

# *The Bloodless Evolution*

*Leadership and Emotional Intelligence: A focus on recent changes in business practice, a background to emotional intelligence and the importance of emotionally competent leaders in today's workplace.*

**by: Michael Massey**

‘You say you want a revolution. Well, you know we all want to change the world.’

So starts John Lennon’s famous song ‘Revolution’, written in the Sixties when there was so much to be angry about - or so many people thought. It was a period of frustration for those with something to say, and an uncomfortable one for those who found themselves the target of those frustrations. It heralded an era of enormous social, political, technological and economic change. ‘You tell me that its evolution’ the song continues - prophetic words because that’s exactly what happened - not revolution, but evolution. A period of evolution which, in thirty years has achieved the equivalent of a dozen revolutions. A time when a new fearless, resolute media has emerged from its chrysalis: its spotlight seeking out sham and shaming. The world has been conquered by a mouse - a Microsoft mouse - and has gone surfing. For the first time in history information has become common currency. Evolution, not revolution, had given power to the people.

The effect on the business world has been both dramatic and traumatic. Old warhorses and their followers who commanded their fiefdoms by edict and looked upon change as an annoying disruption - whose right to lead stemmed from the power that their title bestowed rather than their ability - happily and unthinkingly led their businesses down the Valley of Death. The clock which started ticking for time-servers and technocrats, and now chimes their departure. We have entered a tougher, more exacting world. The corporate magnifying glass, unearthed from the bottom drawer where it had been languishing for years, probes a reality where there is no hiding place. What has resulted is a period of restructuring the scale of which had never been seen before. There has been a massive downsizing. The dispensable have been dispensed with and the paper pushers pensioned. Those who remain are focused, fearful, pressured and overworked; effectiveness has become the benchmark of success. Individuals no longer enjoyed the (perhaps illusory) protective cloak of their organization. Now, security is determined solely by level of performance. The tall pyramid has become a hump. Structures and systems have been replaced by networks and teams, leadership has replaced management and learning has replaced instruction.

In the space of a few years, evolution had caused a revolution in business culture and business practice. If that were not enough, the rate of change continues to accelerate. The pace of business has found new momentum, and the globalization of our economy demands an ever higher level of personal and corporate performance. Today, leaders of large corporations and team leaders alike find themselves under enormous and relentless pressure. They inhabit a world where they no longer lead by command: they have to convince and persuade and it’s not easy - it’s tough. There is no authority to be had from title - authority has to be hard won. Those they lead belong to a new generation. A competent, committed, informed and independently-minded generation who require to be motivated and communicated with in radically new ways. ‘You say you’ve got a real solution’ starts the second verse. ‘Well, you know... We’d all like to see the plan’. ‘Cometh the hour, cometh the man’- or in this case ‘men’. It was in 1990 that American psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer first aired their theory of emotional intelligence. It has since been defined as ‘the ability to identify, understand and sense your emotions and those of others, and to use that knowledge to assist thought and understanding as a source of information, influence, creativity and energy’. They framed the theory as a model of social intelligence whose basic concept refers to the ability to recognize and regulate emotions in ourselves and in others. EI was put firmly on the map in 1995 when Daniel Goleman popularized the theory in his best-seller ‘Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ’. But is emotional intelligence really new? Well, nothing under the sun is new. Leaders, be they politicians, dictators, CEO’s, team leaders or shop stewards, have for centuries massaged, pushed, manipulated, swayed and driven people’s emotions. We have always preferred the emotionally competent to lead us through uncertain times: leaders who could give clarity and direction - leaders who inspire us. What is new is that we know more about how our brain works. The emotional mind and the rational mind are separate, but interconnected. When we achieve a balance we are working at our best. They work together. What is new is the understanding that IQ alone cannot predict the effectiveness of a leader. It is an effective measure of mental ability, but an IQ score in the stratosphere does not automatically indicate good

leadership material. What is new is the realization that a person's ability to identify, manage and understand emotions is fundamental if they are to be an effective leader - good leaders need to be intelligent about emotions if they are to be successful.

Goleman went on to develop and interpret emotional intelligence to be a theory of performance: of effectiveness in the workplace, as a predictor of performance and leadership. He identified four EI 'domains': Self-awareness and Self-management - how we manage ourselves, and Social-awareness and Relationship-management - how we manage relationships. Within those domains there are 'EI competencies', such as emotional self-awareness and empathy, which provide the framework of his interpretation of the theory. The 'EI men' - particularly Goleman - articulated their theory convincingly. They have captured people's imagination and answered a need. From being a 'revolution without a cause', the business community is discovering a way of connecting with the new order: a means of refreshing stagnant business thinking and rejuvenating business leadership. By adopting the theory of Emotional Intelligence - a theory with a sound scientific foundation - it now has the opportunity to acquire the means with which to meet the new goals and the new challenges of the 21st century. Unlike IQ, emotional intelligence can be learned and developed, which is why it is having such a dramatic effect on leadership and leadership development. So how are Emotionally Intelligent leaders identified? What sets them apart from the others? Emotionally Intelligent leaders understand the effect of their actions, their words and their moods on those they lead. They recognize the importance of interpersonal relationships. They listen. They show empathy. But most important of all, they are self-aware. They know themselves. Through this understanding and self-knowledge they have the self-confidence to generate enthusiasm and to ignite passion in those they lead.

What is fascinating about Emotional Intelligence is the fact that it makes such good sense. It answers a need of our time. It could be described as 'the great enabler'. It motivates us to find our true potential. It activates our aspirations and helps transform them into reality. It helps us to use and understand our emotions, our intuition in particular - the wisdom we have within us - and to connect with ourselves, and those around us. Emotionally intelligent leaders are effective. They facilitate change. They improve performance. They produce results. They make a difference.

'You say you've got a real solution. Well, you know...' we have!

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