

Wanted: Emotional Intelligence

The most difficult issue in making any changes in American manufacturing companies is leadership. The question is, can company management act as the change agent?

Many of today's management are having trouble leading their company through the battlefields of globalization, which begs the question: What *type* of leader is needed?

The best research that I have found, which identifies a profile of what we need for new leadership, is by Daniel Coleman in his book titled *Emotional Intelligence*. Coleman's research makes the case that "emotional" intelligence is the most important factor that differentiates a typical from a great leader.

Coleman says, "intellect is a driver of outstanding performance. Cognitive skills such as big picture thinking and long term vision are important. But when I calculated the ratio of technical skills, IQ, and emotional intelligence as ingredients of excellent performance, emotional intelligence proved to be twice as important as the others for jobs at all levels."

In Coleman's research, the most successful leaders were people who have the skills to understand customers, communicate, motivate, and persuade people to follow them.

These are people who have the five "Components of Emotional Intelligence." It's worth reviewing one more time before you go get the book.

Self-Awareness: This is the ability to understand your limitations and to be able to handle constructive criticism. Any manager who won't or can't accept criticism sends out a signal that criticizing their style, decisions, or policies is in some way off limits.

As soon as that happens, employees are forced to stylize the truth or modify the facts to fit the leader. It takes a strong and open-minded individual to be aware of his or her weaknesses, and to be strong and open enough to accept constructive criticism.

Self-Regulation: One of the central tenants of critical thinking is the ability to be able to rise above your moods, biases, emotions, and prejudices to make the best decision. Coleman describes this as "self regulation," the key factor in making the right decision during a time of great change. This is the ability to suspend judgement; to think before acting.

Motivation: Coleman's research shows that the new leaders are motivated by a "desire to achieve for the sake of achievement."

These people have a passion for new challenges and like work that is new and interesting and requires fast learning.

Coleman describes the motivated leader as someone with a "passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status." I think he is describing leaders who are very interested in bringing more meaning to their lives and careers. These people are rare, but they are out there.

And, the new challenges in manufacturing may be just the right match: It is the motivated and self-confident leader who also sets the example for risk taking. Many SMMs (small and mid-sized manufacturers) are going to have to take more risks to survive in the new economy. You can't simply issue proclamations about risk to the employees; here, your work must match your talk. If you want employees to take

risks, you as the leader must be willing to set the example.

Empathy: This is defined by Coleman as the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people. Empathy is important for building teams, which are an essential part of the decentralized organization.

Empathy is also necessary to retain the talented people I call "hunters." Hunters are the people who get things done and are very difficult to replace. Retaining "hunters" must be a high priority of the leader, because it costs too much to replace them. It takes skills in coaching, mentoring, and empathy to be able to retain hunters and get them to follow you.

Social Skills: This is about proficiency in managing relationships, building networks, and building rapport with people. Surviving in the new global economy has more to do with people than with objects.

The necessary social skills may include persuasion: knowing how to make emotional pleas and how to use your abilities to influence other people.

Discussing empathy and social skills may sound like business psychiatry, but these qualities are part of the skill sets used by the most successful of today's business leaders. These new leaders have a dimension to them that is beyond the administrative, analytical, and data side of the business.

Mike Collins is the author of Saving American Manufacturing, a comprehensive step-by-step strategy that demonstrates how to ultimately become an organization that will continually find new opportunities in today's fast-changing global economy. IMPO

