



In Pursuit Of High Performance

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In the late Eighties and early Nineties there was a trend (and in some cases there still is) to mechanise and do away with the troublesome and weak human element. This has not proved possible. All our organisations are people driven, and as such, people are a most important asset – albeit flawed and at times, frail, compared to machines. The problem we now have is how to enhance the performance of the human asset in the organisation in the face of technological advancement that is almost exponentially vertical.

Organisations and companies are required to perform to ever increasing demands and expectations from stakeholders. The need to optimise performance from staff is critical, yet the focus is on “team building” in a very gratuitous way, and little sustained development is offered.

What elements can we look to in the human, in order to “enhance the person’s performance”?

- Reduce fears
- Address stress
- Create comfort with their persona
- Train people to regard change as positive progression
- Enable the person to question core beliefs when appropriate
- Establish the individual’s relationship with time
- Teach the individual basic Mind Mechanics in order to understand human behaviour in themselves and others.
- Expand the individuals’ ability to imagine and think.
- Use all the above to practice “APPLIED EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE”

Much is being said at the moment about **Emotional Intelligence – EQi. Dan Goleman, amongst many others has written much material on the subject and advocates the following equation:

$$EQi = 2(IQ + QUALIFICATION)$$

In other words, you can be as intelligent as you wish, have the most incredible qualifications, but this does not necessarily make you a person who can lead or motivate people.

The very word “emotion” evokes a feeling of weakness in us. We are hard wired to give the impression that we are “tough” and “fearless”. Keep a stiff upper lip in other words. This may well have been appropriate twenty years ago, but it is no longer a sustainable attitude. The fact of the matter is that being emotionally intelligent often means being emotionally “tough” and is the antithesis to weakness. Emotional competence is the key to leadership.

As humans, we tend to shy away from issues we do not understand. For example, we consider our brain and minds to be the realm of Brain Surgeons, Psychologists and Psychiatrists. I still remember my school days when a person went to a psychologist, they were definitely “loony”! Yet our brain and minds are the most important of our bodies. We visit the dentist and doctor for regular check – ups, but do we ever have our brains checked? Voluntarily? No.

Why? The fundamental reason is that we understand so little of our brain. Moreover, our minds are a mystery to us that we fear to address. The unknown. It is far easier to ignore this than address it. The reality is that until now, there have been no facilities where we can check up and service our minds in a simplistic “acceptable” way. Fortunately people like Dan Goleman and Drs Everly and Mitchell are opening the door to this mysterious realm and creating an awareness of the necessity to look to EQi as the route to superior human performance in Dan Goleman’s approach, and the understanding of the effects of traumatic stress in the works of Drs Everly and Mitchell.

Consider our survival mechanisms. There are two I wish to mention. Firstly our mental survival. Our brains are energy saving devices. We lose 80% of our short term memory in order to create a “reserve” to trigger the state of “fight or flee” that we call a state of high arousal. This leaves us 20% of our capacity to work with

It is said that we only use 3% of our mental capacity and that a genius only uses 1% more. So between normal people and geni, there is a reserve of 16% – 17% of mental capacity we can tap into for increased human performance.

How is this 16% - 17% occupied? It is filled with “mental baggage” such as stress, accumulated stress, traumas past and present and fear. Imagine if we could tap into this reserve by addressing the mental baggage issues and unleashing the latent potential? Well, through learning Emotional Intelligence – and *APPLYING* it to our lifestyle, it is very achievable. We now look at Applied Emotional Intelligence or AEQi.

The second aspect of the survival mechanism we need to look at is the physical. We have not changed physiologically for 13,000 years. The survival mechanisms we had back then, function in the same way. When faced with a traumatic incident, the following occurs:

- Heart rate increases
- Blood pressure elevates
- Arterial dimensions decrease
- Blood thickens
- Voiding of bladder, bowels and stomach
- Breathing becomes shallow and quick
- Cortisol and Adrenalin are released into the body.

This is known as a state of “High Arousal”. Let us look at the frequency of traumatic incidents from 13 000 years back until now.

