



Pros & cons of focus

- Clive Wilson, Primeast, UK

There's a bit of a theme emerging in PV this season. Last month Jeannette Terry reminded us of the need to keep people focused in times of change and at the same time maintain motivation and morale. This month Kevin Obermuller uses research to back the claim for emotionally intelligent leadership.

It strikes me therefore that a thought for August is around how leaders can maintain the balance between focus (often seen as task orientation) and sensitivity (to the needs of people and to the opportunity that engagement with them can present).

Long-standing readers will know that I often use the journey metaphor at this time of year – and I think it is a helpful one.

Imagine embarking on a journey complete with map and tickets to discover that things are not quite what they seem. Indeed, I think most journeys turn out that way. Imagine not asking at the station whether trains are as scheduled. Imagine not checking with locals for best restaurants and sights. You get the picture.

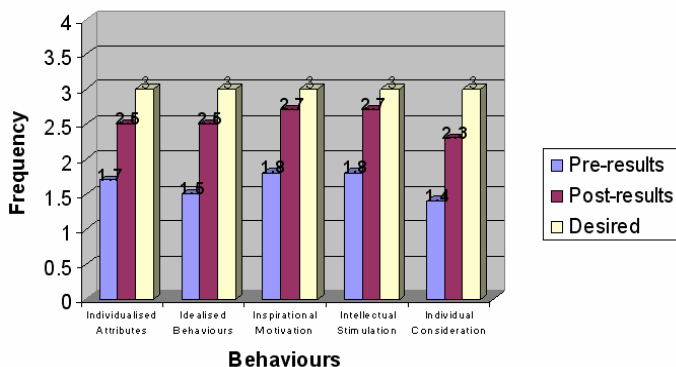
Surely the most rewarding journeys are a combination of good planning and enthusiastic and flexible engagement with people along the way.

I hope you see the connection to Kevin's research.



*an alliance of three best-in-class consulting firms
strategically located around the world
bringing global solutions to vital business challenges*

Transformational Leadership



EI makes the case for leadership

- Kevin Obermuller, Learning Dimensions, Australia



Becoming part of GLA came from a strong conviction that the three founding partners were in close alignment in beliefs and values regarding leadership in organisations and the way we could support in creating sustainable and successful businesses. In other words, our alliance began through synergy in what we now call “emotional intelligence” or EI (EQ in some circles) rather than in pragmatic business imperatives. It is this phenomenon that helped put GLA on the map and I would like to explore it in a context that I hope will strengthen the resolve of readers to invest their energies in leadership development.

Strong belief in people's capability is a first step in leadership. The second is knowing how to harness and develop it. And the third is to recognise where we as leaders get in the way through inappropriate “role modelling” or our inability to develop ourselves and others effectively in the so-called “soft-skills”. In this respect, it is often our personal blind spots that blinker us from accepting the EI realities of ourselves and others.

Awareness of our strengths and weaknesses in the way we relate to others is key and EI tools can greatly assist us in these aspects of leadership. They help us recognise and manage our own emotions and those of others. They give us clues to balance heart and head in decision making.

At GLA we have been fortunate to explore the opportunities offered by EI insight with clients in a structured way through research projects. In essence, we asked the following three questions:

Do leadership development programs featuring EI really work for individuals?

Can we fast-track the capability of teams by developing their EI capability?

Will increasing people's EI capability make a difference to job satisfaction and performance?

By using psychometrically valid tools and techniques we were able to confirm the affirmative in all three cases. In a nutshell, tailored leadership programs can lead to the enhancement in leadership capability that in turn lead to greater employee satisfaction and enhanced business results. Furthermore, we discovered that EI capability has an inverse correlation with the likelihood of people being absent from work and frontline employees such as sales people having high levels of EI are more successful in relationship-based selling environments.

One small example of the results obtained in the area of leadership development is shown opposite. Here we used the world renowned 360° MLQ™ Multi factor Leadership tool before and after one of our leadership programs. (Zoom in at your terminal if you wish to check out the axis labels - ed). The programme was for a group of engineers leading a multi-million dollar research and manufacturing project requiring the coordination of several hundred employees in very short time frames. The results show that, not only did leadership capability improve, but also a global employee satisfaction survey undertaken just before completion of the project (the time when there was most pressure on all involved) demonstrated the highest level of satisfaction in any part of the client's business around the globe.

The most exciting thing for us as researchers however has been that the program and approach has now become subsumed in to the cultural moire of the organisation. The patterns of behaviour developed during the program have now become “the way we do things around here” and are influencing other parts of the business to review their approach to leadership and empowerment.

I trust that Positive Vibes readers will see these studies as encouragement for the interest in leadership you evidently take. If you want to know more, please respond to me through our editor or direct to me at kevin.o@learningdimensions.com.au.