

Embedding emotionally intelligent behaviour for sustainable success by Maureen Bowes

As a facilitator of personal and team development, I understand the importance of sustaining success within a team or organisation. I want to share my learning to date on making change last, what's worked and why, for two reasons; so that as readers of *AppliedEI*, you might get ideas that work for you in your development programmes and so that, between us, we may apply best EI practice. This article complements Tim Sparrow's *Why development training doesn't work*. Both articles are intended as a stimulus to re-evaluate personal and professional development and training opportunities.

Here are two case studies, taken from opposite ends of a team effectiveness continuum, to illustrate i) how the same key features and principles combine to make change and development sustainable, ii) what makes the difference, and iii) the qualitative return on investment.

- A team of four surgeons – in their own words dysfunctional, infighting and untrusting
- The top team of a housing association - the CEO, three directors and eleven senior managers of South Somerset Homes (SSH) – performing well, in search of ways to do even better.

The following step by step outline presents the key features from the same intervention, adapted for use with both teams, and spans a twelve to fifteen month period. It is based on applied emotional intelligence, - the practice of managing the relationship between our thoughts, feelings and behaviour (with particular emphasis on how feelings affect behaviour).

Intervention - Key Features Step by Step

1. Individual Effectiveness Diagnostic Profile (IE)

Each team member completes an on line self perception questionnaire to assess their emotional intelligence.

2. 360° feedback

5 – 6 raters complete a shorter on line version of the IE to compare other people's perceptions of the individual's effectiveness

Both questionnaires measure:

Self Regard, Regard for Others, Self Awareness, Awareness of Others, Emotional Resilience, Personal Power, Goal Directedness, Flexibility, Personal Openness, Trustworthiness, Trust, Balanced Outlook, Emotional Expression & Control, Conflict Handling, Interdependence and Self Assessed EI.

3. Self Directed Learning

Each team member creates an individual development plan from what the profile reveals. S/he decides which area of development is most important given the current situation. This is revisited every 1-2 months.

4. Action points

The priority area of development is then itemised into specific action points or behaviours that the individual wants to achieve. S/he commits to practising this action point regularly over the next month.

5. Support

To assist in making the action point happen, each person chooses another team member as a support person both to discuss progress and receive feedback. Where possible, action learning groups also add to this support.

6. Accountability

While the Individual Effectiveness Profiles are confidential, the action points are not. A list of the team members' action points is circulated within the team so that each team member is aware of everyone's action point and, importantly, can accommodate everyone's action point.

7. Coaching

During the course of the intervention each team member has one to one coaching every 1 – 2 months to ensure individual development needs are supported and met.

8. Team development

The whole team participates in a facilitated session each month. Here key learning points are introduced, current issues identified and addressed and emotionally intelligent behaviour put into practice. Examples of themes include *You get what you tolerate*, *Interdependence*, *A courageous culture* and *Inspirational Leadership*.

9. Facilitation

Regular contact and consultation, expertise, flexibility and appropriate timing from the facilitator play a crucial part in achieving the programme's objectives.

10. Review

A benchmark tool recording each team member's perception of the team's effectiveness completed at the beginning and the end of the intervention measures perceived progress.

A review day six months after the programme gives team members the opportunity to showcase their successes, evaluate the programme and consider what difference the programme has made (qualitative ROI).

Intervention - Key principles

The upfront investment in this type of intervention has to be considered along with the probability and value of lasting success. Factor in the consequences of embedding the following two key principles:

• Attitudinal approach

The Individual Effectiveness questionnaire enables the facilitator / coach and participant / coachee to become aware of and develop Relative Regard – how an individual values her/himself contrasted with how the same individual values other people. When combined with the 360° feedback, this snapshot measure brings personal insights into attitude and impact on others. It compares the attitude each individual believes s/he conveys with the individual's attitude as perceived by others. Coaching in and practice of *I'm OK*, *You're OK* behaviours, individually and as a group, raises individual levels of self esteem and creates healthy interpersonal dynamics.

• Performance = Potential – Interference

(*The Inner Game of.....* series, Timothy Gallwey)

Conventionally, organisations opt for acquiring more knowledge and skills to achieve individual potential. While knowledge and skills are clearly very important, equally important is removing interference – the approach taken in this intervention. Areas of resistance, doubt, limiting beliefs and negativity are zoomed in on from the start, with the IE profile and action points providing very practical steps to remove the interference, what gets in the way, for each individual.

