

“IF YOU’RE LOOKING FOR THE PLAYS AND STRATEGIES TO RAISE
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, THIS IS THE HANDBOOK.”

—Jack Canfield, co-creator of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*
and co-author of *The Success Principles*



LEADING — WITH — EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

**HANDS-ON STRATEGIES
FOR BUILDING CONFIDENT and
COLLABORATIVE
STAR PERFORMERS**

RELDAN S. NADLER, Psy.D.

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Teamwork is an Unnatural Act: Are Your Teams and Organization Dumbed Down?

By Relly Nadler, Psy.D., MCC

Teamwork is very popular today in organizations, but it is an unnatural act that takes a strategy, discipline and practice. Most organizations talk about teamwork and put a group of workers together and say “you are a team now”. Duly formed the team is marched out onto the field to succeed or fail. Coaches can help leaders and their teams avoid performance issues.

The problem is without a strong leader or well developed teamwork skills; more people equal lower team Intelligence Quotient or IQ. For each new person on team without a strong teamwork process the team IQ can decrease about 2 points or more. A team of 7 people not formed or trained well then can lose approximately a standard deviation (14-15 points) in Intelligence. Each individual can have a high average IQ, above 115, but the team IQ can hover between 70-85, low average and low performing. Urgency, complexity and individual focus can lead to stress and reduced individual cognitive functioning, where team players and leaders then can perform at their worse. Defensiveness, blaming, ignoring, micromanaging and being unclear in directions all lower the team IQ and have them operating in a “dumbed down” manner.

In a performance group or on a sports team, over 90% of the participants time is spent practicing- standardizing their routines or processes, identifying roles and responsibilities, improving communication effectiveness, working on their coordination, alignment or teamwork. The focus is learning from mistakes until they are ready to perform for the audience or fans. The result is a high performing team where the team IQ is synergistic and thus higher than the individual IQ's.

It is a documented fact that, in the corporate world, less than 5% of an individual's time is devoted to off-line learning. In fact nearly all the learning in organization happens after the fact and in front of customers, where mistakes are costly to organizations reputation and bottom line and the individual's career development. (Nadler, 2007). Emotional and Social Intelligence have been written about as the “new science of success and human relationships.” (Goleman, 2006, Albrecht, 2006) Working in teams, then becomes the playing field to demonstrate these skills.

Hillary Elfenbein (2006), assistant professor at Berkley, recently published a study linking emotional intelligence with team performance at work. She found that “teams with greater average emotional intelligence have higher team functioning than [did] groups with lower emotional intelligence.” Moreover, in a team, “the ability to understand one another's emotional expressions explained 40% of the variance in team performance.”

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In today's organizational environment, it is unnatural for teams and individuals to take the same time which athletes, performers and teams do to practice their skills and improve their weaknesses. If organizations are to survive and thrive in the future they must use the intelligence, creativity and potential of their people at all levels.

There are eight key ingredients, which organizations must incorporate into their work to master the use of teams. Each of these efforts counteracts what is outdated, easy and natural. If done well the team IQ can increase about 2 points or more for each team member. A coach can help a leader and their team to become high performing by discussing and facilitating for the thirty actions below.

Team ingredients

1. Shared vision – What is natural is to have a blurry vision of where the organization is going. The vision is not communicated enough or shared throughout the organization.

What is unnatural yet necessary is to create an inspiring vision for the future that is clear and informs all throughout the organization what the future holds and their role in it. It is shared because it is understood and repeated in numerous ways.

Leaders usually do share the vision but usually not enough or in multiple methods.

Actions: Leaders have to be deliberate and have a plan on how to communicate the vision

- Leaders need to share the vision and tie it into the daily tasks every day in their conversations. Can they commit to tie it in four times a day? (Kotter, 1996)
- People need to be clear what needs to be done and why.
- Leaders have to include what is in it for the employees, use the word "because".
- Leaders need to include others for comments, clarifications or additions. This way they get others "fingerprints" are on it.
- Leaders need to remember involvement = commitment.

2. Trust among members- What is natural is to rely on your self or your department and not expect much from others.

What is unnatural yet necessary, is to develop an interdependency on others characterized by high trust and risk taking.

Actions: Leaders develop trust by trusting their people.

- Leaders develop trust by being vulnerable and admitting their mistakes.
- Leaders make and keep small promises.
- Leaders set high expectations for their team and encourage risk taking and direct feedback.

3. Established expectations and guidelines – What is natural is to assume that co-workers are on the same page and that they understand the desired results.

What is unnatural yet necessary is to be very deliberate in clarifying reciprocal expectations and establish guidelines for how to work together effectively.

Actions: To be a team the individuals need to co-create expectations for themselves and feel their input was heard and valued.

