



WHITE PAPER

Emotionally Intelligent Leader

Authentic people-centred leaders are emotionally intelligent

EMOTIONALLY INTELLIGENT LEADERS

Authentic people-centred leaders are emotionally intelligent

INTRODUCTION

Consider a past manager whom you believed was a poor leader. Did they avoid making decisions; were they self-satisfied, even smug about the managerial prowess; did they micromanage their people; did they play favorites, or were they reluctant to provide feedback, completely radio silent on performance, ideas, and your contribution?

These management behaviours can be downright infuriating. But they are extremely damaging to the organisation, destroying employee engagement, trust, and productivity.

But what is going on? Why do far too many managers behave in this annoying and counterproductive manner?

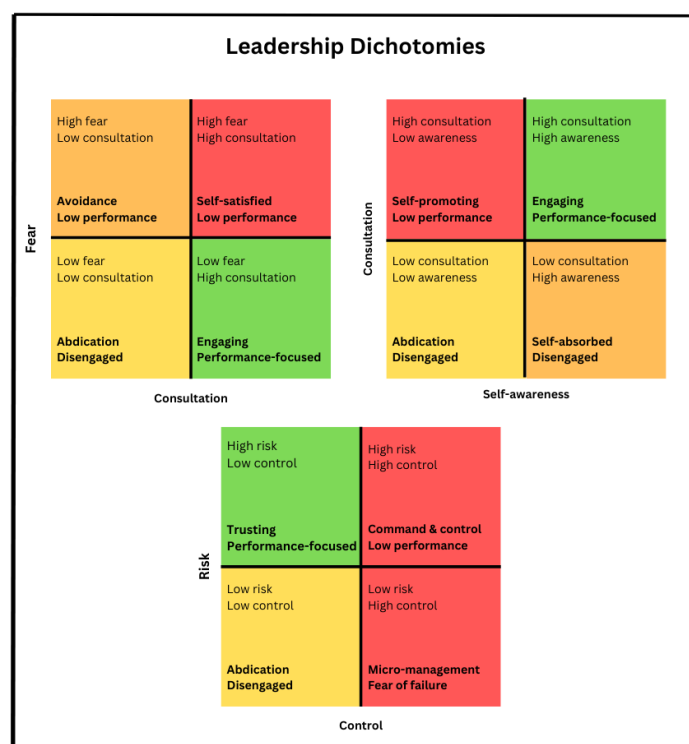
Simply they are fearful! Many managers lack connection with their people because they fear being vulnerable, consequently they speak to their people out of fear:

- Fear of failure.
- Fear of imperfection.
- Fear of being exposed.
- Fear of lack of control.

So, their communication, or lack of it, is to gain control, avoid vulnerability, and contain the situation.

Often referred to as fearful leadership, it's hallmarks are subtle but corrosive behaviours of overly controlling management styles which stifle creativity and autonomy, and reluctance to communicate transparently, often causing rumours, gossip and misunderstanding. Typically, fearful leaders will prioritise short-term gains because communication can be directive, and short, saving the manager from engaging with the workforce. Consequently, the workplace becomes tense, anxious and work-security conscious. An unconscious fear of losing control has created a fearful, unproductive working environment.

A useful way to consider the idea of fearful leadership is through a series of leadership dichotomies – contrasting conditions from low to high.



Red, orange, and yellow conditions create low performance as the leader lacks an understanding of their own emotions and the needs of their people. In these conditions, the leaders are focused on self-satisfaction. That is, they are tending to their emotional needs only.

In the green conditions, the leader puts their emotional needs last because they have understanding and control of their emotions. They put the needs of their people first, knowing that doing so will ensure their needs are ultimately met.

Leading in fear or through fear is not emotional intelligent leadership.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The concept of emotional intelligence has been with us for many years although it was popularized in the late 1990s. Social intelligence, as it was referred to at the time, was defined by Thorndike in 1920 as *the ability to understand people*¹². More recently, Salovey and Mayer defined emotional intelligence (EI) as *the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion and thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in self and others*⁹. Importantly, the more recent definitions of EI focus on the ability *to understand and reason* with emotions and to *regulate* emotions. It is for this reason that we state leading in fear or through fear is not emotionally intelligent. An emotionally intelligent person has the ability to understand their own and others' emotions; to make sense of, discuss, and influence emotions; and to control emotions.

