

Emotional Intelligence as a Predictor of Successful Teams

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Introduction

The investigation of emotional intelligence (EI) is a growing field as it has recently grabbed the attention of psychologists, researchers, theorists, writers, and even management about individual's responses through emotions. The purpose of this analysis is to explore to the extent that teams can increase team performance by utilizing members' emotional intelligence in the most efficient manner. Most importantly, the essence of this phenomenon and its impact on teams, as well as the role of team leaders will be evaluated in order to validate emotional intelligence's importance as a predictor of overall team success. We assume that, Domain7 Solution, our company in analysis, has clearly demonstrated to work successfully with emotional intelligence in its teams even with its nonexistence of middle managers. On the other hand, the company has forced upper team management and employees to collaborate together on projects. The results of these arrangements have resulted in a successful company, happy employees as well as company growth. The key concepts of emotional intelligence tie into Domain7's Solution success. Through this paper we will discuss important relationship between EI and teams, and propose some recommendations at end to sustain its success.

Emotional Intelligence: The Key Ingredient

Research in the field of emotional intelligence (EI) has gained momentum in business, various industries, as well as in educational sectors (Reyes-Dominguez, 2008). According to Whetten and Cameron (2011) emotional intelligence refers to the ability to diagnose, understand, and manage emotional cues, of oneself and the relationship with others. By now, most executives have accepted that emotional intelligence is as critical as intelligence

quotient (IQ) to an individual's effectiveness (Druskat & Wolff, 2001). The use of emotions is critical for individuals as it allows for the disclosure of intrinsic responses to the personal and professional environment. Emotional intelligence (EI) is fundamental for work teams because it is the key ingredient that fosters a healthy and productive work environment. Moreover, an emotionally intelligent team is also able to create an environment in which members value their membership, collaboratively focus on what needs to be done, and addresses issues that need to be dealt with (Dimock & Kass, 2011).

Emotional Intelligence: Essential Tool for Successful Teams

According to Druskat and Wolff (2001) emotionally intelligent “norms, attitudes and behaviors” can eventually become a habit. This would in turn support behaviors for constructing “trust, group identity, and group efficacy” (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001). According to “A Model of Team Effectiveness,”¹ high productivity and team effectiveness come from high levels of participation, cooperation, and collaboration. In order to build these three components, three essential conditions have to be met in a group: trust, identity and efficacy. To reach these vital components, group emotional intelligence has to be well established as it makes handling individual emotions easier and eventually allows for higher levels of trust, identity and efficacy among group members (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001). This leads to team members being engaged in all tasks, which leads to higher productivity and performance.

Myers (2013) states that “group emotional intelligence is at the heart and base in producing team effectiveness.” It is less a matter of conscious effort than of one's

¹ Refer to Appendix A

unconscious processing of emotional information. Similarly, Gujral, H. & Jaya, A. (2011) explain that emotional intelligence aids in reducing conflicts, which can create a more comfortable and cooperative work environment (p.2). Furthermore, team members play a key role in individual and team motivation. Although emotional intelligence may not affect team performance and effectiveness solely or directly, it assists and enhances fundamental factors that lead to high team performance and effectiveness.

According to Boyatzis (1982), a study conducted on a multi-national consulting firm, the results suggested that one of the key differences between star performers and average managers is the presence of emotional intelligence, that is, individuals who have high intelligence were shown to have bring two times the revenue to a firm, and they are four times as likely to be promoted in comparison to those with lower emotional intelligence and self-awareness (Whetten & Cameron, 2011). Moreover, as per Goleman (1998), research has shown that emotional intelligence is two times more significant to success in comparison to cognitive intelligence and expertise (Whetten & Cameron, 2011), which only contributes to approximately ten percent of the success.

Based on the quotes on Domain7's website, it seems the company already has a fairly high level of emotional intelligence, as quoted by one of their employees, Erin Poettcker, "I love the emphasis Domain7 places on communication and relationships. It makes for a supportive and encouraging work environment that's great to be a part of" ("Domain 7", 2015). Similarly, a quote from another employee, Mac Lugay, "I really like that this is a collaborative process, and that I work with an amazing team that are smart, driven and committed to doing the best work" ("Domain 7", 2015).

How Can Teams Manage their Emotions?

Teams suffer because they are not aware of emotions at the group level. Having norms for group self-awareness is a critical part of group emotional intelligence that facilitates group efficacy.² Teams gain this through self-evaluation and by soliciting feedback from others. Emotionally competent teams have the emotional capacity to face potentially difficult information and actively seek opinions on their task processes, progress, and performance from the outside. Some teams gain feedback directly from customers, and others look to colleagues within the company, to suppliers, or to professional peers (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001).

