

# Emotional Intelligence in Business Leaders a tool for Workforce Motivation

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**Abstract:** *This research examines the impact of Emotional Intelligence (EI) in business leaders and its application as a tool for workforce motivation. An attempt has been made to explain what leadership is, considering that everyone talks about leadership and only a few have a grasp of what it truly means and this can simply be described as the ability to influence people around you towards achieving a cause. The conceptual review subscribed to is hinged on the four core areas of E.I competence which are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management, existing literatures and surveys shows that business leaders are known to set the standards for their organizations, therefore a leader that lacks emotional intelligence can have an all-round negative effect and result in lower employee engagement and a higher turnover. The findings show that the application of emotional intelligence positively corresponds with improved product and service delivery, also that managers who have a high competence in emotional intelligence enjoy a more dedicated and effective workforce. In conclusion, recommendations have been made that organizations should enact corporate policies that require an EI test before employing of managers, web links have also been made available for business leaders to take a self-assessment of the state of their EI.*

**Keyword:** *Emotional Intelligence, Intelligence, Emotions, Leadership, Workforce, Motivation.*

## INTRODUCTION

The word ‘business’ is certainly one of the most used words in human interactions, this is largely so because every single day we naturally engage in form of business activity or specifically explain another to someone. With preference to this research work let’s take a look at what a business is.

According to Maitrayee (2021), a business is an organization comprising of people who strive together to achieve common objectives and goals. It is important for a business organization to have a vision that implies what it intends to achieve in the future and values that represent the organizations integrity. Furthermore, Hooper (1961) suggests that it is the whole complex field of commerce and industry, the basic industries, processing and manufacturing industries, the network of ancillary services, distribution, banking, insurance, transport and so on, which serve and interpenetrate the work of business as a whole, are business activities.

Business generally refers to organizations that seek profits by providing goods or services in exchange for payment. However, businesses don’t need to turn a profit to be considered a business as the pursuit of profit in itself, makes an organization a business (Ward, 2020).

A business can broadly be categorised into services, manufacturing or retail. A business can also be made up of individuals having a side hustle or large corporations having hundreds of employees. This brings us to the issue of leadership; to successfully run a business someone must be put in a position to take charge at all levels of operations and such a person can be seen as the business leader. But before we go around throwing titles let’s take a look at who a leader is and the myths surrounding leadership. Pretty much everyone knows what leadership is about, but it is only a handful that really have a grasp of what it truly means.

In a book titled “The Future Leader” by Jacob Morgan, the author interviewed more than 140 CEOs around the world and asked them each to define leadership. He explained that people struggled and had to pause to think because the word business was used so frequently without really defining. We often take the concept of leadership for granted simply by assuming that we all know what leadership is and what a great leader looks or should like. Interestingly, once the CEOs found their definitions, their answers ran gamut as the over 140 people did not give back a single duplicate response. Some CEOs defined leadership as possessing business acumen, such as the ability to set a company’s vision or achieve its objectives. Others concentrated on human characteristics such as empathy, humility, and variety. Every response was unique, but they were all correct. Every leader has their own concept of leadership, which determines how they lead as well as their company’s culture and direction. (Morgan 2020).

For the purpose of this research we have adopted the following as definition of a leader:

*“A leader is someone who can see how things can be improved and who rallies people to move towards that better vision. Leaders can work toward making their vision a reality while putting people first. Just being able to motivate people isn’t enough, leaders need to be empathetic and connect with people to be successful” (Morgan, 2020).*

Considering that there are numerous definitions of leadership, it means that an organization must have a clear picture of what leadership means and what it means to be a leader within that company.

## BUSINESS LEADERSHIP

Strong business leadership is a vital part of every successful company. A team of employees with strong, skilled leadership is far more likely to be productive than a team without. The word "business leadership" describes how people make decisions, strive toward goals, and exercise authority in a professional setting. Business leadership can take numerous forms, but it typically entails a CEO or a few higher-level employees mentoring and inspiring the rest of the team. The purpose of business leadership is to discover the optimum leadership model for a certain firm and its employees (Indeed, 2021).

Leadership has a direct cause and effect relationship upon organizations and their success. Leaders determine values, culture, change tolerance and employee motivation. They shape institutional strategies including their execution and effectiveness. Leaders can be found at any level of an organization, not just in management. Successful leaders, on the other hand, share one trait. They persuade those around them to get the most out of the organization's resources, especially its most valuable and costly asset: its people (Germano, 2010).

