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Harvard Business Review



January 2004

Inside the Mind of the

Warren G. Bennis
**The Seven Ages
of the Leader**

Manfred F.R.
Kets de Vries
**Putting Leaders
on the Couch**

Plus:

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Businesspeople tend to be extroverts, taking a lively interest in others and preferring action to introspection. But to be fully effective as leaders, they must learn to navigate the twists and turns of their emotions and those of the people around them.

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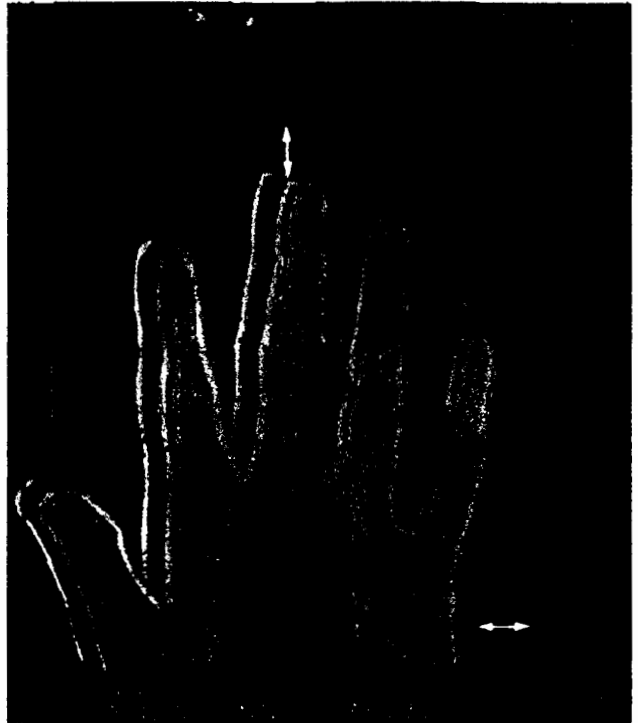
Empathy, intuition, and self-awareness are essential to good leadership, but they can be tricky to hone and dangerous to use. Eighteen leaders and scholars explore how to manage emotional intelligence.

Leading by Feel

Like it or not, leaders need to manage the mood of their organizations. The most gifted leaders accomplish that by using a mysterious blend of psychological abilities known as emotional intelligence. They're self-aware and empathetic. They can read and regulate their own emotions while intuitively grasping how others feel and gauging their organization's emotional state.

But where does emotional intelligence come from? And how do leaders learn to use it? The management literature (and even common sense) suggests that both nature and nurture feed emotional intelligence. Part genetic predisposition, part life experience, and part old-fashioned training, emotional intelligence emerges in varying degrees from one leader to the next, and managers apply it with varying skill. Wisely and compassionately deployed, emotional intelligence spurs leaders, their people, and their organizations to superior performance; naively or maliciously applied, it can paralyze leaders or allow them to manipulate followers for personal gain.

We invited 18 leaders and scholars (including business executives, leadership researchers, psychologists, a neurologist, a cult expert, and a symphony conductor) to explore the nature and management of emotional intelligence – its sources, uses, and abuses. Their responses differed dramatically, but there were some common themes: the importance of consciously – and conscientiously – honing one's skills, the double-edged nature of self-awareness, and the danger of letting any one emotional intelligence skill dominate.





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Be Realistic

John D. Mayer (jack.mayer@unh.edu) is a professor of psychology at the University of New Hampshire. He and Yale psychology professor Peter Salovey are credited with first defining the concept of emotional intelligence in the early 1990s.

This is a time of growing realism about emotional intelligence—especially concerning what it is and what it isn't. The books and articles that have helped popularize the concept have defined it as a loose collection of personality traits, such as self-awareness, optimism, and tolerance. These popular definitions have been accompanied by exaggerated claims about the importance of emotional intelligence. But diverse personality traits, however admirable, don't necessarily add up to a single definition of emotional intelligence. In fact, such traits are difficult to collectively evaluate in a way that reveals their relationship to success in business and in life.

