

Running head: LEARNING TO LEAD WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence

A Review

Assignment

Select one book to review from the Book List. Write a 4 - 6 page review of the book, following the guidelines provided. Include an Introduction, Summary, Critique, and Recommendation.

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### Bibliographic Citation

Goleman, D., McKee, A., & Boyatzis, R. E. (2002). *Primal leadership: Learning to lead with emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

### Introduction

The book I chose to review for this assignment is entitled *Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence* by authors Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, and Richard Boyatzis (2002). In this book, Goleman et al. conclude that in order to be a successful leader, one must be able to connect to followers through emotions. I chose this book simply because I agree. I believe that in order to become an effective leader, one must be able to bond with their followers by developing an emotional sense of their well-being. In turn, this will create trust needed to produce followers who really believe in their leader to point them in the right direction. And we all know that without trust, it is impossible to become a successful leader in today's volatile business environment.

Goleman et al. provide an in-depth look at the emotional make-up and competence of effective leaders. Their book is written for people who are already operating in a leadership capacity and those who aspire to improve their leader effectiveness. Grounded in current research in the neurosciences and coupled with relevant insights from the social sciences, the book is suitable for working adults seeking to better understand the proper and effective role of emotions in the work place.

### Summary

The authors state “the fundamental task of leaders, we argue, is to prime good feeling in those they lead. That occurs when a leader creates resonance - a reservoir of positivity that frees the best in people” (Goleman et al., 2002, p. vii). The authors point out that although

this is true, many leaders today simply ignore the fact that emotional intelligence is such a large part of being a successful leader.

The book starts out by describing how a great leader's success is dependent on working through their own emotions and driving the emotions of followers in the right direction. By understanding the power of emotions in the workplace, leaders will not only attain goals such as better business results and the retention of talent, but will also see improvements in an organization's intangibles such as higher morale, motivation and commitment.

“Throughout history and in cultures everywhere, the leader in any human group has been the one to whom others look for assurance and clarity when facing uncertainty or threat, or when there is a job to be done” (Goleman et al., 2002, p.5). In modern organizations, it is still the leader's job to drive emotions in a positive direction and clear the smog created by toxic emotions. After all, when a leader drives emotions positively, it brings out the best in everyone (Goleman et al., 2002).

The book then goes on to describe how not only leaders, but people in general rely on their connections with other people for emotional stability, the fact that other people can change our very physiology and therefore our emotions, and how people, especially in groups, can inevitably “catch” feelings from one another. This is especially true of the leader simply because everyone watches the boss. Even when the boss isn't visible, his or her attitude affects the mood of his direct subordinates, and a domino effect will eventually ripple through the company's emotional climate. In this way, the authors demonstrate the reason why a successful leader must be credible at all times.

The last part of the book describes how exactly mood affects results. “Although emotions and moods may seem trivial from a business point of view, they have real

consequences for getting work done” (Goleman et al., 2002, p.12). The authors go on to state how good and bad moods tend to perpetuate themselves, how negative emotions can disrupt work, and how when people feel good, they work their best. This is especially true in teams.

In general, the authors are trying to point out that the overall mood of a company can seriously affect the attainment of an organization’s goals. In fact, they state “for every 1 percent improvement in the service climate, there’s a 2 percent increase in revenue” (2002, p.15). They go on to point out that how people feel about working for a company can account for “20 to 30% of business performance” (2002, p.18). Lastly, they state that “roughly 50 to 70 percent of how employees perceive their organization’s climate can be traced to the actions of one person: the leader” (2002, p.18). So what exactly are the authors trying to say? They are simply trying to show that a leader’s emotional state and actions do indeed affect the people they lead and in turn how these people perform.

### Critique

The central ideas contained in this book closely parallel Daft’s treatment of emotional intelligence. Daft defines emotional intelligence as “a person’s ability to perceive, identify, understand, and successfully manage emotions in self and others” (2005, p.191). According to Daft, emotional intelligence consists of four fundamental categories: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Goleman et al. substantially agree with the essential concepts if not the form of these categories.

Self-awareness, according to Daft, is “the ability to recognize and understand your own emotions and how they affect your life and work” (2005, p.194). Leaders with a high level of self-awareness learn to trust their “gut feelings” and develop a sense of self-confidence. According to Daft, self-awareness is the basis of all other competencies (2005, p.194). On the

other hand, Goleman et al. define self-awareness as “having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, as well as one’s strengths and limitations, and one’s values and motives” (2002, p.40). The authors also agree that these people are capable of using their “gut sense” to guide decisions, and that self-awareness is indeed the foundation for the remainder of the emotional intelligence categories. In their mind, self-awareness facilitates both empathy and self-management. The two in combination allow for effective relationship management, which then builds a foundation for self-awareness. Without self-awareness, a leader will not be capable of recognizing their own emotions and therefore not capable of managing others’ emotions. Once a leader is capable of recognizing their emotions, the next fundamental category, self-management, can be focused on.

