



In business... are emotions really *touchy-feely*?



By Richard Izard and Oliver Nyumbu

"I don't understand the problem with these people - the way I handle such difficult and demanding situations is to logically think things through, have a good workout in the gym, and take a shower".

This is a senior manager's complaint about his management team's "time-consuming", "touchy-feely" reactions. Clearly, emotions handled poorly can have a disruptive if not damaging effect - and ignoring them altogether can be equally destructive.

Happily, there is a growing body of research which points to the central role of emotions in achieving organisational and business success.

Consider for instance, the role of emotions in the marketplace. A study by the Journal of Advertising involving 23,000 US consumers, 13 categories of goods and 240 advertising messages revealed: *'Emotions are twice as important as facts in the process by which people make buying decisions'* Quite a vital statistic if you are in the business of selling and providing services. In the words of Dan Hill, author of the book 'Emotionomics': *"What is business if not providing services and products by and for emotionally driven people?"*

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Emotionally driven people? You wouldn't suspect it from observing how some senior managers plan, decide, and behave. The 'emotionally driven' populate both the marketplace and the workplace. So, what about emotions in the workplace? According to a 'Time' cover story linking emotions and productivity: *"Emotional happiness present in employees can account for 10 to 25 per cent higher job performance."* Essentially, this is about workplace engagement which is important but not easy to measure and improve.

Researching their book 'First Break All the Rules', Curt Coffman and Marcus Buckingham concluded: *"...people leave managers, not companies"*. This makes emotionally savvy managers a wise investment, while the emotionally illiterate ones remain a dangerous expenditure.

Richard recalls: *"Two years after I left a company I had been on the board of for eight years I met Sam, one of the old team, at a social function. She said to me that the company had changed and wasn't as good as when I was there. I asked her why and she said "because when my Dad died you came and sat on the edge of my desk and asked me how I was, they wouldn't do that now". What I found interesting was that her judgment of me and the whole company was based not on professional competence or task orientation but on taking two minutes to care."*

So, what implications might this have for a manager? Among other things, there is the matter of self awareness. Some leaders are so focused on actions and targets that there is little or no time to reflect on their default behaviours and whether these win hearts and minds or turn people off completely. A leader can benefit from periodically undertaking a bit of soul-searching, for example:

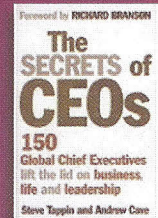
- Am I aware of the impact of my behaviour on others and can I change it when necessary?
- Do I frequently seek out feedback from different sources about my strengths and weaknesses?
- Can I listen to feedback or criticism without shutting down, becoming defensive, or lashing out at the messengers?

Emotional intelligence, as defined by authors Baker and Greenberg, is *"Actively managing thoughts and feelings to bring out the best... abilities and to create positive interactions with other people"*.

Is it time to let the feelings do the talking?

The Foundations of Leadership

"Real life for CEOs is tough... being a CEO today should come with a health warning." For their book 'The Secrets of CEOs' Steve Tappin and Andrew Cave studied the real lives of leaders from 150 companies around the world, providing fascinating and valuable insights into the job of CEO.



This collective wisdom and philosophy inspired the authors' checklist of 'CEO Foundations', including:

- **Do you know who you are?** Essential to maintaining drive and focus to succeed, this requires careful analysis of personal motivation and a defined purpose.
- **Do you have high emotional intelligence?** Despite scientific evidence to show that every decision is shaped by emotions, few leaders invest in their EQ beyond the business situations they have encountered.
- **Do you have sufficient mental clarity?** With the relentless pressure on CEOs to continually switch focus, 'cortical inhibition' - the state of one's mind 'going blank' - is a common occurrence. Developing calming and energising breathing techniques can help to address this.
- **Can you sustain peak performance?** Under-performing leaders often have an inadequate understanding of emotional states. Building the capacity to combine emotions with energy is essential in enabling leaders to push beyond normal limits and, crucially, ensure time for recovery.