Many teams make conscious efforts to build team spirit by having team-building outings that give team members a sense of collective enthusiasm (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001). Teams and their leaders realize that by regulating group level emotions they can improve the overall attitude of the team. The most affective teams have established norms that strengthen their ability to respond effectively to the kind of emotional challenges a group confronts on a daily basis. The norms they favor accomplish three major factors: creating resources for working with emotions, fostering an affirmative environment, and encouraging proactive problem solving (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001). Every team needs resources that all members can rely on to deal with group emotions, and one important resource is a common vocabulary (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001). For example, a group member at the Veterans Health Administration picked up on another member's bad mood and told him that he was "cranky" today. The "cranky" term stuck and became the group's gentle way of

² Refer to Appendix B

letting someone know that their negativity was having a bad effect on the group (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001).

So the most palpable way to build emotional capacity through regulating team-level emotions is to create an affirmative environment, as everyone values a team that when faced with a challenge, responds with a can-do attitude (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001). One of the most powerful norms for building a group's ability to respond to emotionally challenging situations is an emphasis on proactive problem solving (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001). This serves the company by removing an obstacle to profitability. It also shows a team in control of their own emotions that refused to feel powerless and was eager to take charge (Druskat, V. & Wolff, S. 2001).

Can Emotional Intelligence Improve Communication and Decision Making?

The effects of emotional intelligence on communication within team members and its positive impact on team decision-making is imperative to consider. Emotional intelligence within teams enhances key individual factors that have a direct influence on team performance. Recent work by Bell (2007) shows the value in conceptualizing how individual characteristics combine at the team level to have a direct influence on team performance outcomes. They also examine the impact of emotional skills on both team task and communication performance in teams. According to Arn (2013), highly emotionally intelligent individuals are more effective at expressing their emotions constructively, which leads to less relational conflict. In team-based organizations, effective communication is critical. Its level and effectiveness plays a key role in the outcome of interactions. Liu (2010) proposed and found three dimensions of quality of communication experienced (QCE);

clarity, responsiveness, and comfort. The presence of these factors may actually improve decision-making.

Using emotions to facilitating thought, in particular, is relevant in its application to the team decision-making process. Troth et al. (2012) developed and tested a multi-level model to explain how the emotional skills of individual team members influence their communication performance in a team. According to Light (2007) an individual's communication performance within teams corresponds with the quality of team outcomes. Scullen et al. (2003) also demonstrated the core role of communication in work performance at the individual level. They also included a human skills component in their conceptualization of performance in which the ability to communicate with others was strongly highlighted. Communication performance incorporates a fundamental outcome of effectiveness. Effective communication accomplishes the goals, the objectives, or the intended functions of the team member (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984). According to Troth et al. (2012), the understood assumption is that the most competent communication behaviors are effective.

Millar & Rogers (1976) further argue that effective communication is dependent on the emotional skills used by an individual. Berger (2005) mentions skills involving the elements of detecting, understanding, and regulating emotional displays, such as encoding and decoding skills. According to Burgoon & Baccus (2003) nonverbal communication skills have been found to *directly* contribute to successful communication performance. Troth et al. (2012) assert that emotional skills contribute to better communication outcomes for individuals within teams. Significant relationships have been found between individual emotional skills and performance in communication-dependent activities such as decision-

making (Lam & Kirby, 2002). Research examining the performance of individuals within teams suggests team members capable of recognizing and managing their own and others' emotions during interactions are *likely to make better decisions*.

According to Troth et al. (2012) Individuals with stronger emotional skills are more likely to detect counterproductive emotions within the team through awareness skills and have a greater capacity to deal with these emotions. Emotional skills are also more likely to have an impact on performance within a team when the performance goal involves communicating interdependently with others (Jordan & Troth, 2004). Troth et al. (2012) propose two hypotheses that suggest both emotional awareness and management skills will positively relate to communication performance.³

Can a Leader Guide the Team's Overall Emotional Intelligence?