Even when they're viewed in isolation, the characteristics commonly associated with emotional intelligence and success may be more complicated than they seem. For example, the scientific jury is out on how important self-awareness is to successful leadership. In fact, too much self-awareness can reduce self-esteem, which is often a crucial component of great leadership.

From a scientific (rather than a popular) standpoint, emotional intelligence is the ability to accurately perceive your own and others' emotions; to understand the signals that emotions send about relationships; and to manage your own and others' emotions. It doesn't necessarily include the qualities (like optimism, initiative, and self-confidence) that some popular definitions ascribe to it.

Researchers have used performance tests to measure people's accuracy at identifying and understanding emotions—for example, asking them to identify the emotions conveyed by a face or which among several situations is most likely to bring about happiness. People who get high scores on these tests are indeed different from others. In the business world, they appear better able to deal with customers' complaints or to mediate disputes, and they may excel at making strong and positive personal connec-

tions with subordinates and customers over the long term. Of course, emotional intelligence isn't the only way to attain success as a leader: A brilliant strategist who can maximize profits may be able to hire and keep talented employees even if he or she doesn't have strong personal connections with them.

Is there value in scales that, based on popular conceptions, measure qualities like optimism and self-confidence but label them emotional intelligence? Certainly these personality traits are important in business, so measuring and (sometimes) enhancing them can be useful. But recent research makes it clear that these characteristics are distinct from emotional intelligence as it is scientifically defined. A person high in emotional intelligence may be realistic rather than optimistic and insecure rather than confident. Conversely, a person may be highly self-confident and optimistic but lack emotional intelligence. The danger lies in assuming that because a person is optimistic or confident, he or she is also emotionally intelligent, when, in fact, the presence of those traits will tell you nothing of the sort.

Never Stop Learning

Daniel Goleman is the cochair of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations based at Rutgers University's Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology in Piscataway, New Jersey.

You can be a successful leader without much emotional intelligence if you're extremely lucky and you've got everything else going for you: booming markets, bumbling competitors, and clueless higher-ups. If you're incredibly smart, you can cover for an absence of emotional intelligence until things get tough for the business. But at that point, you won't have built up the social capital needed to pull the best out of people under tremendous pressure. The art of sustained leadership is getting others to produce superior work, and high IQ alone is insufficient to that task.

The good news is that emotional intelligence can be learned and improved at any age. In fact,

data show that, on average, people's emotional intelligence tends to increase as they age. But the specific leadership competencies that are based on emotional intelligence don't necessarily come through life experience. For example, one of the most common complaints I hear about leaders, particularly newly promoted ones, is that they lack empathy. The problem is that they were promoted because they were outstanding individual performers, and being a solo achiever doesn't teach you the skills necessary to understand other people's concerns.

Leaders who are motivated to improve their emotional intelligence can do so if they're given the right information, guidance, and support. The information they need is a candid assessment of their strengths and limitations from people who know them well and whose opinions they trust. The guidance they need is a specific developmental plan that uses naturally occurring workplace encounters as the laboratory for learning. The support they need is someone to talk to as they practice how to handle different situations, what to do when they've blown it, and how to learn from those setbacks. If leaders cultivate these resources and practice continually, they can develop specific emotional intelligence skills—skills that will last for years.

Watch the Language

Colleen Barrett is the president and COO of Dallas-based Southwest Airlines.

I've always felt that my intuition was pretty darn good, and I think I can read people well. I rely a ton on my gut. I know the mood of our different work groups. I know the expectations of our employees. I think people are generally born with a predisposition for this type of emotional awareness. But I certainly believe you can enhance your ability just from experience and learning. I've probably gotten better at it over the years because I read and listen to everything, and I'm constantly observing. I watch body language and how people interact.

