Chapter VIII

Towards an Emotionally Intelligent IT Organization

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ABSTRACT

Considerable attention has recently been focused on the area of "emotional intelligence" (EI) in business administration circles as well as in IT management. Often, it is being suggested that IT workers need the "soft skills" of emotional literacy, especially when dealing with users and co-workers. However, how can one develop this "emotional intelligence"? What might be its various components? Moreover, to what degree and how might IT management get involved to try to move its IT organization on the EI path? Such issues are discussed in this chapter.

THE CONCEPT OF "EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE"

For a long time, the Western World has considered IQ, the ability for cognitive reasoning, as the main (if not only) determinant of a person's "intelligence." In IT, it was indeed very often the case that the person whose programs were most efficient and had the fewest errors would be considered the prime candidate for promotion. However, today, in the "post-modern" era, the development of information systems is recognized as a socio-technical field. Nearly a decade ago, an article in *Computerworld* (Weldon, 1995), called for

"emotional literacy" among IS developers. Since then, a number of articles have appeared calling for development of "soft skills" and lamenting that IT workers are often emotionally weak. Such articles often call for another type of intelligence in addition to superior cognitive, logical skills.

Harvard psychologist and educator Howard Gardner (1983) had, in the 1980s and beyond, promoted his theory of multiple intelligences. He maintained that in addition to logical/cognitive intelligence (as measured by IQ), there exists linguistic intelligence, and also naturalist, interpersonal, intrapersonal, spatial, musical, and bodily kinesthetic intellegences. Following this type of perspective, Daniel Goleman, a psychology Ph.D. who formerly taught at Harvard, in his 1995 international bestseller *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), focused widespread attention on the reality that what matters regarding one's ability to succeed in work and life is often more than IQ. He has, however, stated that Emotional Intelligence (EI) is more than one thing and includes: knowing what you're feeling and using that knowledge to make decisions, the ability to manage distressing moods, maintaining hope in the face of setbacks, having empathy, and being able to get along with people. In his book, Goleman sets out on a quest "to understand what it means—and how—to bring intelligence to emotion." He also declares that "the market forces that are reshaping the work life are putting an *unprecedented pressure on emotional intelligence for on-the-job success*" [italics added]. Using a brain physiology, neurological exposition, Goleman shows that brain circuitry is extraordinarily malleable and "temperament is not destiny." In fact, he seems to be asserting that inner growth and transformation of personality are indeed possible.

In his sequel book, *Working With Emotional Intelligence* (1998), Daniel Goleman identifies a number of "emotional competencies"; on the personal level, he promotes recognizing one's emotions, assessing one's strengths and weaknesses truthfully, a sense of self-worth, self-control, honesty, responsibility, adaptability, motivation, commitment, initiative, and optimism. On the social dimension, he identifies understanding others, assisting others to develop, persuasive ability, conflict management, change management, nurturing of relationships, and the ability to cooperate and create group synergy.

Upon deeper reflection, it is not hard to recognize that a high degree of "emotional intelligence" could indeed make a significant difference in the effectiveness and motivation of many of today's IT professionals, particularly those that interact with other people in the course of their work. Moreover, it is not only emotional intelligence, strictly understood as above, but also a broader spectrum of psychological awareness that would be in order for the "information resource professional" of the 21st century, as opposed to the "DP

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