

Developing Ambidextrous, Connected and Mindful Brains for Contemporary Leadership

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Abstract

Contemporary leadership demands certain competencies of the person who aspires to lead that are distinct from the feudal era. Today's leader has to inspire, not defeat. A leader who cannot read people cannot inspire. Leadership is examined here through the lens of Emotional Intelligence acknowledging the emotional reality of the workplace. Developing leadership capability is more about becoming a certain kind of person with desirable habits rather than having abilities or occupying a position so that required traits continue to be exercised even under critical and stressful conditions. The parts of the brain that perform well under duress lie in the emotional core and basal areas. Brain structures that mediate self-regulation, decision-making, empathy, intuitiveness, balanced view, resilience, optimism and motivation have been identified; hence ways to exercise these can be devised. Development of a whole-brained persona through exercises that help focus attention, develop alertness and mindfulness is advocated. Awareness helps to nurture competencies from childhood and continue the process of learning through adulthood with activities designed for the purpose, in an organized way, aspiring to attain balanced ego and equipoise. Leadership is a process that begins with the self and extends outwards to power organizations and nations towards greatness.

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The 'Modern Times' film by Charlie Chaplin portrays mindless work and aggressively intimidating superiors with no regard for the humanness of the work force. It brings out the irony that humans are employed for jobs that only humans can do, yet their humanness is often ignored by other humans. Leadership and Management has come a long way since those 'Modern Times' and had to evolve to keep up with the long strides of progress. Today the challenge of globalization and level playing fields ensures that talented people don't have to put up with the misery of dehumanization and under-valuation for long. The 'Bad Boss' has been pinned down as the foremost cause for exodus of talent from organizations that looked attractive from the outside (Amy Zipkin, Wisdom of Thoughtfulness – New York Times 31 May 2000 quoting data from Marcus Buckingham, Gallup Organization). The quintessential 'Bad Boss' is however quite innocent in his own assessment and oblivious of the adverse impact of his/her habitual behavior. The first step towards improvement has to be 'Awareness'.

The competencies that steadily push a person up the hierarchy like academic brilliance and hard work are found to become less relevant for performing a role which demands leadership. Conventional intelligence gets you the job but it is Emotional Intelligence that is effective once you are in the driver's seat. It is not possible to sprout new competencies along with the changing demands of the job. EI Competencies are intrinsic and individuals have various natural endowments. Like many other skills these can be learned and developed throughout life.

Awareness lies at the base of the development process. The deeper the awareness, the earlier the process can begin, with babies being nurtured to develop secure affection styles, spotting and encouraging empathy development in kindergarten, learning to be a team player in school, learning

how to influence others in college, understanding emotional realities at the workplace during management training, dealing with these realities in an attuned and empathic way and balancing these with the demands of the task at hand during executive development, and coaching of leaders for developing effective practices that have a lasting legacy and impact on the future. The learning can be seamless rather than rigidly compartmentalized, but if those in positions of authority are unaware of the EI construct and of opportunities that help exercising EI competencies, the learning happens in a haphazard and unequal way, and fear of addressing emotional reality maintains the culture of avoidance and denial that sap strength and drain energy while so called leaders puzzle about why their methods fail or succeed.

EI learning happens at the level of the limbic system and involves forming desirable habits through practice. These subconscious habits once acquired, will emerge effortlessly under stress and during a crisis but cannot be learned under stressful conditions because stress chemicals are not conducive to new learning. Most leaders have learned the competencies in childhood and early adulthood in the laboratory of life and continue to hone their skills while on the job – until they find themselves in leadership positions – that is when some continue to learn but others stop learning.

Leadership is itself a stressful condition as one is under constant gaze of watchful eyes, driven by a desire for power and a need to make an impact, always in readiness for action. This condition is one of 'arousal' mediated by the pumping of adrenaline. Sustained arousal leads to high blood pressure, compounded by supportive action of cortisol (stress mediating hormone) secreted by the adrenal cortex. Cortisol hampers learning by interfering with the birth of new neurons and formation of new networks. Conventionally

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subordinates do not expect a leader to do any learning and withhold vital information and suggestions. Another factor that blocks learning is the attitude of the individual who does not think that it is necessary to learn anything more as he already has all the competencies that got him to this position. Such a combination of attitudes may result in the leader succumbing to the 'CEO Disease' getting disconnected from reality.

Awareness of EI processes can help to recognize stress as it builds up through familiarization of somatic markers (physical sensations that warn about the state of the subconscious mind) and leaders can manage the stress effectively to allow tacit learning to continue out of day to day experience. Leadership competencies are not only learned at the workplace. A keen learner will soak up lessons from personal life, community work, while playing at a favourite sport or while organizing social events and functions.