Considering that an organization is a planned coordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common explicit purpose of goal through division of labour and function, and through hierarchy of authority and responsibility (Schein, 1980). The strength of any organization is built on the strength of its workforce, which is the basic driving force. This workforce more often than not consists of individuals from diverse backgrounds who possess and exhibit different value systems/abilities and operate at contradistinctive IQ levels (Amanawa, 2015). A manager needs to have competence as well as intelligence to tackle the obvious and covert challenges with the ultimate aim of achieving optimum workforce motivation, this is because a highly motivated workforce inevitably results in increase productivity.

## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Before we go any further, let us take time to understand the two important words that form the core of this research 'Intelligence' and 'Emotions'.

It might seem useless to define such a simple word. After all, we all have heard these words hundreds of times and probably have a general understanding of its meaning. However, the concept of intelligence has been a widely debated topic amongst members of the psychology community for decades (Charlotte, 2020).

Intelligence is described as the ability to learn, comprehend, or deal with new or difficult situations, as well as the ability to apply information to influence one's surroundings or think abstractly, as judged by objective standards (Merriam-webster, 2021). Psychologist Robert Sternberg defined intelligence as the mental abilities necessary for adaptation to, as well as shaping and selection of, any environmental context (Sternberg, 1985).

Emotion is defined as a conscious mental reaction (such as rage or fear) that is subjectively experienced as a strong sensation focused at a single object and is usually accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body (Webster, 2021). It can also be described as the Affective states of consciousness, as opposed to cognitive and volitional states of consciousness, are those in which joy, grief, fear, hate, or other emotions are felt (Dictionary.com, 2021).

"Emotional Intelligence" is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004). In very simple business terms emotional intelligence can be said to be a manager's ability to understand his/her unutilized own emotions, as well as that of an employee or subordinate and then use it to get optimum productivity and achieve corporate goals.

## RELEVANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

In order to fully understand the relevance of Emotional Intelligence, it is importance to know how its application has changed over time. Table 2. gives a clue as to how Emotional Intelligence has transformed.

**Table 2. The Evolution of Emotional Intelligence**

YEAR	EVENT
1930's	Edward Thorndike a Major thinker in psychology (often called the father of modern psychology) in his research described "Social Intelligence" as the ability to get along with others.

1940's	David Wechler (an American psychologist and developer of the well-known Intelligence Scale) suggested that affective components of intelligence may be essential to success in life.
1950's	Abraham Maslow (the Humanistic psychologist) described how one can build emotional strength.
1975	Howard Gardner (a Multiple Intelligence Researcher) published the book "The Shattered Mind", in which he introduced the concept of Multiple Intelligence.
1985	Wayne Payne was the first to introduce the term "emotional intelligence" in his doctoral dissertation entitled "A study of emotion: developing emotional intelligence; self-integration; relating to fear, pain and desire.
1987	In a Mensa Magazine article, Keith Beasley used the term "emotional quotient." Although Reuven Bar-on claims to have used the phrase in an unpublished version of his graduate thesis, it has been proposed that Beasley's was the first published use of the term.
1990	Peter Salovey and John Mayer published their landmark article, "Emotional Intelligence", in the Journal of Imagination, Cognition, and Personality.
1995	New York Times writer, Daniel Goleman popularized the concept after he published his book "Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ).
2004	More recently, John Mayer, Peter Salovey and David Caruso published an article titled "Emotional Intelligence: Theory, Findings, and Implications.

Source: (Amanawa, 2015)

Overtime, scientists began to study why standard intelligence alone isn't enough to predict performance of an individual. They realized that there is another type of intelligence that isn't related to the standard cognitive intelligence- it's called emotional intelligence. In the past intelligence has mostly been associated with cognitive reasoning, which functions as memory, ability to solve problems, and learning. But contrary to such stereotype belief, there is actually a non-cognitive aspect of intelligence.

Howard Gardner (a Multiple Intelligence Researcher) in his book titled; Frames of the Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, proposed two additional types of intelligence: Intrapersonal Intelligence and Interpersonal Intelligence.

1. Intrapersonal Intelligence: the ability to understand one's own feelings, motivation and fear.
2. Interpersonal Intelligence: the ability to understand others and their desires, and motivations.

Gardner argues that these new intelligence kinds were just as relevant in predicting performance and success as traditional intelligence. Despite the fact that the phrase "emotional intelligence" had not yet been coined, the subject was being researched at the time.

## OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This research seeks to state the impact of emotional intelligence when imbibed and applied by the managers, with the strategic intent of efficiently keeping the workforce motivated and productive. Also to see how the managers' ability to understand their own feelings and capabilities as well as that of members of the workforce will help the management in making proper decisions for growth and sustainable development.