In organizational settings, emotions are seen as a contagion process in which followers constantly interpret the leaders' emotional expression (Haver, Akerjordet, and Furunes, 2013). Crawford (2009) sees "emotion as inherent to the practice of leadership rather than separate from it" (Cliffe, 2011, p. 4). Emotions, then, are central to the pattern of values (Barker, 2001, p. 473) that emerge with leadership (Drodge & Murphy, 2002). Leaders who are attuned to their own feelings and the feelings of others can use their understanding to enhance the organization, as well as teams (Daft, 2011). The better the leader can identify with this the more leaders can harness and direct the power of emotions to improve follower satisfaction, morale, and motivation, as well as to enhance overall team effectiveness (Daft, 2011).

³ Refer to Appendix C

According to Daniel Goleman, there are five main elements of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman 2006). A strong leader should be able to organize and manage these skills increasing their overall emotional intelligence. Self-awareness, empathy and social skills are the strongest of the five factors. Self-awareness is necessary for leaders as it adds the ability to identify strengths and weaknesses in others as well as themselves. Strong empathy and social skills go hand in hand as they add great communication skills, as well as the ability to manage change and conflict. Empathy is critical to a successful team and organization, as it gives leaders the ability to put themselves in another person's situation. Understanding and implementing these five vital elements can help leaders guide the overall emotional intelligence of a team.

Can Team Members Learn Emotional Intelligence?

Daft (2011) suggests that "EI can be learned and developed" (p.147). Emotional intelligence can be enhanced with practice; with concerted effort, people can change their levels of emotional intelligence (Whetten & Cameron, 2011). While training team members' on the importance of emotional intelligence can be a difficult task, according to Bagshaw (2000) there are a variety of questions that can help develop and recognize team member's emotional intelligence, making the attempt at this process easy.⁴

Bagshaw (2000)'s research suggests that individuals who have high emotional intelligence will often answer yes to all of the posed questions. However, this is dependent on individuals who have high self-awareness. So, we can see that EI is very distinctive from the numerous types of training that individuals receive at work; one needs to have abilities that

⁴ Refer to Appendix D

are related to EI to be able to understand their own EI. Training team members on the ability to understand and relate to emotions can be done in various ways. For example, when a leader trains members on building cohesiveness amongst the team, it is a factor of EI. When a bond exists among the team members, which too is part of having EI. Therefore, a strategy or a specific technique on how to train members to be emotionally intelligent may not be crucial. However, the attempt to attain more *cohesiveness and sensitivity* towards team members *is* critical, as it will ultimately help an individual gain a higher level of emotional intelligence.

Through training, what individuals are able to exhibit are empathetic relationships, which involves “investing in understanding before being understood, communicating authentically and assertively, and being able to develop relationships of trust and credibility quickly” (Bagshaw, 2000, p. 3). According to Bagshaw (2000), deciding on which useful EI elements that will impact the workplace beforehand is essential. This way training is planned out in an effective manner and allows team members to perform better and work collectively to meet desired goals.

The Domain7 Solution Analysis

Now, we will talk about Domain7 Solution and its success as a business company. Before we do that, we will give some background information on Domain7. Domain7 is an agency that specializes in creating “innovative digital experiences that help organizations grow and companies connect” (“Domain 7”, 2015). It is composed of “approximately 40 team members” (“Domain 7”, 2015). According to Domain7’s website, the business is usually done in teams (“Domain 7”, 2015).

As per *The Globe and Mail* article, the company currently does not have any middle-managers and has three directors to whom the employees report to. This is in order to maintain “an open, collaborative environment, with an emphasis on autonomy and individualism” (Borzykowski, 2012). The issue lies, as the company continues to grow, within the increase of the number of employees becoming difficult for the three directors to lead over fifty employees. Essentially, Neumann would like to change Domain7’s management structure and does not wish to compromise his organization’s autonomous culture, wish he feels the addition of middle-managers would create by imposing a hierarchical structure. Eliminating middle-managers is not a feasible option for Domain7, as mentioned in the article, Mr. Neumann pointed out that “what worked with 20 people isn’t working with 50.”

Our analysis of the company’s success is that it is sustainable provided enough people in higher management to keep up with the increasing numbers of employees. The reason why Domain7 has worked so successfully is that it is only a small number of employees reporting to a small number of top management. This is reasonable. However, if there are not enough people in top management, burnout may result. This is because of the fact that the few people in top management will not be able to cater to their employees’ ideas. This may lead to less cooperation and projects not getting done.

Recommendation

Therefore, our *first* recommendation is for the company to stress communication among teams and avoid conflict. In order for this model to work, Domain 7 should look at the teams that apply this most successfully and use them as examples to inspire other teams. This

fosters better teamwork. That results in projects getting finished. Thus, Domain7 maintains its success.