The other day, I was talking to one of our officers, and he said, "How do you do that?" and I said, "How do I do what?" He was referring to a meeting we'd both been at earlier. I'd asked

one of the presenters at the meeting, a fellow who reported to this officer, if he was feeling OK. The officer thought the employee was fine, but, it turns out, the poor guy had had a pretty traumatic experience in his personal life the night before. His presentation went well, but he seemed off to me, distracted. I suppose in order to have seen that, I must have been fairly attuned to what this fellow's presentations were usually like.

I often communicate on a passionate, emotional level—which can be a detriment, particularly for a woman in a predominantly male leadership group, as ours was for many years.

I rely on calmer people around me to give me those raised eyebrows that say, "Lower the passion a little bit."

There were times when I'd launch in on an issue and make gut-level assertions like, "Our customers feel this," and "Our employees feel that." Though everyone in the group would probably deny it, I know that part of their reaction to my outbursts was, "Oh, that's just Colleen, and she's on a tangent," and they would tend to disregard what I was saying. I've learned to rely on calmer people around me to give me those raised eyebrows that say, "Lower the passion a little bit, and people will listen more." When I'm making my arguments, I have to really prepare and try to be—and this is very difficult for me—factual and dispassionate.

Build Pathways

Steven Gutstein (gutstein@connectionscenter.com) is a psychologist, autism expert, and codirector of Connections Center for Family and Personal Development in Houston.

I work with autistic children, a population typically defined by its lack of emotional intelligence. People with autism can't connect—indeed, they aren't really interested in connecting emotionally with others. Traditionally, the therapeutic approach with these kids has been to teach them to fake it. They are urged to make



eye contact with others, to repress whatever distracting behaviors they may have, and to use social scripts. Many of these therapies have the appearance of being successful. People with autism do learn the scripts, and some even blend in.

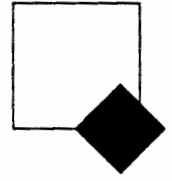
The problem is, faking it never ceases to be work. So as autistic children become adults, they stop putting on the show. Among adults with Asperger's syndrome (a form of autism marked by average or above-average IQ), fewer than 12% hold jobs. Only 3% leave home. These findings make the case profoundly that one gets only so far on IQ. People need to connect emotionally, and with flexibility, in order to succeed. These findings also demonstrate that traditional therapies have not been successful at improving quality of life for autistic people.

My approach to teaching emotional intelligence skills to children with autism, which I call "relationship development intervention" (RDI), takes a different tack. It begins with a belief that people with autism can be taught to value relationships, to seek out interactions that are not merely transactional ("I will deal with you because there is something I want from you") but where the whole point is to enjoy the shared

If people with autism can learn emotional intelligence, anyone can.

experience. Nonautistic people begin to have these kinds of relationships early in life; at about ten months, most babies start developing the capacity for social referencing, the appreciation that *my* actions should take into account *your* emotions. We now know from neuroimaging that at this stage some critical neural pathways are being laid down among all the structures in the limbic system, which regulates emotion and motivation. Autistic children typically don't develop those pathways.

But with RDI, which uses cognitive exercises and activities to motivate the children to learn specific behaviors rather than social scripts, I think we can create the neurological traffic to establish those pathways. Mind you, we are not curing autism. But we are teaching emotional intelligence. If people with autism can learn emotional intelligence, anyone can.



Get Motivated

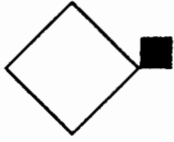
Richard Boyatzis (reb2@cwru.edu) is a professor and the chair of the department of organizational behavior at Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management in Cleveland.

People can develop their emotional intelligence if they really want to. But many managers jump to the conclusion that their complement of emotional intelligence is predetermined. They think, "I could never be good at this, so why bother?" The central issue isn't a lack of ability to change; it's the lack of motivation to change.

Leadership development is not all that different from other areas in which people are trying to change their behaviors. Just look at the treatments for alcoholism, drug addiction, and weight loss: They all require the desire to change. More subtly, they all require a positive, rather than a negative, motivation. You have to want to change. If you think you'll lose your job because you're not adequately tuned in to your employees, you might become determinedly empathetic or compassionate for a time. But change driven by fear or avoidance probably isn't going to last. Change driven by hopes and aspirations, that's pursued because it's desired, will be more enduring.

