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What Makes a Leader? (Daniel Goleman, Reading6, Chapter1)

What is important for a leader?

When we mention “Leadership”, there are many types of leaderships and it is difficult to define it in one word. I have been interested in how leadership should be from my college days since I was a captain of martial arts club in college. Because once I could be a good leader, I would lead my team to a higher end. Goleman gave us a good clue about leadership by thinking about emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is the most important element of leadership.

Emotional intelligence is the most important element of leadership. According to Goleman, there are three categories of personal capabilities: emotional skills, cognitive abilities and competencies demonstrating emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence proved to be twice as important as the others for jobs at all levels, and contributes to effective performance, especially in leaders.

In short, there’s a close relationship between emotional intelligence and effective performance, especially in leaders. Besides, emotional intelligence played an increasingly important role at the highest levels of the company, where differences in technical skills are of

negligible importance. It often happens that employees who used to perform very well as technical assistants under managers become to perform poorly when they got promoted to managers because of lack of emotional intelligence. Because they didn't know how to motivate or communicate with their employees. Eventually, he or she failed to perform effectively as a team.

The five components of emotional intelligence

Goleman also showed five components of emotional intelligence at work: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill.

(1) Self-awareness

Self-awareness is understanding one's emotions, weak points and strong points as well as one's values and goals. People with high self-awareness can speak accurately and openly about their emotions and the impact they have on their work. They also recognize how their feelings affect them, and other people and their job performance. We can recognize self-awareness as candor, an ability to assess oneself realistically, a self-deprecating sense of humor and self-confidence.

(2) Self-regulation

Self-regulation is the component of emotional intelligence that helps us to control our bad moods and emotional impulses, and to create an environment of trust and fairness. There is also an argument that people who can master their emotions are seen as being cold-hearted and their considered responses are taken as a lack of passion. And people with fiery temperaments tend to be thought of as having charisma and power. But Goleman thinks that extreme displays of negative emotion have never emerged as a driver of good leadership. Extreme displays of negative

emotion just make people around feel bad. Moreover, the displays sometimes deprive people around of their motivation or effectiveness.

(3) Motivation

Motivation is encouragement for an employee to do his or her tasks. I would say that motivation is a supplement for people to work just as vitamins are so for people to be healthy. And it is one trait that all effective leaders have. Those with leadership potential are motivated by the drive to achieve rather than by external rewards such as a big salary. In other words, they have a passion for work itself. Besides, they remain optimistic even under adverse circumstances.

(4) Empathy

Goleman also pointed out that empathy, which means thoughtfully considering employees' feeling in the process of making intelligent decisions, is especially important recently as a component of leadership for three reasons: the increasing use of teams, the rapid pace of globalization, and growing need to retain talent. Empathy helps leaders to understand their team's emotion, decreasing the chance of misunderstanding by cross-cultural dialogue. And coaching and mentoring pay off not only in better performance but also in increased job satisfaction and decreased turnovers. Even though, empathy doesn't get much respect in business, because people tend to think that if they care about others' feeling so much, leaders can't make hard decisions. However, leaders with empathy do more than sympathize with people around them. They use their knowledge to improve their companies in subtle but important ways.

(5) Social skill

Social skill is the culmination of other components of emotional intelligence, and is friendliness with a purpose; social skilled people tend to have a wide circle of acquaintances.

People tend to be very effective at managing relationships when they can understand and control their own emotions and can empathize with the feeling of others. But sometimes people with social skill might appear not be working while at work. For example, they at times chat with others during work hours. Even though, we can't deny that the leader's task is to get work done through other people, and social skill makes that possible.

Is every component mentioned above actually important?

Self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation are self-management skills, and empathy and social skill are abilities to manage relationships with others.

Self-management skills are important when we live in society. If a person behaved without self-management skills, like a child, others might think him or her immature, and wouldn't respect or trust him or her. So basically, I agree with Goleman's idea that self-management skills are important.

But for me self-regulation is still open to question. From my experience, people would feel distant from a person with self-regulation. Human being is supposed to be emotional to some extent, and if persons can handle their emotion completely, people around them might not trust them sooner or later, or think them inhuman. Because they can't read their mind at all, and tend to think they are hiding their feeling because he or she can't trust them. So from my point of view, too much self-regulation sometimes might do more harm than good because it not only keeps people at a distance, but also gets a person who is trying to be self-regulated and to hide their fierce feeling stressed out.

Much like social skill. Being too much social sometimes might do more harm than good

because people around a person who is too social might think that they are not a serious person for work, and hanging out or chatting with others to make friends with them is more important than work. However, I still believe that being social is quite important to achieve a good performance. Social skill serves as a lubricant for relationships or friendships.

On the other hand, self-awareness, motivation and empathy are especially important and necessary for being attractive leaders. Self-awareness is necessary to know one's limit and what and how to do at crises. Motivation is like gas for cars, and sometimes waxes so as to shine them. Also, empathy is lubricant for relationships with others.

Organization behavior and emotional intelligence

Organization behavior itself is a vague word. But with Goleman's help, I could see "organization behavior" more clearly. Because he gave me a specific image that I need to be an attractive leader. And now I know what kind of tools I should learn: emotional intelligence, which consists of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill.

Someone might say that emotional intelligence is genetic and we have to give up enhancing it. It might be true that we are born with certain levels of emotional intelligence. But I believe we can learn emotional intelligence. People learn emotional intelligence as they grow up; that is, emotional intelligence comes with maturity. We could say that maturity is emotional intelligence. As Goleman pointed out, it might require an individualized approach with sincere desire and concerted effort, and can't possibly be achieved overnight. Even though, if there's chance to enhance our emotional intelligence, there's no choice but doing our best to learn it to be an attractive leader.