Our *second* recommendation for this company is to add middle managers. It is evident that as the organization continues to grow and the number of staff continues to climb, there will be an immense need for middle-managers. As mentioned by Leerom Segal in the *Globe and Mail* article, “At some point, he’s not going to be able to oversee everyone. What happens if he reaches 200 staff?” (Borzykowski, 2012). It is nearly impossible for the three directors to efficiently supervise and deal with all employees’ issues, as there is simply not enough time for them to do so. The introduction of middle-managers would allow the three directors to be able to free up their time, which they can use to carry out their duties and oversee the more important and larger issues, while the middle-managers can pay attention to the minor issues. This will also help release the immense pressure and stress placed on the three directors and the middle-managers can report issues to the directors instead of the directors having over fifty employees reporting to them.

Our *third* recommendation comes with the purpose of maintaining Domain7’s organizational culture and autonomous and independent work environment. We recommend Domain7 take a few steps. *Firstly*, to ensure the non-compromising of the open and collaborative work environment, the most essential step is to ensure that the middle-managers who are hired or promoted, have a high-level of emotional intelligence. As mentioned in a *Forbes* article, “middle managers stand out with the highest emotional intelligence (EQ) scores in the workplace because companies tend to promote people into supervisory positions who are level-headed and good with people” (Bradberry, 2015).

Secondly, the Domain 7 has to ensure that the employees have a high level of EI as well. As mentioned in this paper, emotional intelligence is a key element in the team and company's success, as Daniel Goleman emphasizes in his book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998), "We only know what to do by realizing what feels right to us. Attention is our previous resource. Feelings are the body's version of the situation; everything we want to know about our situation is revealed in our feelings" (Goleman, 1998). Therefore, to ensure all employees have a high-level of intelligence, it is important for their supervisors to display this, as an example for their subordinates to follow, which in turn, will produce satisfied employees and successful projects.

Thirdly, Domain 7 has to invest in EI developing as well as EI training. As seen earlier in this paper, emotional intelligence can be trained and developed (Whetten & Cameron, 2011); therefore, Domain7 can ensure all their middle-managers have a high-level of emotional intelligence by firstly evaluating their current level of emotional intelligence, analyzing areas and needs for improvement, designing a training program based on the analysis to fulfill those needs, and finally, providing them adequate training before they begin supervising other employees. In order to evaluate an individual's emotional intelligence, the organization can use tools such as, "Solbey's Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale", which is a behavioral assessment for emotional intelligence, defining it as, a social intelligence which gives one the ability to use the awareness of one's own and others' feelings as a guide for one's behaviour (Whetten & Cameron, 2011); another example is, Goleman & Boyatzis' "Emotional Competence Inventory" this differs slightly from "Solbey's Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale", as it is a 360 degree assessment, and

defines emotional intelligence as “the composite set of capabilities that enable a person to manage himself or herself and others,” (Whetten & Cameron, 2011).

In addition to hiring middle-managers who possess high levels of emotional intelligence and providing them adequate training, for the consistency and sustainability of Domain7’s open, collaborative and autonomous work environment, middle-managers should be rewarded in some form for excellent display and maintained of such behavior. Moreover, the middle-managers should be encouraged to motivate their subordinates to display similar behavior, and similarly the middle-managers, the lower-level employees should also be given a reward respective to performance when it is aligned with the organization’s culture, as an incentive for the reward-receiver to continue to exhibit the performance and at the same time, it motivates other employees to do match their co-workers’ behavior.

Our last recommendation would be to Domain7 improve the self-efficacy among its employees. Emotional intelligence plays a key role in the formation of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the self-confidence of one’s ability to complete tasks (Lombardo, 2015). It is an important aspect in the organization. Employees with a higher self-efficacy often set larger goals that greatly affect the organization while employees with lower self-efficacy find it difficult to achieve larger goals because of the confidence they lack over their own abilities. Having middle managers in this organization would benefit the employee’s self-efficacy. The middle managers could also benefit top management by aligning organizational goals with the personal goals of employees to create an efficient work environment that accomplishes its tasks. With the help of middle managers, employees within Domain7 can find their self-confidence and self-awareness to take greater control of their feelings and working capacity.