There's no such thing as having too much emotional intelligence. But there is a danger in being preoccupied with, or overusing, one aspect of it. For example, if you overemphasize the emotional intelligence competencies of initiative or achievement, you'll always be changing things at your company. Nobody would know what you were going to do next, which would be quite destabilizing for the organization. If you overuse empathy, you might never fire anybody. If you overuse teamwork, you might never build diversity or listen to a lone voice. Balance is essential.





Train the Gifted

Elkhonon Goldberg (*egneurocog@aol.com*) is a clinical professor of neurology at New York University School of Medicine and the director of the Institute of Neuropsychology and Cognitive Performance in New York.

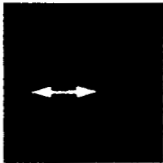
In the past, neuropsychologists were mostly concerned with cognitive impairment. Today, they are increasingly interested in the biological underpinnings of cognitive differences in people without impairments—including differences in people’s emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence can be learned, to a degree. It’s like mathematical or musical ability. Can you become a musician if you lack natural aptitude? Yes, you can, if you take lessons and practice enough. But will you ever be a Mozart? Probably not. In the same way, emotional intelligence develops through a combination of biological endowment and training. And people

who don’t have that endowment probably won’t become deeply emotionally intelligent just through training. Trying to drum emotional intelligence into someone with no aptitude for it is an exercise in futility. I believe the best way to get emotionally intelligent leaders is to

select for people who already show the basic qualities you want. Think about it: That’s how athletic coaches operate. They don’t just work with anyone who wants to play a sport; they train the naturally gifted. Business managers should do the same.

How do you identify the naturally gifted? I’d say you have to look for those with a genuine, instinctive interest in other people’s experiences and mental worlds. It’s an absolute prerequisite for developing emotional intelligence. If a manager lacks this interest, maybe your training resources are better directed elsewhere.



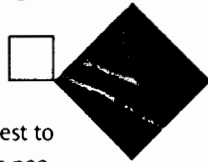
Seek Frank Feedback

Andrea Jung is the chair and CEO of Avon Products, which is based in New York.

Emotional intelligence is in our DNA here at Avon because relationships are critical at every stage of our business. It starts with the relationships our 4.5 million independent sales reps have with their customers and goes right up through senior management to my office. So the emphasis on emotional intelligence is much greater here than it was at other companies in which I’ve worked. We incorporate emotional intelligence education into our development training for senior managers, and we factor in emotional intelligence competencies when we evaluate employees’ performance.

Of all a leader’s competencies, emotional and otherwise, self-awareness is the most important. Without it, you can’t identify the impact you have on others. Self-awareness is very important for me as CEO. At my level, few people are

My kids are part of my 360-degree feedback. They’re the most honest of all.



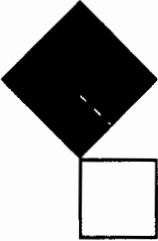
willing to tell me the things that are hardest to hear. We have a CEO advisory counsel—ten people chosen each year from Avon offices throughout the world—and they tell me the good, the bad, and the ugly about the company. Anything can be said. It helps keep me connected to what people really think and how my actions affect them. I also rely on my children for honest appraisals. You can get a huge dose of reality by seeing yourself through your children’s eyes, noticing the ways they react to and reflect what you say and do. My kids are part of my 360-degree feedback. They’re the most honest of all.

I grew up in a very traditional Chinese family. My parents were concerned that the way I’d been raised—submissive, caring, and averse to conflict—would hinder my ability to succeed in the *Fortune* 500 environment. They were afraid I couldn’t make the tough decisions. But I’ve learned how to be empathetic and still make

hard decisions that are right for the company. These are not incompatible abilities. When Avon has had to close plants, for example, I've tried to act with compassion for the people involved. And I've gotten letters from some of the associates who were affected, expressing sadness but also saying thanks for the fair treatment. Leaders' use of emotional intelligence when making tough decisions is important to their success—and to the success of their organizations.