13 000 years ago:

traumatic frequency – 1 every 2 months

2 000 years ago:

traumatic frequency – 1 every 2 weeks

1 000 years ago:

traumatic frequency – 1 every week

100 years ago:

traumatic frequency – 2 every week

50 years ago:

traumatic frequency – 3 every week

10 years ago:

traumatic frequency – 1 every day

5 years ago:

traumatic frequency – several times per day

1 year ago:

traumatic frequency – 5 times per day

NOW:

Traumatic frequency – up to, and often more than 10 per day.

When we refer to the term “traumatic frequency”, we refer to incidents that have the capability to trigger

the “State of High Arousal”. These vary in nature and intensity from person to person. For example, some people are driven to violence in traffic, whilst others remain calm. There are some schools of thought that deny the existence of stress altogether. Just how correct they are remains to be seen, but it would be naïve to adopt this stance in the face of ongoing evidence to the contrary. During the Vietnam War, 150,000 American soldiers were killed in combat. After the war 350, 000 soldiers died from Post Traumatic Stress related reasons.

It is quite clear that 13,000 years ago until recently, the state “of high arousal”** as a means of survival was appropriate, *and today this very survival tool is destroying us*. The frequent trauma experienced today triggers the body into high arousal which means sustained release of Adrenaline and Cortisol, coupled with elevated blood pressure, reduced arterial dimension and increased blood viscosity – *a recipe for human disaster* when experienced on a sustained basis.

Add an extra dose of fear to this and you can clearly see that it does little for increased human performance. So if we wish to pursue the route of managing people through habit correction or fear, we need to realise the effects of this process today are far different to the outcomes experienced twenty, even ten years ago.

It used to be appropriate to tell staff to “leave your home troubles at home”. This is also no longer appropriate due to the high number and varied traumatic incidents we experience today. If we want to get optimum performance from our staff or human asset, we need to lead with EQi and understand how to handle these new, high levels of stress in our people.

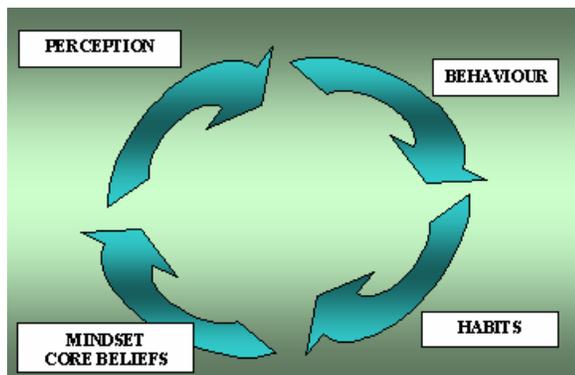
Given these high levels, is it still appropriate and effective to run organisations on fear based techniques? A simple example is where the CEO says to the salesperson “See me in my office before you leave this afternoon”. This is at eight that morning. The result is that the salesperson will probably wonder the entire day about the reason for the meeting. Are they in trouble? Is the CEO angry? People lacking EQi always anticipate the worst. The salesperson takes their mind from the task at hand and worries the entire day. Performance is diminished. Had the CEO said, for instance “Please see me this afternoon, before you leave about project X. I need to give you some more data. It will take only 10 minutes of your time. Is that O.K. with you?” It is clear that this is no cause for concern or

additional “Mental Baggage” for the individual, who is free to perform at their best.

We have been brought up by fear, live in fear and work in fear. Think of our education system – work hard or fail. Our legal system – obey the law or be punished. Most religions – heaven or hell. At work – produce results or no increase or bonus. In companies, deep-seated techniques for ruling with fear predominate, such as “divide and rule” or “need to know”.

One does not have to be a genius to realise that we have to start running our relationships and organisations with a different technique that is appropriate to modern technological progression and the likely future progression.

THE WHEEL OF BEHAVIOUR.



When you challenge the Core Beliefs that we call our “MINDSET”, we trigger an unpredictable reaction from the Amygdala that can and indeed does precipitate strong emotions. (The Amygdala is our emotional centre and is the part of the brain that recognises fear)

We also know that our “MINDSET” coupled with our Perception causes our BEHAVIOUR. Our mind is an energy saving device in terms of survival, and it consequently forms habits, as it is an energy saving device as explained. Our question is how does an Emotionally Intelligent person go about changing MINDSET and more importantly should such a person want to change the MINDSET of another individual?