The following tables simplify the changing scenario and demands from new leaders by giving at a glance the attitudinal change towards Emotions at the Workplace:

Table 1: Emotions	
Then	Now
No Place in Business	Essential in Business
Confuse	Clarify
Interfere with Judgment	Contribute to Judgment
Distract	Motivate
Undermine Authority	Generate Influence without Authority

Present day captains of industry have realized that apathy results in poor quality and poor numbers. Hence some philosophical workplace considerations have shifted with time, as summarized in Table 2:

Table 2		
Philosophy	Old	New
Focus	Function	Values
Attitude towards People	Resource	Stakeholders
Contribution from People	Work	Enthusiasm, Commitment, Networks
Power comes from	Position	Influence
Culture	Impersonal	Resonant
Quality Considerations	Competitive	Excellence
Client Satisfaction	Satisfy	Delight
Market	Niche	World
Attitude to Change	Resentful, Slow	Essential for Survival

Changing a philosophy usually involves a change in psychology or what we term as 'mind-set'. Consider the individual as a composite whole consisting of overt and covert aspects. Surprisingly the covert issues take up more space than the visible tip, like an iceberg.

1. EMOTIONAL REALITY OF THE WORKPLACE:

The Overt and Covert aspects of the Individual

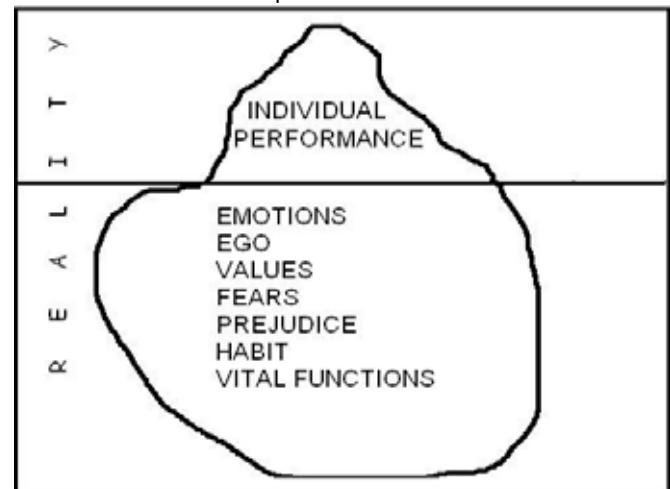


Figure 1

The Overt and Covert aspects of a Team

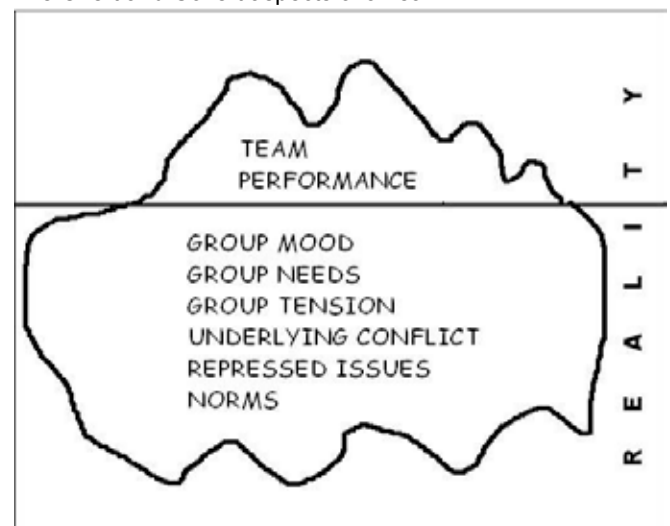


Figure 2

Source: *Make the Unconscious become Conscious*

- - Karl Albrecht¹

Once the full picture of the overt and covert components of an individual's personality is brought in to the light the individual's behavior becomes comprehensible. If the individual herself / himself becomes aware of the subconscious issues that are not usually addressed such as ego, fears and core values, then the person can take charge and become an emotionally intelligent and aware person who can regulate and manage the self. Being aware that other people also have emotions, ego, values and fears and have as much right to these as we do, helps us to empathise and understand others better. This understanding develops along with attunement and practice into social skills that include persuasion, developing consensus, managing conflict, soothing ruffled nerves, negotiating with win-win solutions, effecting change and influencing outcomes.

Individuals grouped together by common purpose make a team. The team has its own covert reality and unaddressed issues such as conflict, recognition, unwritten and unspoken ways of doing things that are called norms that could be deeply entrenched and difficult to change even though team members may leave and new members take their place. A leader has to recognize this reality and sense norms. Useful norms can

be retained and obsolete or counter-productive ones can be changed. The leader can usher in change by setting a clear example (Be the change you want to see in the world – Mahatma Gandhi). Without sensitivity the well meaning leader may trample on the group norms and cause much anguish, further reducing the cooperation that is required for effecting change.

Individual egos coalesce to form a team ego. If any one member suffers from low self esteem it brings down the morale of the whole team so care has to be exercised to make sure that no single member is undervalued or uninvolved. The leader has to show the way towards subjugation of personal interests to the greater ambition of the team and the organization. A leader with a coaching style can go further by showing each member how he / she can find personal self actualization through the work done for achieving the team goals. This alignment powers the team through a magnetic synergy that helps it to achieve like never before, boosting team spirit and enthusiasm.