Gauge Your Awareness

Howard Book (hbwork@netsurf.net) is an associate professor in the department of psychiatry at the University of Toronto and an organizational consultant.



Self-awareness is the key emotional intelligence skill behind good leadership. It's often thought of as the ability to know how you're feeling and why, and the impact your feelings have on your behavior. But it also involves a capacity to monitor and control those strong but subliminal biases that all of us harbor and that can skew our decision making.

Consider, for example, a vice president who complained to me recently about his new hire, the head of sales. He found her to be unassertive, indecisive, unsure—hardly leadership material. When I talked to her, however, it turned out she felt her boss was sabotaging her career. The vice

Whereas cognitive intelligence is fixed by about the age of ten, emotional intelligence increases with age.

president had been hired only five months before she had, and he was oblivious to how his anxiety to please the CEO was causing him to micromanage. In doing so, the VP was undercutting the sales director's independence and confidence. His lack of self-awareness directly impaired her performance.

Experience and literature on the subject suggest that while both nature and nurture influence emotional intelligence, nurture is the more important factor. Indeed, this emphasis on environment is one of the hallmarks that differentiates emotional intelligence from cognitive intelligence, or IQ. Whereas cognitive intelligence is fixed by about the age of ten, emotional intelligence increases with age. So you can actually learn emotional intelligence skills like self-awareness. One simple way to measure your self-awareness is to ask a trusted friend or colleague to draw up a list of your strengths and weaknesses while you do the same. It can be an uncomfortable exercise, but the bigger the gap between your list and your helper's, the more work you probably have to do.

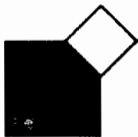
Sniff Out Signals

Robert Goffee (rgoffee@london.edu) is a professor of organizational behavior at London Business School and a cofounder of Creative Management Associates, an organizational consulting firm in London.

You need some degree of emotional intelligence to be an effective leader, but you do see some one-hit wonders out there—people who have limited emotional intelligence but can still excite a particular group. The problem is, they can't transfer their success to another organization. They got lucky and landed in a situation in which their passions happened to connect with the organization's passions, but they probably wouldn't be able to replicate that at another company. By contrast, true leaders can connect with different groups of people in a variety of contexts.

To some extent, these one-hit wonders can learn how to be emotionally intelligent. One component of emotional intelligence is "situation sensing"—the ability to sniff out the signals in an environment and figure out what's going on without being told. You can develop this skill through jobs in which you're exposed to a wide range of people and have a motive for watching their reactions. For instance, Roche CEO Franz Humer is highly skilled at detecting subtle cues and underlying shifts of opinion. Humer told

If these skills are developed disproportionately, they can interfere with your relationships.



me and my colleague Gareth Jones that he developed the skill while working as a tour guide in his mid-twenties. Because he relied solely on tips for his pay, Humer quickly learned how to size up a group of as many as 100 people and figure out who was likely to give him a tip. That way, he'd know where to focus his attention. (For more on this example, see "Why Should Anyone Be Led By You?" HBR September–October 2000.)

I'd caution against overemphasizing any one aspect of emotional intelligence; if these skills are developed disproportionately, they can interfere with your relationships. If you're extremely self-aware but short on empathy, you might come off as self-obsessed. If you're excessively empathetic, you risk being too hard to read. If you're great at self-management but not very transparent, you might seem inauthentic. Finally, at times leaders have to deliberately avoid getting too close to the troops in order to ensure that they're seeing the bigger picture. Emotionally intelligent leaders know when to rein it in.

Engage Your Demons

David Gergen directs the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He served as an adviser to presidents Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton.