Interestingly, since the early 1990s, EI has been closely linked in the research with organisational success. Although many managers would rather their people left their emotions at home, emotions are part of our workforces and importantly it is how emotions are manifested and controlled. Relevance of emotions in the workplace has progressively led to research recognising the importance of the emotive content of leadership³. The effectiveness of leadership in large part depends on the leader's ability to proactively and reactively manage emotions in the workplace.

When considering emotional intelligence and leadership,

a useful definition of leadership is:

*Behaviours used in any situation where you influence the thoughts, behaviours, or feelings of one or more people*¹⁰.

AUTHENTIC PEOPLE-CENTRED LEADERSHIP

The concept of authentic, people-centred leadership is about transformation, improving self and others on the journey to high performance. This is absolutely a journey of change and learning.

*By being authentic, supporting employees' needs, communicating with purpose, and fostering ingenuity, you can become a successful leader for the future*¹⁰.

Steven J. Stein from MHS, a psychometrics firm, developed the Four-Pillar Model of leadership which is useful for us to consider the skills of an authentic, people-centred leader.

The four pillars are:

Authenticity	Insight
Coaching	Innovation

Four Pillars of Successful Leadership			
Authenticity	Coaching	Insight	Innovation
Self-Actualisation	Self-Actualisation	Self-Actualisation	Self-Actualisation
Reality Testing	Empathy	Optimism	Independence
Self-Regard	Reality Testing	Self-Regard	Problem Solving
Emotional Self-Awareness	Interpersonal Relationships	Social Responsibility	Assertiveness
Social Responsibility	Assertiveness	Interpersonal Relationships	Flexibility
Independence	Emotional Self-Awareness	Emotional Expression	Optimism

In their research on the links between emotional intelligence and leadership, MHS identified that transformational leaders achieved substantially higher scores on all subscales of the EQ-i except for Assertiveness, Independence, and Problem Solving. It does not mean that these subscales are unimportant, it is that other subscales are highly important in this form of leadership. Indeed, in authentic people-centred leadership it is preferable to have lower levels of assertiveness.

In the table above, we can see the importance of

subscales playing out.

To be effective, truly authentic, people-centred leaders must be considered as credible, fair, and human. Humility is their super-power.

Leaders that present authentically gain respect, and application from followers.

What do authentic, people-centred leaders do:

- Act as role models
- Inspire fair and values-based behaviour
- Demonstrate esteem and confidence

Workplaces of the past were about policing behaviour and gaining compliance. Authentic, people-centred leaders understand the need for equitable, collaborative, and mentoring workplaces. Coaching is focused on supporting followers to realise their full potential.

RESONATING WITH OTHERS

Resonating with Others is one of the six competency clusters of the NSC Group Enterprise Leadership Competency Framework^{®7}. Through the competency clusters, the Framework establishes the skills, capabilities, and behaviours required of an Enterprise Leader. Critical emotional intelligence skills of an Authentic, people-centred leader include the ability to resonate with others.

To resonate means the *reinforcement or prolongation of sound by reflection, or by synchronous vibration*. In human communication, to resonate means two people are “on the same wavelength” emotionally, they feel *in synch*.

In the Framework, Resonating with Others is defined as:

Enterprise Leaders are emotionally intelligent leaders who are in touch with those around them, interpersonally connected in thought and emotion. Acting with emotional clarity, emotionally intelligent leaders understand and regulate their emotions to build strong, authentic relationships based on trust. They understand that all behaviour happens for a reason, and they always respond to it in a validating manner. They have genuine empathy for their people. Enterprise leaders inspire commitment and followership through deep concern for their people².

The competency cluster *Resonating with Others* includes two competencies:

- Humility
- Emotional intelligence

Humility is the ability to accurately view your personal talents and flaws while being void of arrogance; a modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance. The word does not mean having low self-esteem and a lack of confidence, as that condition would detract from the ability to lead.