Acceptance of reality is not always easy. It involves acceptance of the whole truth including the inconvenient and brutal facts. If someone is not prepared to accept his own subconscious even privately, he will suffer from insecurity and cannot be comfortable with transparency. Discomfort with transparency is obvious to others and results in corrosion of trust with resultant loss of influence. To be mindful and accepting of reality is to exercise mental discipline that results in equanimity. Mental energy that is consumed for the purpose of continued denial and non-acceptance of reality is stolen by subconscious processes hence not available to the cognitive brain for directing attention to problem solving and creative ideation. Non acceptance, strong attachment and intention to control others drain away capacity for attentiveness and the strain of leaking away of limited resources causes negativity and stress. It is better to accept that the only person that the brain is equipped to control is the self. A person who fails in self-control is certainly not equipped to control others. Acceptance of reality frees mental resources for constructive use.

Often subordinates look up and see a person who has been vested with power but is not in control (of the self). They cannot get themselves to respect such a superior, consequently they feel insecure in their own roles. Unpredictable superiors keep people guessing, 'how will he/she react', reasonable and understanding one day and scathingly humiliating the next. When subordinates feel 'unsafe' they build fortresses around themselves and withhold their best talents. Regardless of designation, humiliation feels equally noxious to everyone. Toxic emotional experiences impact the immune system by confusing physically threatening conditions with socially threatening conditions. The biological stress response to both physical and social threat is identical.

Threat Response:
 Increased Blood Pressure
 Increased Blood Sugar
 Diverting of Attention to the cause of threat and away from the task
 Increased muscle tone in readiness to fight or run
 Suspension of digestion as blood is diverted to muscles
 Suspension of reparative immune processes
 Suspension of thought process

2. CLUSTER OF EI COMPETENCIES REQUIRED FOR LEADERSHIP

Leadership demands certain competencies of the person who aspires to lead or finds him / her self in a position to lead. Instead of the word competency we often hear the word quality when speaking of what we look for in a leader. This seems to imply that competency must be practiced so thoroughly that it has a lasting effect on the physiology of the person. It is more about being a certain kind of person rather than having abilities ('Leadership is a matter of how to be, not how to do it' Francis Hesselbein CEO Girl Scouts USA). Let us examine the Emotional Competency model popularized by Daniel Goleman and followed by EI practitioners around the world.

Table 3 : Emotional Intelligence Competencies		
	Relating to Self	Relating to Others
Recognition	1. Self Awareness Accurate self-assessment	3. Empathy Organizational Awareness
Regulation	2. SElf Management	4. Relationship Management

The quadrants cannot be water-tight separation as it is obvious that regulation cannot happen without recognition. The existence of the subconscious in individuals and covert aspects of organizations (Figs 1 & 2) and social structure has to be acknowledged and included for full effect.

Rapid strides have been made in the understanding of brain function since the advent of fMRI and PET Scan technology. We can now identify the areas of the brain that participate in various functions, cognitive, related with emotions or connected with processing sensory information and initiating movement. Some functions relevant to leadership competencies are summarized below:

Executive Functions with related Brain Structures that enable them

- Emotional memory– Amygdala (Limbic System)
- Response to emotional turmoil – Right Prefrontal Cortex (PFC)
- Decision for appropriate response –Left Prefrontal Cortex
- Soothing of emotions – Orbito-frontal Cortex (OFC)
- Delaying Gratification – Orbito-Frontal Cortex
- Bringing subconscious emotions to level of cognition – Insular Cortex
- Access to Intuition – Right anterior Insular Cortex
- Finding Anomalies and mistakes – Right Prefrontal Cortex
- Negativity – Right PFC
- Seeing Opportunity – Left PFC
- Motivation to keep trying in face of set-back – Left PFC
- Ability to turn around negative mood – Left PFC
- Empathy – Mirror Cells scattered in many brain areas especially in Anterior Cingulate Cortex, Insula and Limbic system
- Creativity and Ideation– Right Hemisphere
- Mindfulness and attention to task – Left Hemisphere

Use and adequate balance of executive functions result in development of competence and frequent exercise of desirable traits leads to these being ingrained as habits. Desirable habits are regarded as qualities. Since the brain structures identified as participants in executive functions also participate in non-executive functions, exercises for energizing these tissues can be designed from the point of view of alternative activity to dispel boredom. For example team games and sports improve team competence at work and exchanging jokes and laughing aloud improves mood energizing action in the left pre-

frontal cortex that regulates urges that arise in the emotional mid-brain. The brain participates in every activity of the body including unconscious regulation of metabolism, as well as in imagining and envisioning. With awareness we can exercise the brain with a purpose.