American history suggests not only that emotional intelligence is an indispensable ingredient of political leadership but also that it can be enhanced through sustained effort. George Washington had to work hard to control his fiery temper before he became a role model for the republic, and Abraham Lincoln had to overcome deep melancholia to display the brave and

warm countenance that made him a magnet for others. Franklin Delano Roosevelt provides an even more graphic example: In his early adult years, FDR seemed carefree and condescending. Then, at 39, he was stricken with polio. By most accounts, he transformed himself over the next seven years of struggle into a leader of empathy, patience, and keen self-awareness.

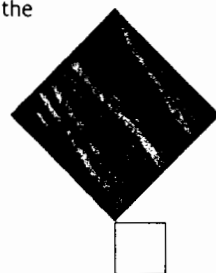
Richard Nixon thought he might transform himself through his own years in the wilderness, and he did make progress. But he could never fully control his demons, and they eventually brought him down. Bill Clinton, too, has struggled for self-mastery and has made progress, but he could not fully close the cracks in his character, and he paid a stiff price. Not all people succeed, then, in achieving self-awareness and self-control. What we have been told since the time of the Greeks is that every leader must try to control his own passions before he can hope to command the passions of others.

Best-selling author Rabbi Harold Kushner argues persuasively that the elements of selfishness and aggression that are in most of us – and our struggles to overcome them – are exactly what make for better leadership. In *Living a Life That Matters*, Kushner writes of the personal torments of leaders from Jacob, who wrestled all night with an angel, to Martin Luther King, Jr., who tried to cleanse himself of weakness even as he cleansed the nation's soul. "Good people do bad things," Kushner concludes, "If they weren't mightily tempted by their *yetzer ha'ra* [will to do evil], they might not be capable of the mightily good things they do."

Let Your Guard Down

Sidney Harman (sharman@harman.com) is the executive chairman and founder of Harman International Industries in Washington, DC.

Eight years ago, we acquired Becker Radio (now Harman/Becker) to help us develop the dashboard navigation and media systems that are now the major part of our business. In a meeting at Becker, several of the engineers there argued that the only way for us to take the lead in the emerging field of "infotainment" was





to abandon tried-and-true analog systems and design and build totally new digital systems—a very risky proposition for our company.

Back home, I sat down with our key executives to talk about this disruptive idea. I went into the meeting with only a rough notion of how we should proceed. There was clearly anxiety and skepticism in the group, concern that we would be betting the company if we went digital. I realized that to provoke the creative thinking we needed, I would have to let my guard down and be willing to embarrass myself by floating unformed—and even uninformed—ideas. I assured the group that anything we said in the meeting stayed with us. Our discussion went on for six or seven hours. By opening up to my colleagues, and by encouraging them to think freely and improvise, I helped generate a novel perspective that no one of us had brought to the meeting: Commit all the company's resources to this digital direction, facilitate the transformation by eliminating hierarchies and silos, and remove barriers between functions.

Today, our sales are approaching \$3 billion, and our stock price is at an all-time high. We wouldn't be here if we hadn't taken the radical steps conceived in that meeting. And that plan would not have emerged had I failed to recognize and respond to the group's apprehension and elicit its collective creative thinking. The leader who uses emotional intelligence to catalyze creative thinking subordinates himself to the team but elevates the company to achieve goals it otherwise couldn't.

Watch Your Culture

Janja Lalich (jlalich@csuchico.edu) is an assistant professor of sociology at California State University, Chico, and an expert on cults.

Cult leaders don't do anything mysterious; they just know how to package themselves and their promises well and how to target responsive audiences. They're very good at influencing, or, to be more precise, manipulating, followers. To do this, they rely on a keen ability to perceive others' vulnerabilities and longings—to know what people want.

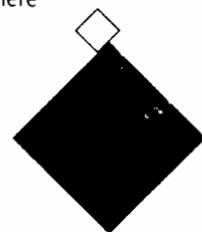
One way a cult leader manipulates is by exploiting followers' eagerness to be part of something bigger than themselves. That desire often prompts followers to assign to a leader attributes that he doesn't actually possess. A type of group contagion can take hold—a "true-believerism" mentality. Then followers can fall into what I call uncritical obedience, never questioning the leader's claims. When followers give a leader this power, there are obvious dangers.