So what makes the difference? People change during this type of intervention, usually becoming more personally satisfied and productive. Dissatisfaction results from team members not sharing the same values and / or feeling particularly vulnerable from the intervention. The flexible nature of the programme and key principles mean individual and team vulnerabilities can be accommodated into workable solutions.

There are many differentiators from ownership and buy in, to appropriate levels of support and challenge. The following five factors are key and carry equal importance in sustaining success.

Developing helpful attitudes towards change

Developing teams to function well or to go from good to great means winning hearts and minds. Providing knowledge, skills and awareness can win minds, but shifting attitudes so that people are willing to embrace change, take on different approaches and new practices, requires commitment from the heart. Change triggers feelings and to progress through change we have to progress through feelings. Getting from 'It's just the way I am.' or 'But we've always done it this way.' to 'We'll do whatever it takes.' or 'We can do that and more.' requires a different attitude.

The internal development required to move from rejection and denial towards acceptance involves increased self esteem and self awareness combined in equal measure with awareness of, and respect for, others. External influences to tip the balance in favour of change are inspiration, meaningful discussion, steps towards feeling safer and peer example. This type of intervention creates a climate of opportunity for these internal developments and external influences to occur.

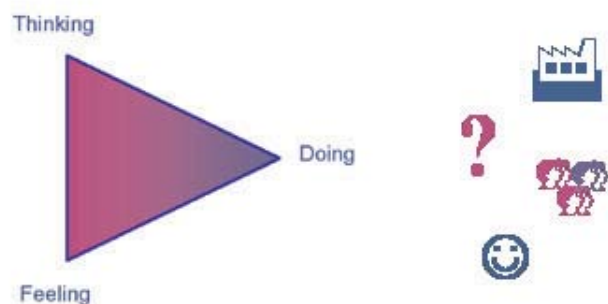
Feelings affect behaviour

Achieving a willingness to change means finding feelings that motivate to replace feelings that demotivate. The surgeons did not trust one another. They knew that trust was a vital ingredient if they were to work effectively together. They knew rationally that they should demonstrate trust for one another but found themselves emotionally unable to do so. They were at a dead end. Turning this around isn't a quick, easy or rational process. Workable solutions required give and take, a recognition of personal vulnerability, a willingness to behave differently plus time and evidence to feel that it was safe enough to trust again. They achieved this – not in a soft and fluffy way, rather in a courageous and committed way, and with integrity. These individuals shared their self development through the action points and team sessions, in so doing, they increased their self awareness and personal openness and improved their interpersonal relations. The surgeons became more connected, they got to know one another better and respected their differences. Consequently, team member commitment grew with the momentum of the programme, making it more difficult not to deliver on the consensus they had achieved as peers.

In house delivery

When individuals attend courses externally, they struggle sometimes to apply what they have learned on their return, especially if this involves behaving differently or introducing new practices, when the world outside the training has remained the same. This type of in-house, whole team intervention means every team member participates together in the same room, receiving the same continuity of content and sharing the same, appropriately challenging, experience. The SSH top team's group profile indicated low levels of personal openness. Combine this trait across four departments, some in different buildings, and the tendency towards silo working is apparent. Bring the senior managers from all the departments together, one day a month for six months, facilitate activities where people connect, generate ideas across teams, have time together away from their day to day environment to raise and address issues, and personal openness cannot fail to increase. Pairing up with the CEO

What is an Attitude?



An evaluative position (based largely on feeling, with related thinking/beliefs, and strongly influencing doing/action) towards a person (including oneself), a group, an organisation, an idea, etc

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or Director, as equals, in a safe and structured activity (e.g. reducing silo working) brings a fresh perspective, adds value to company development and increases team esteem. More open communication and exploration of conflicting interests brought tensions to the surface and allowed SSH departmental heads to voice their frustrations constructively, recognise how truly interdependent they are and the importance of demonstrating their company value *We do what we say*.