3. THE OLD STYLE

Leadership and dominance is displayed in animals that live in groups. This is the primitive pattern of leadership that is based on confidence and physical strength. In this style the effect of Testosterone (male sex hormone) on muscle mass, and on the brain where it is capable of generating self confidence, increased social perception, increased social vigilance in competitive setting and decrease in interpersonal trust is evident. Some of the primitive characteristics are continued in human organizations, such as the urge to compete physically and displace the dominant leader, and to bully and intimidate the others into submission through lowered self esteem. The ideology is paternalistic and because of its prevalence many still feel comfortable with it and are content to be either submissive or dominating. Humans retain the parts of the brain that participate in conjunction with sex organs in this patriarchal system, but are endowed with much more. Evolution has gifted humans with a neocortex that is so top heavy that it has to be wrinkled and folded to fit into the skull. When we see what the neo-cortex is capable of we realize that something as important as leadership should not be relegated to the medieval mid-brain. Feudal subjugative leadership as displayed in the Testosterone School of Management is obsolete. Contemporary requirements need to be understood and competencies driven by the parts of the brain that are relatively newly evolved must be developed through exercise.

Evolution ensures that faculties that are useful are retained while irrelevant abilities are gradually whittled away. The human brain has retained the lion's ability to be effective through emotions and competition. These medieval mid-levels are by no means superfluous (or they would have been deselected by evolution). They are essential, hence the denial of their importance and attempts at repression in an effort to become civilized are misguided. Emotional Reality of individuals and of teams needs to be acknowledged, lessons are to be learned from this level and conscious regulation of the mid-brain (and not repression) has to be achieved.

Leadership styles that feed on fear, based on intimidation like 'command and control' and less coercive yet pressurizing 'do as I do' (pacesetting) are essential tools in the leader's tool-kit but need to be reserved for real emergencies that are life threatening and not merely ego threatening. Commanding and dictatorial abilities work so well in dire circumstances that evolution prudently retained them, but we must use them only when the situation warrants it. Emotional Intelligence provides personal discipline, confidence and courage to enable a leader in the art of leadership characterized by the visionary, coaching, affiliative and democratic styles.

4. CONTEMPORARY STYLES

Today's leader has to inspire, not defeat. A leader who cannot read people cannot inspire even if he has a vision of his own. The vision conjured to lead an organization into the future may not appeal at an emotional level to many if it does not resonate with their own vision for their individual path. The brain does not generate passion unless the goal is one's own.

The brain does not maximize its processing capability without a stimulating soak in neurochemicals that mediate positive emotions (such as endorphin, dopamine, oxytocin, serotonin). Although the recruitment process has picked the juiciest and healthiest brains, they underperform when uninspired. A leader needs to read each personal dream and interweave it with the organization's vision. Sometimes we are unaware of our own dreams, how does one read the unspoken dreams of others?

Mirror cells discovered in monkey and rat brains and later researched through fMRI in humans, have demystified the wireless ability we observe in empathy, by which we experience emotional contagion and create a theory of other minds¹⁰ *(read their thoughts and intentions). People with defective mirror cell systems have trouble getting along with others socially because they cannot tune in to their feelings and guess their intentions or judge sincerity or lack of it. Luckily most people have intact mirror cell systems that help us learn so well by observing and copying. This system ensures that empathy is intrinsic and we do not have to learn the process. In fact we have to learn to switch off empathy at times in order to be effective (like when a surgeon has to suture a wound on a bleeding yet wriggling child). The same ability to switch empathy to standby mode can be developed further to enable us to detach from our own suffering and be objective about a situation.

Equipped with these magical little mirror neurons an astute observer can sense the basic fabric of another person's values, beliefs, hopes and dreams. Napoleon Buonaparte is known to have observed that 'A leader is a dealer in hope'. Mirror cells are the basis of the ability of animals to create a theory of what the other is feeling, thinking and intending to do. According to Dr VS Ramachandran who has extensively studied phenomena linked to mirror neurons, guessing the intentions of others is a life-saving ability and could have developed first, i.e. awareness of other's is more primitive than self-awareness. This ability can be further developed using the same infrastructure, to recursively examine what the individual herself / himself is feeling and thinking.

5. INTUITION AND VISION

Experiments using fMRI have demonstrated that imagination is a real electrical and biological process in the brain. To conjure a vision for a company the leader needs imagination blended with thorough knowledge of the field and markets. Since vision is a projection to the future there is no hard data available to justify the idea. It is based on trends and dreams and seasoned with a sprinkling of intuition.

Intuition comes from feelings of comfort or discomfort with certain ideas. The signal for what 'feels right' or doesn't comes from a part of the brain that stores information about feelings at a level that is too deep to be verbal. The language of the signal has to be decoded from a 'gut feel' or 'a feeling in my bones' or information like 'my heart is not in it' or a grating feel of 'it goes against my grain'. The decoding is difficult because the source of the signal could come from deeply ingrained values, fears or a large tank of tacit knowledge that builds up with experience and sub conscious observation of what works and what doesn't. There is no analytical explanation for this font of knowledge or dated events in the memory to act as precedent. Also the feelings could be based on prejudice and stereo-typing that even we are unaware of. Hence intuitive

messages cannot be explained or relied upon as data, but yet they are signals and they are data, just in another form and not admissible in court. Yet a 'smart guess' based on intuitive signals is all that lies at the base of a vision and no one gets far without one.