Humility is important to the authentic, people-centred leadership style as it enables the leader to faithfully and genuinely engage with their team, to understand their needs and put the team's needs before their own needs.

The behavioural statement of humility in the NSC Group Enterprise Leadership Competency Framework^{®7} states:

Sets an organisational standard of positive validation by separating the person from any challenging behaviour; remains empathic of others and challenges own behaviour where empathy wanes; aims to establish a positive role model of humility and deep concern for others; coaches reports to build humility and resonance with others⁷.

Emotional Intelligence has been defined earlier in this whitepaper. This competency focuses on the leader continuously improving their emotional intelligence skills. In contrast to personality, which for an adult, cannot be changed but can be mitigated, emotional intelligence is learnt and is capable of continuous improvement.

The behavioural statement of emotional intelligence in the NSC Group Enterprise Leadership Competency Framework^{®7} states:

Supports the importance of emotional intelligence in leadership by regulating personal emotions for positive role modelling and relationship building; actively develops own emotional intelligence through reflection on actions, professional development, and coaching from leader; improves emotional intelligence to ensure interpersonal connection with reports in thought and emotion⁷.

To resonate with others comes naturally to emotionally intelligent leaders. To be an authentic, people-centred leader, it is essential to be emotionally intelligent. This form of leader empathises the emotions of their followers but also expresses the emotions for the group.

Through the leader giving the emotions voice, the employees feel validated and respected.

Under the guidance of an authentic, people-centred leader, employees feel valued; they feel empowered to share ideas, learn, collaboratively make decisions, and achieve. The emotional connection with others in the workplace makes work more meaningful, natural, and human. When resonation occurs in a team, the employees are emotionally engaged. This is a critical state in the quest for high performance.

Without a healthy dose of heart, a supposed “leader” may manage – but he does not lead³.

THE INTERSECTION: EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, PEOPLE-CENTRED LEADERSHIP & HIGH PERFORMANCE

Emotional Intelligence not only regulates the emotions of self, but it also plays a role in the management of emotions of followers due to the nature of the Limbic System⁸. The ability to influence the emotional regulation of others is an essential competency of people-centred leadership. Servant leadership, a form of people-centred leadership and its relationship to emotional intelligence has been explored by research. People-centred leadership’s capability to influence employees’ attitudes and encourage the adoption of tenacity and grit in their approach to work indicates the positive impact of the leadership style on team member’s work performance^{13,15}.

The sub-scales of empathy, social responsibility, impulse control, problem solving, stress tolerance, and optimism are well established in emotional intelligence². These elements are also important contributors to people-centred leadership. Significant research into the influence of emotional intelligence on people-centred leadership

indicates strong correlational relationships between the two. Additionally, emotional intelligence has been demonstrated to have significant impact on work performance, employee and leader work-satisfaction.

More recent studies into people-centred leadership and emotional intelligence have reinforced the important role these conditions have on work performance¹⁴. The findings of Ullah, et al study¹⁴ suggests that people-centred leaders with higher emotional intelligence are more skilled at managing their own and others’ emotions, which positively influences work performance.

Additionally, grit, determination, and empathy have positive mediating influences on people-centred leadership. There is significant organisational benefit to be gained from promoting a culture that prizes perseverance, passion, empathy, and care. Through the integration of these characteristics into leadership development, organisations can positively influence work performance.

CONCLUSION

In the whitepaper *The Leader, Communication & High Performance*⁸, we discussed the concept of emotionally intelligent leaders communicating differently for positive performance effects in the workplace. This whitepaper has extended the study of emotional intelligence influence on people-centred leadership and the resultant higher performance. With the additional aspect of the inclusion of perseverance, grit, determination, passion and empathy into the culture, research has demonstrated that leaders can have a lasting, positive impact on organisational performance by adopting people-centred leadership and EI.

Furnished with this knowledge and demonstrated outcomes, leaders can banish fearful leadership and its damaging influences on employee engagement, trust, and productivity to the dumpster of history. No further should the adages of tough leadership be accepted when we know that people-centred leadership and emotional intelligence delivers high performance and successful organisational results.

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