesis of six primary leadership styles in response to the needs of the setting.



**The Coercive Style** – In this style, the leader demands immediate compliance. Reminiscent of the old-school autocrat, the coercive style is most often a negative influence on rewards systems and the environment of an organization. There are times, however, when it is efficient and most useful. In times of crisis, when clear direction is needed, this style can provide a kick-start to a turnaround. During a standoff, a police SWAT team would operate most effectively with crisp, clear, unilateral commands. Since the vast majority of our organizational life is not in crisis, though, the use of the coercive style should be limited to a small number of instances where clarity or an immediate response is required. Unfortunately, the formal authority vested in managers allows some to revert to this style as a matter of convenience or expedience. Those who do so, however, find the long-term detriment to the workgroup to outweigh any short-term gains.

**The Influencing (or Visionary) Style** – Goleman referred to this style as Authoritative;<sup>5</sup> however, it does not rest in “authority” for its effectiveness. The Influencing style is one where the leader motivates people by making clear to them how their work fits into the larger organization. Sometimes referred to as “visionary,” Influencing through trust and relationship building is neither mystical or the province of a select few. Those who work around such leaders enjoy the experience because they understand what they do, why it matters, and how it relates to the work of others. The catch phrase of an Influencing style would be “come with me.” Although most effective in a variety of settings, this style would not resonate with a work group of experts or peers, and the Influencing leader may be seen by some as overbearing, pompous or out-of-touch by a group without the maturity or requisite trust relationship to benefit from the focus on higher-level goals.

**The Affiliative Style** – The Affiliative style would stress that people come first. It revolves around people, their values and their emotions over tasks and goals at hand. The leader builds strong emotional bonds and reaps benefits many times from the fierce personal loyalty that results. This style has a markedly positive effect on communications (people who like one another talk and share more). The style also drives up flexibility, trust and innovation. The Affiliative leader is a natural relationship builder, and would commonly be the one to socialize with their direct reports and ensure celebrations of birthdays and similar events occur on a regular basis. This style is especially effective when building relationships, enhancing team harmony or increasing morale. Its exclusive reliance on praise, however, can allow poor performance to go unrecognized. Employees might then misperceive that mediocre performance is tolerated, or that rules and accountability are not as important as the people involved.

**The Democratic Style** – The Democratic leader spend time building trust, respect and commitment through listening to their employee’s ideas, giving others a say in decisions and listening to their concerns. Because people have a say in the development and implementation of goals and strategy, their commitment to the success of the organization remains high. This style, however, has its drawbacks. Some democratic leaders use this style to put off decisions, or to delay action in their search for elusive consensus. In those times, this style can actually escalate conflict in those who feel confused and leaderless. The approach is ideal, though, when a leader feels uncertain

about the best direction to take and who needs ideas and guidance from others in the environment.

**The Pacesetter Style** – The pacesetter leader says simply “follow me.” Although an attractive style, especially in an individualistic America, this style should be used sparingly, like the Coercive style. It sounds admirable to have a leader who sets high performance standards, then exemplifies them him- or herself. He quickly pinpoints poor performers and demands more from them. She is obsessive about doing things better and faster, then asks the same from others. If others don’t rise to the challenge, they are replaced with persons who can. The pacesetter style isn’t always a disaster. It works well when employees are self-motivated, highly competent and need little direction or coordination. In other settings, though, it can lead to overwhelmed employees, a poor feedback or rewards structure, and a boss who jumps in to fix lagging performance rather than delegating tasks and facilitating success.

**The Coaching Style** – This style focuses more on personal development than on the tasks associated with the work environment. Think of an effective coach or tutor in a sports, acting or music environment. The relationship is closer in terms of personal performance, and rests on the willingness of the employee to engage in the dialogue of development and adapt their behaviors in a manner that the coach and student find mutually acceptable. Coaching leaders help employees identify their strengths and weaknesses, then tie them to their personal aspirations. They often enter into agreements concerning the roles and responsibilities of each participant in the coaching relationship, and give recurring feedback and instruction regarding performance. This is a time-consuming style, sometimes exceeding the time available for a busy manager. There is no doubt that coaching improves results; the dialogue, feedback and communication process has an inevitable impact on the desired end-state. This style does flounder, however, when the leader lacks the expertise to develop others, or when the employee is resistant to proposed change.

### **The Effective Leader**

The most effective leader is one who can move from one style to another in a seemingly effortless fashion, applying the type of communication, motivation and intent necessary to meet employee needs in a variety of settings. Successful leaders will master and routinely use at least four of the styles – especially the authoritative, democratic, influencing and coaching styles. The key is flexibility of style approach and a willingness to adapt one’s preferences to the setting within which they must be employed. It is rare to find a perfect scenario, thus resting responsibility for the appropriate style in the leader’s hands.