One very new part of the neocortex that researchers identified late because it lies tucked under the temporal lobe is the insula. One of the functions of this strategically located cortex is to integrate emotion (feelings) and cognition. This shy and unassuming bit of brain is processing the ability to become aware of intuitive signals and it takes practice and encouragement to strengthen such a subtle role. It is seen that monks who meditate for long hours and practice emotional variety of meditation (where feelings of compassion are evoked for all beings) and practice mindfulness have larger and heavier insular cortex especially on the right side. Exercising parts of the brain results in increased robustness of that area. It has become evident through study and research that Emotional Awareness, Emotional Regulation, Empathy and Mindfulness are trainable skills.

6. MINDFULNESS

The very first way to train in mindfulness is to listen. Listening is an art and a trainable craft. To convert the craft of listening into an art it takes a healthy respect for all human beings. If this respect comes from the core, significance of each individual is acknowledged from the sub-conscious which other wise tends to remain pre-occupied with the significance of the self. So a person who listens with full attentiveness radiates a message of humility. [Humility does not mean that you think less of yourself, It means you think of yourself less – Ken Blanchard]. Making a habit of attentive listening is as beneficial to both parties. The speaker feels reassured, comforted and affirmed while the listener develops the same benefits to the brain and immuno-endocrinal system as one achieves with mindfulness of meditation.

Benefits of Mindfulness
 Lower blood pressure
 Regulated Blood Sugar
 Lower Heart Rate
 Improved digestive function
 Improved immunity and healing
 Positive mood
 Higher energy
 Ability to concentrate on task
 Ability think creatively

Mindfulness involves capturing of the working memory available to the conscious brain and channelling it to one activity. This entails internal discipline and enough regulation of the potentially distracting amygdala (emotional center). Amygdala responds primally in response to fear and strong negative emotions triggering the threat response and hijacking the working capacity for attention to focus on the cause of the fear or other kinds of turmoil. The Anterior Cingulate Cortex bristles with activity when pain or social slight is experienced. This part of the brain urges the person to immediate action not giving the slow thinking levels enough time to weigh the pros and cons of the action and its possible consequences.

Under conditions of real physical threat a burst of energy

is provided to the muscles (via the chemistry of the threat response) enabling swift and powerful action to attack to protect what is valued or to flee from danger, or else the energy could be used to defuse a potential crisis. The Amygdala is set with a hair-trigger and responds briskly to minimal inputs, hence it is likely to confuse physical and social issues. The perceptions of physical and social pain are identical in pattern of activation in the Anterior Cingulate Cortex (ACC) causing further blurring of the two distinct issues. The ACC spurs the individual to take quick action. Consequently brilliant people find themselves doing the most foolish thoughtless things. When lack of mental discipline results in hijack by mid-brain repeatedly, the thinking levels lie unused and limp for the period, losing health and vitality, while the reactive circuits flourish and become the preferred route for brain activity. Rich endowment in areas responsible for I/Q may thus be wasted.

Methods of Practicing Mindfulness:
 Do any of these with 100% attention
 Play a Game
 Solve a Puzzle
 Listen
 Be with Nature
 Create Something
 Pray
 Feel Grateful
 Dance
 Do Something for the First Time
 Have an Adventure
 Learn to play a Musical Instrument
 Get into Flow at something you do well
 Meditate

7. SELF-CONTROL

Exercising restraint on the amygdala is the left pre-frontal cortex. It just needs a quarter second to abort the habitual action triggered by the reactive brain.. The PFC signal travels via the Orbito-frontal Cortex (OFC) to reach the amygdala. Activity in this circuit soothes the irritated emotional centre and calms it sufficiently for reason to prevail. In persons found to have damage in the circuit that regulates emotion, another severe handicap emerges. They are incapable of making the simplest of decisions like which shirt to wear, or which date to make an appointment. They make disastrous choices and cannot control emotional outbursts, wrecking their social and professional lives. Disconnect between the intellectual and emotional brain is compatible with life and the person can solve complex problems and calculate flawlessly, but the condition spells doom for social effectiveness. Robust health in the PFC, OFC and Amygdala allows an individual to take charge of behavior and is able to present and project the self for others to see and rely upon.

8. WHOLE-BRAINEDNESS

Disconnect between the two sides of the brain (hemispheres) is also compatible with life but results in two different ways in which the person processes information and the two cannot interact with each other and synergize. Depending on the way in which we have trained our brains we may be using the naturally dominant one half of the brain and allowing the other to idle and dwindle.

To maximize potential of natural endowment of neural tissue, it

is necessary to activate and exercise all parts of the brain and keep all parts connected and accessible to each other. The brain is a spatial organ so it can be likened to a city with connecting lanes and by-lanes and buzzing with traffic. Here the traffic is in the shape of electrical signals that zap through the streets and slow-flowing chemical molecules bridge the crossings to send a new signal charging down the next lane. Connectivity is essential to getting work done. Streets that are unused get clogged with undergrowth resulting in reduced efficiency. Used paths are smooth and quick, and they become that way through practice. Learning to do something unfamiliar takes a bit of work, during the process, unused lanes are cleared of debris and opened up.