Cult leaders are also skillful at convincing followers that the leader's ideas are their own. Once followers own the ideas, it's difficult for them to extricate themselves from the leader's message. For example, a leader may exaggerate

The differences between how cult leaders and conventional leaders influence their followers can be subtle.

his own importance. In the 1980s, Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, a wildly popular Oregon-based Eastern guru, always surrounded himself with armed guards. That heightened sense of need for security led some of his followers to perform dangerous, antisocial activities in their desire to protect and defend their ashram and Rajneesh himself.

Cult leaders also make it difficult for people to leave. They set up interlocking systems of influence and control that keep followers obedient and prevent them from thinking about their own needs. Cult leaders may offer "rewards"—sometimes material, more often ephemeral—that keep followers committed to the leader and to the organization's goals. The differences between how a conventional leader influences followers and how cult leaders manipulate them can be subtle. Sometimes the only difference is their intent. And sometimes there is no difference.





Find Your Voice

William George is the former chairman and CEO of Medtronic, a medical technology company in Minneapolis.

Authentic leadership begins with self-awareness, or knowing yourself deeply. Self-awareness is not a trait you are born with but a capacity you develop throughout your lifetime. It's your understanding of your strengths and weaknesses, your purpose in life, your values and motivations, and how and why you respond to situations in a particular way. It requires a great deal of introspection and the ability to internalize feedback from others.

No one is born a leader; we have to consciously develop into the leader we want to become. It takes many years of hard work and the ability to learn from extreme difficulties and disappointments. But in their scramble to get ahead, many would-be leaders attempt to skip this crucial developmental stage. Some of these people do get to the top of companies through sheer determination and aggressiveness. However, when they finally reach the leader's chair, they can be very destructive because they haven't focused on the hard work of personal development.

To mask their inadequacies, these leaders tend to close themselves off, cultivating an image or persona rather than opening up to others. They often adopt the styles of other leaders they have observed.

Leaders who are driven to achieve by shortcomings in their character, for example, or a desire for self-aggrandizement, may take inordinate risks on behalf of the organization. They may even come to believe they are so important that they place their interests above those of the organization.

Self-awareness and other emotional intelligence skills come naturally to some, less so to others – but these skills can be learned. One of the techniques I have found most useful in gaining deeper self-awareness is meditation. In 1975, my wife dragged me, kicking and screaming, to a weekend course in Transcendental Meditation. I have meditated 20 minutes, twice a day, ever since. Meditation makes me calmer, more focused, and better able to discern what's really

important. Leaders, by the very nature of their positions, are under extreme pressure to keep up with the many voices clamoring for their attention. Indeed, many leaders lose their way. It is only through a deep self-awareness that you can find your inner voice and listen to it.

Know the Score

Michael Tilson Thomas is the music director of the San Francisco Symphony.

A conductor's authority rests on two things: the orchestra's confidence in the conductor's insightful knowledge of the whole score; and the orchestra's faith in the conductor's good heart, which seeks to inspire everyone to make music that is excellent, generous, and sincere.

Old-school conductors liked to hold the lead in their hands at all times. I do not. Sometimes I lead. Other times I'll say, "Violas, I'm giving you the lead. Listen to one another, and find your way with this phrase." I'm not trying to drill people, military style, to play music exactly together. I'm trying to encourage them to play as one, which is a different thing. I'm guiding the performance, but I'm aware that they're executing it. It's their sinews, their heartstrings. I'm there to help them do it in a way that is convincing and natural for them but also a part of the larger design.

My approach is to be in tune with the people with whom I'm working. If I'm conducting an ensemble for the first time, I will relate what it is I want them to do to the great things they've already done. If I'm conducting my own orchestra, I can see in the musicians' bodies and faces how they're feeling that day, and it becomes very clear who may need encouragement and who may need cautioning.