Accountability

Group accountability was built in from the start with a review day six months after the end of the programme. The SSH top team reviewed their progress by showcasing the results of their development. They presented ideas for sustaining their success as a group and throughout the company. They were equipped with principles, resources, techniques and personal experience to influence company culture right through to front line staff. They concluded the programme with results, plans for the future and the all important next steps.

Both teams completed a benchmark questionnaire at the beginning and the end of the intervention. The team of four surgeons described themselves at the start as dysfunctional, infighting and untrusting. The same questionnaire one year later shows a 70% - 90% improvement in their team development areas. They describe themselves now as effective, co-operating and directed.

The top team of fifteen from South Somerset Homes, who were performing well at the start, showed an 18% - 48% improvement in their team development areas by the end of the programme. What they say now: We came to the programme from all points of the compass - now we all know where 'north' is.

Commitment to regular review and action builds sustainable success.

Sound development processes

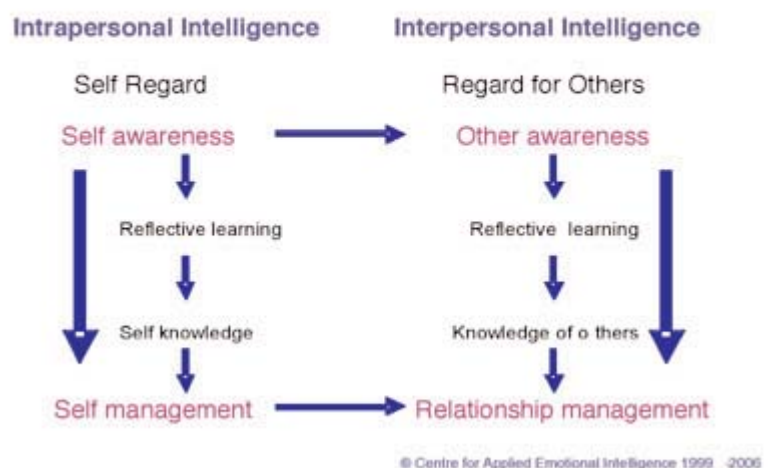
Emotionally intelligent behaviour demonstrates intra-personal and inter-personal intelligences. To be effective in these areas we need to start with awareness and progress through reflection to knowledge and management. These interventions are based on sound developmental processes.

Effective self management and relationship management are essential to sustain success within any team or company. The developmental layers behind these goals are necessary to embed emotionally intelligent behaviour. When this level of knowledge, skill, attitude and habit is core to a team's practice, the team become authentic and congruent. The same is true of organisations when the top or core team cascade this approach outwards.

Outcomes – What's it worth?

There are many reasons why organisations do not apply the above processes to ensure development that works, time pressures and financial cost being the two most obvious. Keeping in mind that qualitative results are hard to quantify, what would the following outcomes be worth to your team or organisation?

Extended Applied EI Model



I'm OK, You're OK. Culture

Team members problem solve from a basis of accepting difference (different needs, wants and styles) and role-model authenticity. This level of congruence at the core of an organisation or department creates a change in culture.

Successful implementation of change

Authentic leadership, peer commitment and strong communication processes (the right people talking together) bring engagement, suggestions, solutions and the will to make things happen.

More efficient meetings

The right people meeting with productive processes in place to facilitate open and honest communication saves time and brings improved decision making.

Respect of true deadlines

Targets met because of transparent communication and negotiation between departments.

Managerial time saving

Improved team communication, staff finding solutions and more face to face communication (less email) results in fewer conflicts and demands on management time

Longer term expected ROI

- Employee turnover costs reduce
- Increased employee satisfaction (measured by employee surveys)
- Increased productivity
- Decrease in complaints – grievances, harassment, bullying etc.

The extent to which any individual or team is motivated to change, develop or continuously improve is directly influenced by each person's feelings. Rational argument or persuasion may win over the sceptical but most people are moved to action through feelings. In turn, feelings are deeply rooted in personal attitudes (the extent to which people value themselves and others). Individuals may be told they need to change their attitudes, or trust more, or be more approachable, they may be aware of this themselves and then falter as they do not know how to apply this to their behaviour, to be more or less of.

Personal development or team interventions can bring sustainable success when:

- they address individual (team and company) attitudes
- they make the connections between (individual and group) feelings, thoughts, behaviour and attitudes
- they facilitate real opportunities to practise "how to".

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