Table 5. Right-brain / Left-brain concept is popular knowledge and summarized in the table below.

Function	Left Brain	Right Brain
Thought	Analytical	Holistic
Uses	Logic	Intuition
Expression	Language	Imagination
Processes	Science	Art
	Math	Music
	Usability	Design
Attention	Can apply to task	Obsessive
Mood	Well being	Distress
Attitude	Hopeful	Despairing
Detects	Opportunity	Anomaly
Relation with Emotion Center	Soothes frustration / worry	Escalates Negative feeling
In adverse situation	Motivates to keep trying	Depressive

Consider a stimulus that irritates and rouses the emotional center. It immediately activates the Right brain to examine what is wrong with the environment and what is causing the distress. This is necessary for survival and well-being. The left PFC tends to detect opportunity in the situation and once activated has a calming soothing action on the emotional turmoil. It overrides reactivity and dwells on the options available to decide on appropriate response.

By itself the left PFC tends to be delusional and falsely upbeat, so the balancing action of the fault-finding right brain is essential to get the realistic mix of attitude. For the purpose of leadership (which includes leading the self) a whole-brained approach is ideal. The right brain contributes intuitively to the vision while the linguistic communicativeness of the left brain will help to convey the vision for others to act upon. The macro level holistic thinking of the right brain with its ability to design systems when coupled with the practical implementation by the left sided faculties with attention to detail, will help the strategy to succeed.

Since a natural dominance of one half of the brain is observed in most people, awareness about this aspect can help us balance the system by exercising the lazy side of the brain through appropriate exercises. Practising ambi-dextrous actions is a useful method e.g. try to write a sentence with the hand you normally don't use to write with, learn to play a

musical instrument, try your hand at sculpting or pottery etc. These can be done light-heartedly and not obsessively as the aim is not to write legibly with the wrong hand but to goad existing neurons into activity. (Forcing a naturally left handed person into using the right as a dominant hand may result in blunting some talents and is not advisable). Activity in neuronal circuits helps to maintain their health and connectedness and encourages new neurons to plug in to existing circuits counteracting age related depletion of the cerebral cortex.

Emotional Intelligence integrates function and optimization of both hemispheres of the Neocortex (thinking upper-brain) and the Limbic System (Emotional mid-brain). Together they make a winning team. Since the neocortex sits atop the mid-brain and the mid-brain reserves the right to by-pass the slow thinker in times of stress, it is imperative for the thinking brain to have a handle on the lower level that can stabilize this willful mount. The reins are in the left PFC that activates half a second after the mercurial mid-brain has already formed an opinion based on the minimalistic information fed to it at high speed. The bulk of information is routed to the thinking brain so it can be discerning and examine the situation in detail. It needs to stall action that emanates from the middle-levels based on habit and tacit wisdom to examine its appropriateness and perhaps, substitute the action with a more considered response.

To buy this half second one needs to devise a pause button by activating the OFC. Every individual has his / her own way of pause-and-consider, developed through practice in delaying gratification, adapting to unfamiliar conditions and many instances of applying brakes to emotional reactions. Notice that people who think on their feet start a response with a non-committing word like 'quite right', or 'is that so' while they process information in the PFC and avoid reacting from the like/don't-like conclusions that light up instantly in the emotional center. At the same time smooth interflow of information between the emotional and analytic departments ensures that the value judgments made by the emotional center and consideration of what really matters gets sufficient prominence as not to be drowned by cold facts and calculations. Blocking signals from the emotions results in decisions that do not agree with core preferences or cause discomfort by trampling on one's fears.

Whole-brained persons are balanced and effective, in touch with reality, yet optimistic and motivated and in charge of their emotions, expressing them appropriately and minimizing the time spent under the influence of negative moods, thus safeguarding health and well-being. Others look towards balanced individuals to strike up meaningful relationships.

9. SECURENESS

In relationships, personal or professional, an individual's attachment style comes into play and reflects the level of 'secureness' of a personality. The style is laid down early in childhood depending on whether the child's needs were met in a reliable and assuring way, unpredictably ambivalent ways, or if the child felt uncared for and abused.

A secure person is capable of maintaining mutually respectful, trusting and open relationships, whereas the anxious person is clingy and jealous and the avoidant person is distant and apparently doesn't care. The health of one's relationships, personal or professional, reflect the health of neural networks that form the basis of abilities such as processing of distressing

emotions. People look up to a leader in times of distress and seek a model to emulate. They look for leaders who can maintain fulfilling relationships. The attachment style predisposes the style of processing unpleasantness and bereavement.

Table 6.