The framework of this research will be used to analyse the management challenges faced by business leaders and also suggestion will be made on how to achieve a better approach to the workforce management/motivation.

## IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

Emotional intelligence in the workplace can be explained as the skill with which you express, reason and manage your own and the emotions of others (Palmer & Stough, 2001).

Managers with high levels of emotional intelligence are not only more successful in their careers, but they are also happier and have better interpersonal interactions. Motivation, companionship, attention, fulfilment, peace of mind, awareness, balance, self-control, independence, autonomy, contentment, appreciation, connection, and desire are some of the healthier and balanced sentiments experienced by managers with high emotional intelligence.

While those with low levels of emotional intelligence exhibit feelings of loneliness, fear, frustration, guilt, emptiness, disappointment, obligation, resentment, anger, dependence, victimization and failure. Management literatures (and even common sense) suggest that both nature and nurture feed emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence comes in varied degrees from one leader to the next, and managers apply it with varying expertise. It's part genetic predisposition, part life experience, and part old-fashioned training. Emotional intelligence, when used wisely and compassionately, propels leaders, their followers, and their

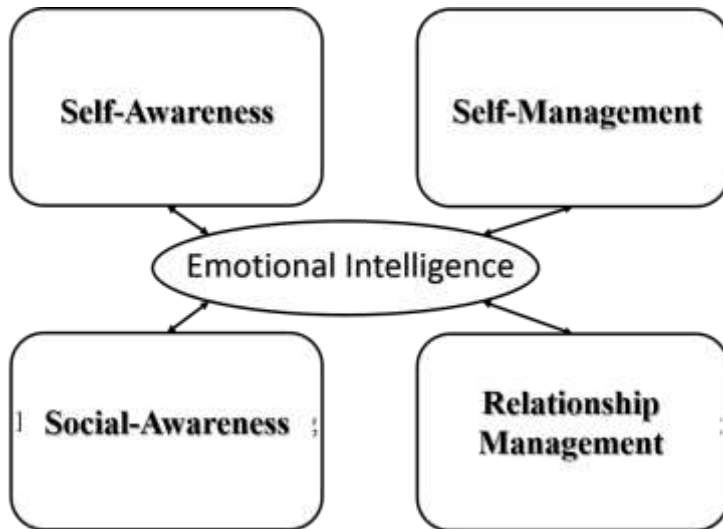
organizations to greater success; when used stupidly or maliciously, it paralyzes leaders or allows them to exploit followers for personal advantage (HBRS, 2004).

## CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

The field of emotional intelligence is fast becoming very popular amongst researchers all around the world, as a result it has evolved into a must-have skill.

This skill set requires business leader to have the ability to perceive emotions, integrate emotions, understand emotions and to regulate emotions to promote personal and corporate growth. The conceptual framework used herein is hinged on the four components of emotional intelligence.

**Fig. 1 Components of Emotional Intelligence**



## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP

Whenever leadership is mentioned the mind of most persons drift towards those in positions of authority. However, everyone who has the capacity to influence another person is a leader. Leadership simply put is ‘influence’. Every person has the potential for leadership.

Emotional intelligence is broken into four core areas of competence, in order to improve your emotional intelligence, it is very important to understand what each competent entails.

**Self-Awareness:** This is at the core of everything. It refers to your capacity to recognize not just your strengths and limitations, but also your emotions and how they affect your and your team's performance.

In a research carried out by Tasha Eurich (An organizational psychologist, executive coach, researcher and New York Times bestselling author), it would interest you to know she discovered that:

*“Even though self-awareness, knowing who we are and how we’re seen is important for job performance, career success, and leadership effectiveness, it’s remarkably short in today’s workplace. In a nearly five-year research program on the subject, we’ve discovered that although 95% of people think they are self-aware, only 10-15% actually are” (Eurich, 2018).*

Eurich (2018) also stated that un-self-aware leaders and colleagues aren’t just frustrating: they can cut a team’s chances of success in half and lead to increased stress, decreased motivation, and higher turnover.

**Self-Management:** This relates to your capacity to control your emotions, especially in stressful situations, and keep an optimistic attitude despite setbacks. Leaders who lack self-control react more and have a harder time controlling their emotions.

According to Green (2021), an important step in developing highly skilled emotional self-management is to be able to find out what your present patterns of emotional self-management are. Observe yourself for a week, and find the answer to the following questions:

- Which emotions do you deliberately foster in yourself?

- Which emotions do you find it easy to manage?
- Which emotions do you carry for a long time?
- Which emotions do you not like and try to avoid or suppress?
- Which emotions do you have which positively impacts your work?
- Which emotions do you have which distracts you from your work?
- Which emotions don't you manage well so that you leave a bad impression of yourself?