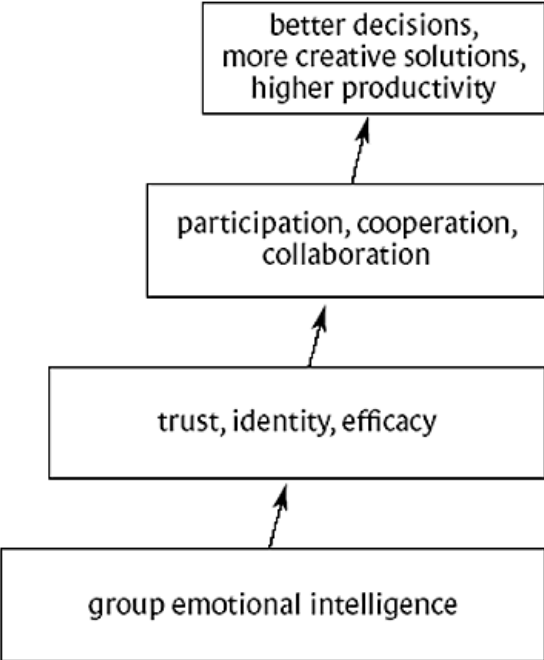
Conclusion

Clearly, significant research has been made on the numerous benefits of individual emotional intelligence versus team's emotional intelligence importance to successful organizations. Moreover, there is enough evidence to portray that an emotionally intelligent team is able to create an environment in which members value their membership, improve communication, collaboratively focus on required tasks, as well as address and resolve conflicts. More importantly, the ability to learn how to regulate one's emotions and cooperatively set norms that *supports* the behaviors of constructing trust, group identity, and group efficacy. This substantial evidence suggests that emotional intelligence assists and enhances fundamental factors that lead to high team performance and effectiveness.

It is also important to note that the self-efficacy of employees can be established through effective use of middle management and emotional intelligence. When you are able to understand and be aware of your own emotions, it allows individuals to have greater control and use of abilities. With higher self-efficacy, employees can align personal goals with organizational goals and aim for greater tasks with this new-found awareness of abilities.

Finally, a team can be successful if they manage their emotions properly. Higher emotional intelligence could lead to higher trust in the group as well as belonging with the group. This leads to more participation and collaboration on projects that need to be done. The end result is higher productivity and better decision-making. This is the desired outcome that most businesses want. Domain7 has used emotional intelligence to create a successful business and should continue to do so.

Appendix A: A Model of Team Effectiveness (Druskatt & Wolff)



Appendix B: Norms That Create Awareness of Group Emotions

Team Self-Evaluation

1. Schedule time to examine team effectiveness.
2. Create measurable task and process objectives and then measure them.
3. Acknowledge and discuss group moods.
4. Communicate your sense of what is transpiring in the team.
5. Allow members to call a “process check.”(For instance, a team member might say, “Process check: is this the most effective use of our time right now?”)

Seeking Feedback

1. Ask your “customers” how you are doing.
2. Post your work and invite comments.
3. Benchmark your processes.

Creating Resources for Working with Emotions

1. Make time to discuss difficult issues, and address the emotions that surround them.
2. Find creative, shorthand ways to acknowledge and express the emotion in the group.
3. Create fun ways to acknowledge and relieve stress and tension.
4. Express acceptance of members’ emotions.

Creating an Affirmative Environment

1. Reinforce that the team can meet a challenge. Be optimistic. For example, say things like, “We can get through this” or “Nothing will stop us.”
2. Focus on what you can control.
3. Remind members of the group’s important and positive mission.
4. Remind the group how it solved a similar problem before.
5. Focus on problem solving, not blaming.

Solving Problems Proactively

1. Anticipate problems and address them before they happen.
2. Take the initiative to understand and get what you need to be effective.
3. Do it yourself if others aren’t responding. Rely on yourself, not others.

Appendix C: Troth et al. (2012) Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1

An individual team member's emotional awareness (own and others) skills will be positively related to the individual member's communication performance within the team.

Hypothesis 2

An individual team member's emotional management (own and others) skills will be positively related to the individual member's communication performance within the team.

Appendix D: Guiding Questions for Team's Emotional Intelligence

- 1) Are you aware of the subtleties of your own feelings?
- 2) Do you usually know what other people are feeling, even if they do not say so?
- 3) Does your awareness of what others are going through give you feelings of compassion for them?
- 4) Can you carry on doing the things you want to do under distressing circumstances, so they do not control your life?
- 5) When you are angry, can you still make your needs known in a way that resolves rather than exacerbates the situation?
- 6) Can you hang on to long-term goals, and avoid being too impulsive?
- 7) Do you keep trying to achieve what you want, even when it seems impossible and it is tempting to give up?
- 8) Can you use your feelings to help you to reach decision in your life?

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