Style	Secure	Anxious	Avoidant
Self Worth	Realistic	Low	High / Low
Perception of Others	Reliable Have Good Intentions	Doubtful	Unreliable
Comfort with Emotions	Comfortable	Obsessive	Uncomfortable
Expression of Emotion	Appropriate	Distracted by Emotion	Suppresses Emotion
Relationships	Capable of Smooth and lasting relationships	Rocky relationships clingy and acrimonious. Successful if partner has secure style	Shallow short relationships. Swings between distantness and coercion
Handling of Distress	Can buffer distress in self and in others	Turns to others for comfort and reassurance	Keeps to self

Healthy personalities do not change when a person moves from personal to professional arena, hence successful lasting personal relationships in any sphere signal the secureness of the personality and reliability of a leader in case the ship runs into bad weather just as relationships often do. A leader's primal task is to work with emotions. Others intuitively look for indicators of emotional stability that qualifies one as an emotionally intelligent leader (table 5).

10. ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

Secure personalities, capable of self-management are comfortable with transparency, which is a requirement in contemporary leadership with a shift towards flat organizational structure. Transparency is essential for creating a refreshing organizational climate. Just as emotional reality of individuals and of teams cannot be ignored so organizational climate should be acknowledged.

A leader may have no job description but whatever he/she does (or doesn't) has an impact on climate. An emotionally intelligent leader proactively creates climate with awareness. Her / his effectiveness is gauged by the positivity in the climate. The leader sets the ground rules by being positive and optimistic and clarifying goals and roles; Creates resonance by enunciating a vision that excites and enthuses the team providing a compelling purpose. He / she appreciates and encourages members who build emotional capacity of the group.

There are always some members whose mood is 'off'. An EI leader allows expression of negative feelings and soothes them by listening, addressing their issues instead of ignoring them, and helping them to turn the mood towards the positive side of the spectrum. Some people are confused between 'idea' and 'identity' and feels dejected when their ideas are

rejected. They need guidance to be able to perceive the separation between the two and climb out of the depressed state to feel valued enough to continue to contribute despite the temporary set-back, feel involved enough to celebrate as a team the emergence of a superior idea even if it is selected over their individual submission.

One good thing about negative emotions is that they provide a surge of energy. A disgruntled hostile member of the team can easily turn saboteur to give vent to this surplus energy. Recognizing this phenomenon and EI leader is vigilant about hostility and can artfully put this extra energy to constructive use by assigning specific challenging tasks. Achievements outside one's comfort zone spark sensations of pride and joy, turning around the mood profitably.

Leaders who share credit, celebrate alongside, highlight strengths and contributions, keep information flowing, give feed-back and criticism in private, discuss hopes for the future, involve everyone in change processes, coach and develop many more leaders, are the ones who drive the climate of the organization in a positive direction. It takes courage to confront and address issues like emotional reality and climate. A leader could stop and ask, 'In my organization, is it safe for a subordinate to tell a superior that he is making a mistake?' The answer to this question could indicate if all levels of employees think of it as a great place to work.

11. EGO MANAGEMENT

Management Research conducted over five years by Jim Collins has resulted in the formulation of a model of five levels of leadership. Leadership begins with leading the self and becoming a significant contributor to society. That is when individuals indulge in activity that is beneficial to something bigger than the self, e.g. family, club, community, organization. However as they contribute throughout life and achieve many aims, they continue to work for self-aggrandization. The expanding ego is its own reward. It keeps raising the bar and beating its own records, stays ahead of the competition and builds great empires. Ego is a wonderful asset for leaders, but as Jim Collin's research pointed out, greatness exhibited by level 5 leaders is of a quality that impacts the future, and results in long-lasting greatness for the company decades beyond the tenure of leader who built that greatness. His findings consistently demonstrate surprising and extreme personal humility in level 5 leaders coupled with fierce resolve to achieve professionally on behalf of the company.



Figure 3

The shining ego-suit* of level 4 leaders that glows in the brilliance of the spot-lights is suddenly invisible at the next level of leadership. Surely the ego is intact and fits snugly with the immense competency of the leader, but the skill that others fail to develop is the art of deflecting the spotlight on to achievements of others and to the collective pride of the company. The essence lies in transcending one's individual ego and subjugating it to the greater interest of the organization. While looking out for opportunities these leaders do not weigh 'what will I get?' and instead seek another chance to build, create and contribute. Sincerity of this humility is apparent in consistency.

Transcendence (subjugation of the ego) is a monk-like ability and would require a great deal of development of the neocortex to effect higher than average regulation of instinctive and subconscious levels that contain emotions / ego and generous access to levels of tacit learning that can also be called experience. The list 'Methods of Practicing Mindfulness' (Box 4) offers alternatives to meditation like sports, music, adventure, solving problems etc. The essence lies in the process of focusing attention and then making the mind alert and open to embrace the next experience, e.g. readiness to face the next ball in a game or a doctor receiving the next patient in a busy ER. Expertise is based on the number of hours the brain is engaged in Focused Attention (FA) or Open Monitoring (OM) activity.