Daft defines self-management as “the ability to control disruptive or harmful emotions” (2005, p.194). Self-management allows leaders to learn to balance their own emotions, enabling them to think clearly and be more effective. Goleman et al. refer to self-management as “keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control” (2002, p.39). Daft and the other authors agree that by staying in control of their feelings and impulses, leaders create an environment of trust, comfort, and fairness. By mastering their emotions, leaders are better able to “roll with the changes” and help the organization adjust. Once leaders are capable of describing their own emotions and keeping them in line, they can focus on their ability to understand others, or their social awareness.

Daft defines social awareness as “one’s ability to understand and empathize with others” (2005, p.194). According to Daft, emotionally intelligent leaders are capable of understanding divergent points of view and interacting effectively with many different types of people and emotions (2005, p.194). Goleman et al. agree, writing that “social awareness is crucial for a leader’s prime task of driving resonance. By being attuned to how others feel in the

moment, a leader can say and do what's appropriate – whether it be to calm fears, assuage anger, or join in good spirits” (2002, p.49). By being empathetic, leaders can make intelligent decisions with regard to people's feelings, seem more approachable to all involved, and develop the skills necessary for getting along with diverse workmates and doing business with people from other cultures. Once a leader develops the ability to understand others, he or she can focus on connecting and building relationships with them. Social awareness as described by Daft and Goleman et al. has also been described as sensitivity to the needs of followers, shown to be a salient trait of charismatic leaders (Conger & Kanungo, 1994).

Relationship management refers to the “ability to connect with others and build positive relationships” (Daft, 2005, p.194). According to Daft this aspect of emotional intelligence develops others, inspires others through a powerful vision, teaches others to listen and communicate clearly, and uses emotional understanding to influence others in positive ways (2005, p.195). Goleman et al. refer to relationship management as “friendliness with a purpose” (2002, p.51). Together these four aspects of emotional intelligence result in a leader who is capable of effectively guiding organizations into the future.

In conclusion, both Daft and Goleman et al. agree that emotional intelligence plays a large role in effective leadership. Daft states, “a leader's emotional abilities and understandings play a key role in charismatic and transformational leadership behavior” (2005, p.196). According to Daft, charismatic leaders are those who have the ability to inspire and motivate people to do more than they would normally do; they have an “emotional impact on people because they appeal to both heart and mind” (2005, p.149).

Goleman et al.'s version of the charismatic leader is described as the “affiliative leader.” According to the three authors, the affiliative leader “creates harmony by connecting people to

each other” (2002, p. 55). Whether these leaders are described as charismatic or affiliative, both rely on the same idea; they are successful by appealing to people through personal measures.

In the same instance, transformational leaders are those “characterized by the ability to bring about significant change in followers and the organization, they have the ability to lead changes in the organization’s vision, strategy, and culture as well as promote innovation in products and technologies” (Daft, 2005, p.153). The image of the transformational leader held out by Goleman et al. can be described as a visionary leader. According to the authors, a visionary leader can be described as a person capable of moving people toward shared dreams (2002, p.55). Goleman et al. believe that when everyone is working towards a shared goal, commitment builds simply because people feel pride in belonging to something that they believe in (2002, p.57).

By holding strong emotional convictions, appealing to followers on an emotional basis, projecting an inspiring vision and motivating followers to achieve it, an emotionally intelligent leader will earn the respect and trust of the followers necessary to be a successful leader (Dasborough & Ashkanasy, 2002).

### Recommendation

I have to say that, in the end, I would not recommend this book to someone wanting to learn more about leadership or how to be a better leader. As I stated in the summary section of this review, I believe the main idea behind this book was summed up in just one chapter of the book entitled “The Neuroanatomy of Leadership” (Goleman et al., 2002, chapter 3). This chapter’s main focus was on the four dimensions of emotional intelligence, which the authors believe are responsible for the success of a resonant leader.

Although I agree that the emotional intelligence of a leader is a crucial aspect of anyone wanting to become a successful leader in today's society, and that most people simply ignore this fact, I believe that there is much more to it than that. I believe that to be a successful leader in today's society, one must possess a combination of qualities and traits that result in a leader who is communicative, diverse, influential, and capable of developing a strong, solid, strategic direction by developing a trusting culture within which to lead people. I don't believe that after reading this book, someone would be understand that there is much more to being a successful leader than just being attuned to others' emotions, as Goleman et al. suggest in this publication.

## References

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- Daft, R. L. (2005). *The leadership experience* (3rd ed.). Mason, OH: South-Western.
- Dasborough, M. T. & Ashkanasy, N. M. (2002, October). Emotion and attribution of intentionality in leader–member relationships. *The Leadership Quarterly, 13*(5), 615-634. Retrieved September 7, 2006, from the ScienceDirect database.
- Goleman, D., McKee, A., & Boyatzis, R. E. (2002). *Primal leadership: Learning to lead with emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

**Note:** This paper is a good sample. Even good samples warrant some feedback. It is well-written and the APA format is outstanding. There is one area that needs some improvement. The author of this book review cites Daft (2005) several times. Keep in mind that in his book, Daft (2005) often uses the work of others to present the theories and concepts. When he does cite or quote another author, Daft's work then becomes a secondary source. When possible, locate and read the primary source so that you have first-hand knowledge of what the original or primary author intends. In other words, follow his footnotes and locate the original source.