The answer is pretty simple. Our lives are one long negotiation after another. We try to educate and traditionally we have done this by fear. We thought that after the Renaissance we would have changed this concept, but alas no. Our reliance on Greek Philosophers style of thinking, based upon argument has exacerbated the “rule by fear”. Our education,

religions and law are all fear based. So is our traditional style of doing business. We reward and punish good and bad habits. We lead by fear.

I relate a story that illustrates this aspect well. A farmer was talking to me about “How bad things had become in South Africa since the change in power in 1994”. This is a typical point of discussion among many South Africans unwilling to embrace change and progression. Nonetheless, in an effort to show me that my “new ways of thinking” were ineffective (a classic method of squashing “good ideas” by senseless argument), he told me about the Xhosa families that worked for him and the change (for the worst – of course) that had influenced the younger generation of Xhosa children, particularly their lack of respect for their elders. He went on to say that the parents were too scared to admonish them or punish them in any way as the children would burn the house down in the absence of the parents by way of retribution. It seems the children are apt pupils in learning to rule by fear

Let us go back to our wheel. We have seen why we cannot work in the realm of MINDSET. We have also seen that we need to influence mindset to change human behaviour for many and varied reasons, education, religion, work, relationships and anti social behaviour to name a few. We have also dealt briefly with the traditional method of fear and can see it is lacking somewhat, albeit that it has served us well for many years. What we want to determine is how the Emotionally Intelligent person deals with this problem.

THE MECHANISM

MINDSET + PERCEPTION = BEHAVIOUR = HABIT = MINDSET. If this is true (and it is) what could be wrong with focusing on the realm of changing habit by punishment and reward?

PUNISHMENT.

We do not respond well to threats. Our “Filing cabinet” or CEREBRAL CORTEX does not like the unknown and causes stress when our Amygdala or “emotional centre is triggered. The Cerebral Cortex makes us risk averse, and we take risk willingly, only when threatened. The threat of punishment consequently does little to keep the focus of humans on the task at hand – they will react to the threat and focus more on the threat or fear, than on their task related performance. This is survival. The fear becomes a trauma, and as we shall see in the trauma model we are going to build, the total focus is on the trauma. The result is that performance is not

sustainable over long periods of time, burnout occurs easily and stress related illness, both mental and physical become prevalent.

Does this sound emotionally intelligent to you?

REWARDS. Give a salesperson an unexpected reward (substantial) for a good years work. Do you think it will motivate the person to do better next year? Generally not. Surprised? Have you used the technique before?

Performance of the individual declines. The person acquires the fear of NOT getting a similar reward the following year and focuses on this aspect as a point of survival. The consequences are that the shift in focus from performance to fear, causes a marked decline in individual performance. Even worse is the creation of expectation that a reward will accrue for excellent performance. The focus shifts immediately to fear.

Does this sound emotionally intelligent to you?

BEHAVIOUR QUADRANT.

Why do we not deal directly with the behaviour? Well we simply cannot. We need to influence or create suitable behaviour PRIOR to the behaviour, which we hope will become habitual, thus negating the wasted energy of continual maintenance. This highlights the flaw in dealing with behaviour after it has happened by rewarding and punishing habitual behaviour. It is chancy and fraught with problems. We cannot deal directly with mindset due to the problems we have highlighted, so that leaves only-

THE REALM OF PERCEPTION.

I am not going to deal in depth with perception at this point. We do however, need to understand a few aspects about it. Why has no one dealt in the realm of perception as a method of influencing behaviour in the past? As Dr de Bono tells us – “there is no truth in perception!” Traditionally we have shied away from concepts that are mysterious, illogical and difficult to explain. The very nature of our Cerebral Cortex dictates this behaviour. We are just starting to understand the complexity and power of perception as a leadership tool in Emotional Intelligence.

If we change perception, an aspect relatively easy to change once we understand the mechanism of thought process and the emotional reactions of people, then we will change the persons behaviour, which will naturally become habitual and in turn

complete the Wheel of Behaviour by influencing MINDSET positively, without us causing the individual stress.

Now THAT sounds emotionally intelligent to me!

In conclusion, there are vast resources of mental capability dormant in people. They can be unleashed. These reserves are the key to modern survival and need to be addressed as soon as possible to start the journey away from our reliance on ancient survival mechanisms, that are in many cases, destroying us instead of saving us.

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