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Connecting People, Purpose & Productivity!

Identifying Your Team's Emotional Reality

- James Terrell and Marcia Hughes

The power of emotional intelligence is in its ability to make visible and conscious what is going on at an invisible and mostly unconscious level of reality. One of the 16 competencies measured by the EQi is Reality Testing and it is defined as how objectively and accurately we perceive what is really going on around us (in contrast with what we hope or fear might be happening). One of the ways to improve reality testing is to increase the quality or amount of measurement that you include in your process of analysis.

The problem is that we are typically seeking to measure aspects of our experience which can be readily observed and quantified. How do our unit sales compare with unit sales of our competitors this year, over the last five years, in X, Y, and Z markets? That information should not be too difficult to obtain. But what about when it comes to the motivation of the members of your marketing team? How do you measure that and how do you improve it, especially given the fact that different people are motivated by different things?

Major components of human motivation are unconscious. What attracts us and repels us from acting is not always that obvious and can be very different for different people. For some team members the thought of a difficult challenge causes them to want to win and prove their mettle. For others they feel intimidated and seek to avoid that engagement even while they may be *acting as if* they are working diligently to accomplish it.

Emotions are invisible forces that arise out of the conclusions we have made about our memories of satisfaction and frustration, success and failure in the past. Every memory that we have is tagged with an emotional indicator informs us as to whether we want to repeat the experience or avoid it, and obviously our motivation can vary through a wide range of degrees. How can we know where our team members are really at when we need them to gear up for a complex or suddenly urgent project?

The Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey, or TESI, is designed to help your team's members discover what they're feeling and why across seven critical competency areas: Team Identity, Motivation, Emotional Awareness, Communication,

Stress Tolerance, Conflict Resolution, and Positive Mood. By making conscious what is typically arising and changing too rapidly to remain on the front burner of awareness, we are able to identify and coordinate the motivational states of our team's members.

Research by Hillary Elfenbein has shown that 40% of team success depends on how aware each member is of the others' emotional states. This is the *team's* emotional self-awareness and when it is made conscious, team members naturally begin to calibrate to each other and compensate as needed – assuming that everyone agrees with the proposed course of action at least in principle. (If someone has a grievance about the way they've been treated and are actually motivated to sabotage the team's effort in retribution, then that is another, but not uncommon, situation!)

How do we make team emotional self-awareness conscious? This is exactly what the TESI is designed to do, and it is very effective in providing periodic snapshots of the team's motivational state. Additionally, the consistent day-to-day adaptation to the level of uncertainty and inspiration provided by the team leader and each of the team members depends on the team skills in the Communication competency.

For developing the skill of personal emotional self-awareness there is a formula which clearly highlights the two required parts of the communication. "I feel_____, because_____." the first blank requires a feeling word, and the second blank requires a rational explanation for the feeling. "I feel upset because you did not include me in the meeting." "I feel excited because we get to present this to senior leadership!" This kind of practice for the team members can be very effective in leading them to making one of the most powerful observations in the process of teamwork.

When one member of the team can accurately speak for the team itself, for instance, "I think WE feel a little confused because initially we were told we *could* telework as much as two days a week." Being able to accurately fill in the blanks on behalf of the team is a sure sign that team members are doing a good job of keeping each other apprised of the changes in their emotional energy and thus how motivated they feel and the what direction they are motivated to go.