12. BECOMING – DEVELOPING PERMANENT CHARACTERISTICS

Research done on meditating monks at Waisman Laboratory for Brain Imaging and Behavior at the University of Wisconsin-Madison under Richard J Davidson and Antoine Lutz proves that mindfulness is a trainable skill and the number of hours of practice in meditation shows up as increase in thickness of relevant parts of the neocortex. Experts with 44,000 hours of practice showed permanent changes to their vital functions and brain wave patterns on EEG.

Different skills exercise and vitalize parts of the brain that are used in the set of actions, e.g. eye to muscle coordination in sports, ear to muscle coordination in music. Executive functions demand focused attention and alertness. Every skill has an associated learning curve. The effort required to perform is more in the beginning and rises with higher levels of performance. With practice a stage is reached when effort required to achieve high performance is lowered. Soft skills and leadership skills are similar in that once the neural pathways have been opened up and widened with practice, the pathway is always there to be used when required. Sportspersons and musicians practice more and perform less, but executives seem to practice little and perform all day. To practice soft skills and leadership skills one does not have to be at the workplace. Whenever there are opportunities for persuasion, conflict management, inspiring and developing others, catalyzing change, building bonds, and working synergistically at home or in the community, these serve as a laboratory for learning and practicing leadership skills. Awareness adds impact.

Collin's research did not delve into the learnability of level 5 skills, but he suggests that everyone take a shot at it. "We may not make it to level 5, but it's worth trying". Considering the encouraging findings of research conducted on the experts in different types of meditation, we may conclude that with

awareness and a goal to become a level 5 leader, executives can practice emotional intelligence in all aspects of life, enough to develop lasting increase in brain tissue thickness and enduring reset of physiology to states of equanimity.

Emotional Competence (including Leadership) is a capability that involves many parts of the brain and becomes a skill when used repeatedly so many times that the ability gets welded into the levels of habit in the brain. Once formed, this competence emerges effortlessly especially in times of crisis. They say anyone can steady the wheel when the sea is calm, it takes a person who has made leadership a way of life to perform as a leader when the going gets tough. Practice makes the circuits efficient and experience gets stored in the memory and serves as wisdom when called upon. Since the highest level of leadership involves subjugation of the ego it adds a zen-like spiritual quality to the individual and benefits not only the health of the individual, but all those who come in contact with him / her and impacts the future by planting seeds of greatness that endures.

13. AWARENESS IS CRUCIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Development by Others

Leadership development has to begin early and a large part of the onus rests on parents and teachers. Children mirror the behavior of significant elders and watch how they weather their emotional storms. Their attachment styles depend on the dependability and integrity of care-givers and corner-stones of self-worth and secureness are laid by them. Awareness about emotional competencies and their development in persons who nurture children may prevent damage from anxiety and stress in the formative stage.

Activities and games designed for children create opportunity for grounding in social interaction, helping spontaneously, becoming a team player and keeping team goals and interests above individual objectives. Other activities help a child to learn to focus attention, and develop alertness in readiness to meet unexpected challenges.

Peer group activities pave the way to building bonds and learning the art of persuasion, collaboration, conflict de-escalation, and taking pride in achievements of others. Heavy work-day schedules and over-organized lives rob young people of opportunities to work on the relationship management quadrant of EI Competence.

Awareness on the part of mentors and coaches helps to develop young workers and executives in EI competencies that will gradually become ingrained as habits so that leadership comes naturally and effortlessly when they find themselves in situations that demand it⁹.* Desirable habits to be developed are:

Habits to be Cultivated

- Culture of Discipline
- Putting People First
- Intuitiveness and farsightedness
- Balance between reality and faith
- Consistency and Resolve in the face of set-back
- Constant quest for upgrading knowledge
- Taste for Excellence

14. SELF – DEVELOPMENT

Leadership begins within the individual, hence Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation is the place to start for persons who embark on developing themselves. An individual must introspect and ensure that he / she has no unmet needs and has adequate feeling of self-worth as to be comfortable in her / his own skin. Empathy is intrinsic but can get swamped by pre-occupation with the self and by anxiety and insecurity. Habit number 2 - 'putting people first' can be engaged once the ego is put in perspective. Hence an awareness about ego as an asset that can go out of balance and tip the boat is essential so that one can dynamically remain poised and centred with accurate self assessment. Realizing that developing the brain will develop leadership abilities the seeker can identify a sport or art form (or a type of meditation) that helps her / him to focus full attention and spend enough time at it to allow new neurons and synapses to grow into the brain tissue. After learning to pay 100% attention on any activity, the person must learn 'mindfulness' and make it a way of life. The next step is to develop alertness that makes one ready to receive the next challenge, come what may, and work on developing the seven habits listed above. Awareness will ensure that learning continues through experience with relationships outside the sphere of work serving as lessons from the laboratory of life.

A leader's work is never done and she/he is never done with developing the self.

I never stopped trying to become qualified for the job – Darwin E Smith, CEO Kimberly Clark (named Level 5 leader in Good to Great by Jim Collins)

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