Rather than viewing these styles as independent from Emotional Intelligence, it is useful to visualize the manner in which they relate to one another. Technical skills and cognitive ability form the foundation from which Emotional Intelligence may emerge. One who is emotionally intelligent can elect from amongst the variety of leadership styles

to deploy themselves in a manner that best suits the needs of the circumstance. In action, the effective leader applies the styles in a manner that can transition from moment to moment. Even in the most critical situations, the opportunity for trust building through coaching or mentoring may arise. In a mature work group, pacesetting may be useful to break through a logjam of group thought. Trying to exert influence before establishing trust may be seen as an uncomfortable hindrance to initial group performance. As one elects to use any of the styles, focus should remain on the task at hand, the change or goal desired and the impact of your actions on the climate and environment of the organization (see inset).<sup>6</sup>

First defined by psychologists George Litwin and Richard Stringer, *Climate* refers to six key factors that influence the environment of any organization:

1. *Flexibility*; the ability to innovate free from red tape
2. The employee's sense of *Responsibility* to the organization;
3. The level of *Standards* set;
4. The appropriateness of feedback and *Rewards*;
5. The *Clarity* people have about mission and values; and,
6. The level of *Commitment* to a common purpose

### **EI as a Diagnostic Tool**

The concepts of EI can serve as a personal development tool for those interested in refining their array of leadership strengths. The relationship amongst skills, intelligence and leadership styles provide great insight when struggling with the needs of a workgroup, or to assess personal growth goals. One method of conducting such an analysis would be to first start with self-awareness, then list areas of strength and weakness upon which to devote time and effort. This is where the use of coaches or mentors to validate or modify self-perception is especially valuable. The ability to objectively view personal areas of need is a hallmark of maturity. Using EI, the threat of exposing weaknesses is muted in the face of the potential gain. Once all of the self-management concepts have been addressed, it is time to move to relationships, then to the Leadership styles as a means of addressing ways in which to improve and enhance the potential for success.

It would be especially useful to work with peers and other team members to ferret out areas of satisfaction and possible growth, then to use the EI/Leadership framework to identify problem issues, breakdowns in communication or understanding, and to mitigate the adverse impact of differing styles, perceptions and needs.

### **EI as a Succession Planning Tool**

One of the greatest concerns in modern organizations is the need to plan for future generations of leaders and managers. To date, many businesses have refined methods for trying to identify the "ideal" candidate for any particular position; however, the mere

listing of desired attributes falls well short of means by which to reliably predict success. EI offers a structure for executives to discern what strengths are most closely related to a specific position, then seeking candidates who match the actual need. Our penchant is to act on anecdotal information, even when faced with decisions of great importance. This results in the hiring of managers who “look good on paper” that perform in a substandard manner once given the reins of leadership.

Rather than working within a subjective, tactically-oriented system of succession planning, and rather than relying on the traditional mentoring or personal coaching approach to develop future leaders, EI offers a sustainable alternative. Assessing the style and EI of the incumbent, then assessing areas where modifications may be desired due to progress or future needs, may be a powerful means by which to match the actual strengths of a prospective manager against the needs of the company. Those who have been working to enhance their EI prior to any selection process would create a benefit both for themselves and for the organization of which they are a member.

### **Emotional Intelligence and Leadership**

Assessing one’s Emotional Intelligence may be difficult in the best of circumstances. In today’s fast-paced business or organizational environment, it may take time away from crucial projects or deadlines that cannot be delayed. Viewing time to enhance one’s EI as an expense, however, fails to recognize the investment potential in terms of personal satisfaction, job effectiveness, and the resultant achievement of group goals through an improved climate in the workplace. Emotional responses to external stimuli are also ones learned over time, thus necessitating repeated efforts to change to ingrain new habits into one’s deployed style. Most training efforts work to modify cognitive (perception and rote knowledge) or psychomotor (practiced physical response, such as learning a golf swing) learning domains. Enhancing EI requires work in the affective domain, requiring trial and error, flexible experimentation and the use of mentors, coaches and other sources of feedback to objectively assess progress. Even though difficult, the work is worth the reward. As compared to the current means by which we work to improve the effectiveness of contemporary organizations, it is an essential ingredient for growth, satisfaction and the bottom line.

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York: Bantam Books, 1995)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.35

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Goleman, “What Makes a Leader?” *Harvard Business Review* Nov-Dec (1998), p.22

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Goleman, “Leadership That Gets Results,” *Harvard Business Review* Mar-Apr (2000), p.36

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.41

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.39