

## Smart Teams that Get Results

When Daniel Goleman wrote his landmark books on emotional intelligence in the mid 90s and early in this decade (*Emotional Intelligence*, 1995; *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, 1998; *The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace*, 2001), managers in organizations everywhere nodded heads in agreement. Finally, what they knew to be true about dealing with people had a name and was clearly articulated. For the past decade, important research has been done in organizations to show that feelings and emotions have a direct impact on effectiveness, efficiency and ultimately the bottom line.

**Developing emotional intelligent teams is important because teams today do most of the work in organizations.**

Businesses thrive when using teams to organize the work. Teams have more talent, experience, diversity of resources, and operating flexibility than individual performers. Research in the last decade has proven the superiority of group decision-making over that of even decision making suffers when the group lacks emotional intelligence

Most research has focused on identifying the tasks and processes that make teams successful. But just learning a script won't make a good actor great; the actor has to be able to deliver the lines with real feeling. A piano student can learn the music of Bach, but he/she has to be able to play with heart to be considered good. Successful teams master effective task processes (**best of the head**) with effective intra and interpersonal skills- **best of the heart**).

The important difference between effective teams and ineffective is the emotional intelligence of the group. Team emotional intelligence is comprised of the emotional intelligence of individual members, plus the collective competency of the group. Everyone contributes with the leader having more influence. The good news is that teams can develop greater emotional intelligence and boost their performance.

### Trust, Identity and Efficacy

Teams are more creative and productive when they can achieve high levels of participation, cooperation and collaboration among members. In an article titled "Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups,"

Vanessa Urch Druskat and Steven B. Wolff (*Harvard Business Review*, March 2001) identify three basic conditions that must be present before such behaviors can occur: mutual trust among members, a sense of group identify (a feeling among group members that they belong to a unique and worthwhile group), and a sense of group efficacy (the belief that the team can perform well and that group members are more effective working together than apart).

To be most effective, the team needs to create emotionally intelligent norms – the attitudes and behaviors that eventually become habits – that support behaviors for building trust, group identity and group efficacy.

Group emotional intelligence is not expressing or suppressing emotions. It is setting intention to acknowledge one's and others feelings and how they may affect the team's work. When "emotions" are ignored, tolerated or avoided, there is a superficial tone that "everything's just fine." Remember, high performing teams will have diverse perspectives that may, at times, disagree. Admitting to this is the first step in clarifying and finding common ground upon which to move forward.

### Feeling good and the bottom line

According to Goleman in *Primal Leadership* (2002), how people feel about working at a company can account for 20 to 30 percent of business performance.

Group emotional intelligence is building relationships both inside and outside the team

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to reach outcomes and overcome challenges. Therefore, the team must constantly balance harmony with productivity. Good feelings are like lubrication for the brain – mental efficiency goes up, memory is sharpened, and people can understand directions and make better decisions. This is because emotions are contagious. When people are in a good mood, it spreads easily to other members.

Workers who feel upbeat tend to go the extra mile to please customers and therefore improve the bottom line. There is research to show that for every 1 percent improvement in the service climate, there's a 2 percent increase in revenue. People take their emotional cues from those around them.

### Developing Smart Teams

One of the ways groups can create better self-awareness is through the use of assessments, for example, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® or OPQ32. These tools show individuals how they have natural preferences for taking in information, organizing their work, communicating, and making decisions. Understanding one's own and other's style leads to acceptance and understanding of how everyone gifts and contributions to achieve team goals.

For example, honest communication is a critical component of emotional intelligence and high performing teams. The Myers Briggs Type Indicator can show how team members make decisions- do they prefer to keep options open, how they gather information, or whether they like closure and come to decisions more quickly.

In any group, people will cross lines and group dysfunction will occur. The ability to regulate group emotions comes from establishing norms. The four EQ norms that help build trust, group identity and efficacy are: interpersonal understanding, perspective taking, confrontation and caring.

Development takes time, intention, commitment, practice, feedback and celebration. However, when the values and norms are clear, and self-management principles are explicit and practiced over time, teams become not only effective, but also self-reinforcing. The message is, "We want you as part of this group, your contributions and perspectives are needed."

### Sustaining Smart Teams that Get Results

The emotional climate of a team is noticed in the habits and norms that drive and reinforce team behaviors; i.e. "It's just the way we do things here." It is the team's job to explore and expose unhealthy work habits in order to achieve team outcomes. The leader's role is to remind the group of its collaborative norms by making them explicit.

Cary Cherniss, chair of a well-known research group on emotional intelligence, puts forth ground rules for teams. For example, everyone on the team should take responsibility for:

- Keeping the team and meetings on track
- Facilitating group input
- Raising questions about procedures,
- Asking for clarification about where the team is going
- Offering summaries of issues being discussed to make sure there is a shared understanding

When values and norms are clear, teams go about their work whether the leader is present or not. In EQ Smart teams, members hold **each other accountable** for (1) adhering to, (2) acknowledging the absence of and (3) celebrating the application of team norms that inspire a healthy and productive team climate.

**For more information about Teams that Get Results contact**  
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Coaching, assessment and Training