The answers to these questions above would help you see that emotional self-management is an essential skill in the workplace irrespective of your role or position, and is essential for a successful working team corporation.

**Social-Awareness:** While it's critical to understand and control your own emotions, you should also be able to read a room. Your ability to recognize others' emotions and the dynamics at work in your business is referred to as social awareness. Empathy is a skill that leaders who excel at social awareness use. They make an effort to comprehend the sentiments and opinions of their co-workers, allowing them to communicate and collaborate more effectively.

Amazon's Jeff Bezos is an example of a well-known senior leader who demonstrates emotional intelligence in leadership. Bezos is noted for his charismatic leadership style, in which he employs self-deprecating humour to make others feel at ease. Next up comes Alan Mulally, the former CEO of Ford. He praised his staff' work in handwritten notes. The main line is that building personal relationships with everyone is critical, regardless of your business or industry, since people want to associate with someone they can trust (Court, 2021). Transformational leaders need empathy in order to show their followers that they care for their needs and achievement (Bass, 1985).

**Relationship Management:** This refers to your ability to influence, coach and mentor others, and resolve conflict effectively. Some prefer to avoid conflict, but it's important to properly address issues as they arise (Landry, 2019).

Results from a survey carried out by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) found that 72% of employee ticked "respectful treatment of all employees at all levels" as the top factor in job satisfaction (Lytle, 2005).

Usher (2017) proposed that to help improve your level of relationship management as a business leader you should follow the under listed steps:

- Enhance your natural communication style by thinking about your interactions with others and how you typically communicate in both relaxed and stressful encounters. Be honest with yourself and identify a few positive and negative communication traits you possess. Make a conscious effort to incorporate the positives more and the negatives less.
- Learn to receive feedback, at times, this can be difficult but it is the perfect opportunity to learn and improve. When receiving feedback, pause and process what the other person is offering. Use your self-management and don't jump to a quick response you may regret.
- Don't avoid the inevitable; there are some people that just simply get under your skin. There are times you have no choice but to interact with these individuals, especially in a work environment. Do not avoid, instead face the situation using your self-awareness, self-management and social awareness strategies. It may be uncomfortable at first but over time it will become easier.

This brings us to why emotional intelligence really matters. Business leaders are known to set the standards for their organizations, therefore a leader that lacks emotional intelligence can have an all-round negative effect and result in lower employee engagement and a higher turnover.

## FINDINGS

I've drawn the following conclusions based on Tasha Eurich's above research on the perils of an un-self-aware leader, Green's procedures to proper self-management, and classic examples of certain well-known CEOs, and the need for respectful treatment with all levels of employees:

1. That if you are self-aware, you always know how you feel. And you know how your emotions, and your actions, can affect the people around you. It means that as a leader you will have a clear picture of your strengths and weaknesses.
2. Leaders who regulate themselves through proper self-management rarely verbally attack others, make rushed or emotional decisions, neither do they stereotype people, or compromise their values. Self-management is all about staying in control.
3. Having empathy is critical to managing a successful team or organization. Business leaders with empathy have the ability to put themselves in someone else's situation. They assist in the development of their team members, criticize unfair behaviour, provide constructive comments, and listen to those who require it.

4. Business leaders who are socially aware are great communicators. They open their doors to hearing good news as well as bad news, and by doing so they get their team to support them and be excited about a new mission or project. Having good social skills is a key factor when faced with the need to manage change and resolving conflicts diplomatically.

## CONCLUSION

It is imperative that business leaders understand the need to be emotionally intelligent as this is indeed one of the best tool to help maintain a motivated and productive workforce.

Managers from tiny businesses to CEOs of global corporations have been known to use emotional intelligence to promote their personal and corporate brands, as well as to improve their working relationships with their staff.

A skilful blend of self-knowledge, self-management, social awareness, and effective relationship management provides a functioning mix that will drive productivity for a long time for the business leader.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

I strongly recommend the following:

1. The Human resource department of any organizations make business rules and regulations for testing the emotional intelligence of applicants before employing them into leadership positions in their organizations.
2. Every business leader/ manager takes a self-emotional intelligence test from time to time and get a proper review of his emotional competence. A sample of such a test can be found at [www.jobEQ.net/selftest](http://www.jobEQ.net/selftest).
3. All managers should begin to pay attention to developing their emotional capabilities. This can be done through personal research of related literature, attending self-sponsored workshops and seminars and signing up with online emotional intelligence bodies such as [www.hbr.org](http://www.hbr.org).

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