- Leaders and the team need to decide on how they are going to make decisions, i.e. majority, minority, a “tell” or content expert, unanimous or consensus.
- Expectations need to be clarified, leader to the team, team to the leader and team of each other.
- Meeting and team guidelines are established that flow out of the expectations, such as “One conversation at a time,” “Stay focused”, and “Defer judgment.”

4. Communication skill and conflict resolution – What is natural is to avoid conflict, jump to rash conclusions and not communicate what you are thinking.

What is unnatural yet necessary is to make your thinking visible, fill in the “white space” for people, identify your assumptions and resolve conflicts.

Actions: The team needs to have specific tools to communicate; otherwise the strongest and most senior voice wins out.

- Part of the expectations should involve communication guidelines
- Most teams need some kind of skill training for communication, like how to listen better, inquiry versus advocacy, summarizing what was said, ladder of inference, left hand column.
- Leaders can assign a devil’s advocate role to enliven the conversations and protect against “group think.”

5. Personal leadership- What is natural is to stay in your comfort zone and only take risks that you are assured of success.

What is unnatural yet necessary is to take risks that are consistent with your values and become a change leader stretching and encouraging others in spite of your own doubts and fears.

Actions: The team is the playing field for the leader to try out their Emotional Intelligence skills and get feedback on their performance.

- Leaders are good at self-management and understand they are the “emotional thermostat” for their team, as their emotions are the most contagious to the team. They maintain their IQ points by knowing and managing their triggers.
- Leaders need to have a developed point of view of their leadership style and know the destination of where they want people to go.
- Leaders need to be aware of the different styles and preferences of their team and vary their style to meet and challenge the individual.
- Leaders can be role models for development by sharing with their team, what are their current areas of focus for development and ask for support and feedback from the team.

- The leader wears many hats on the team and has to know which hat to wear when. Key roles are as an initiator, coach, model, facilitator and negotiator.
- Leaders are the glue in the team, reading individuals and the group's emotional states and being able to help regulate it by attention, humor or empathy.

6. Appreciation of differences- What is natural is to value team members with similar backgrounds and opinions.

What is unnatural yet necessary is to embrace differences and creative tensions to generate better solutions and raise the "Team IQ."

Actions: The leader is powerful role model to the team for how to deal with differences.

- Leaders need to embrace differences as they lead to breakthrough ideas. In studies on creativity and innovation holding opposite and contrary ideas long enough leads to breakthrough ideas. IDEO one of the leading design firms encourages "wild ideas" and "build on other ideas" as some of their guidelines.
- Leaders can help by encouraging the team to stay with the ambiguity, creative tension and dialogue as long as possible versus rushing to a decision.
- The team IQ is a great metric for the group to evaluate themselves on. The IQ should be higher than the IQ of any one individual.
- The differences need to be understood and integrated into new innovations.

7. Accountability and consequences – What is natural is to be disappointed with the efforts of others on your team, but never hold anyone accountable for the missed "deliverables."

What is unnatural yet necessary is to discuss accountabilities and consequences upfront, before a project gets underway and review them throughout the project.

Actions: Leaders provide the road map for the team to deal with obstacles before they arise.

- Leaders help individual define their roles and responsibilities and make sure everyone is clear about them.
- Defining and clarifying what success looks like will help with clarity and standards for the team.
- Having a conversation about accountabilities and consequences as part of the team's formation will help eliminate problems later.

8. Mentoring others – What is natural is to get caught up with urgent crises of the day and do little mentoring or training of key employees or colleagues.

What is unnatural yet necessary is to take time to train and mentor others to be better performers. Career development, learning and succession planning, keeps skills and motivation high on the team.

Actions: Leaders help others enhance their strengths and develop plans to improve their weaknesses.

- Leaders hold one on one meetings with their direct reports to coach and mentor them.
- Leaders help their team share core competencies by cross training.
- Leaders are sharing their knowledge and developing their successors.

These key ingredients make up the strategy for developing high performing teams. Leaders have specific actions to help their team develop. Each ingredient needs to become a discipline that gets practiced, reinforced and refined. Only then will the unnatural become a habit, raising the teams' IQ and creating the foundation for superior teamwork.

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Dr. Reldan S. Nadler is a licensed psychologist, executive coach and author specializing in developing and applying Emotional and Social Intelligence tools and strategies to develop more star performers in organizations. He is the author of *Leaders' Playbook: How to Apply Emotional Intelligence-Keys to Great Leadership*, which this article is adapted from. His website is www.truenorthleadership.com , where there are FREE EI tools and assessments. For more information on Executive and Organizational Development contact us at 805 683-1066 or Rnadler@truenorthleadership.com