The objectivity and perspective I have as the only person who is just listening is a powerful thing. I try to use this perspective to help the ensemble reach its goals.



Keep It Honest

Carol Bartz (carol.bartz@autodesk.com) is the chairman, president, and CEO of Autodesk, a design software and digital content company in San Rafael, California.

A friend needed to take a six-month assignment in a different part of the country. She had an ancient, ill, balding but beloved dog that she could not take with her. Her choices boiled down to boarding the poor animal, at enormous expense, or putting it out of its obvious misery. Friends said, "Board the dog," though behind my friend's back, they ridiculed that option. She asked me what I thought, and I told her, kindly but clearly, that I thought she should have the dog put to sleep rather than spend her money keeping it in an environment where it would be miserable and perhaps die anyway. My friend was furious with me for saying this. She boarded the dog and went away on her assignment. When she returned, the dog was at death's door and had to be put to sleep. Not long after that, my friend came around to say thanks. "You were the only person who told me the truth," she said. She came to appreciate that I had cared enough to tell her what I thought was best, even if what I said hurt at the time.

That event validated a hunch that has stood me in good stead as I've led my company. Empathy and compassion have to be balanced with honesty. I have pulled people into my office and told them to deal with certain issues for the sake of themselves and their teams. If they are willing to learn, they will say, "Gee, no one ever told me." If they are unwilling, they're not right for this organization. And I must let them go for the sake of the greater good.

Go for the Gemba

Hirotaka Takeuchi is the dean of Hitotsubashi University's Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy in Tokyo.

Self-awareness, self-control, empathy, humility, and other such emotional intelligence traits are particularly important in Asia. They are part of our Confucian emphasis on *wah*, or social har-

mony. When books on emotional intelligence were first translated into Japanese, people said, "We already know that. We're actually trying to get beyond that." We've been so focused on *wah* that we've built up a supersensitive structure of social niceties, where everyone seeks consensus. In the Japanese hierarchy, everyone knows his or her place so no one is ever humiliated. This social supersensitivity – itself a form of emotional intelligence – can lead people to shy away from conflict. But conflict is often the only way to get to the *gemba* – the front line, where the action really is, where the truth lies.

Thus, effective management often depends not on coolly and expertly resolving conflict, or simply avoiding it, but on embracing it at the *gemba*. Japan's most effective leaders do both. The best example is Nissan's Carlos Ghosn. He not only had the social skills to listen to people and win them over to his ideas, but he also dared to lift the lid on the corporate hierarchy and encourage people at all levels of the organization to offer suggestions to operational, organizational, and even interpersonal problems – even if that created conflict. People were no longer suppressed, so solutions to the company's problems bubbled up.

Balance the Load

Linda Stone (linda@lindastone.net) is the former vice president of corporate and industry initiatives at Microsoft in Redmond, Washington.

Emotional intelligence is powerful – which is precisely why it can be dangerous. For example, empathy is an extraordinary relationship-building tool, but it must be used skillfully or it can do serious damage to the person doing the empathizing. In my case, overdoing empathy took a physical toll. In May 2000, Steve Ballmer charged me with rebuilding Microsoft's industry relationships, a position that I sometimes referred to as chief listening officer. The job was part ombudsperson, part new-initiatives developer, part pattern recognizer, and part rapid-response person. In the first few months of the job – when criticism of the company was at an

all-time high—it became clear that this position was a lightning rod. I threw myself into listening and repairing wherever I could.

Within a few months, I was exhausted from the effort. I gained a significant amount of weight, which, tests finally revealed, was probably caused by a hormone imbalance partially brought on by stress and lack of sleep. In absorbing everyone's complaints, perhaps to the extreme, I had compromised my health. This was a wake-up call; I needed to reframe the job.

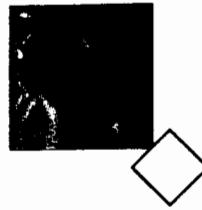
I focused on connecting the people who needed to work together to resolve problems rather than taking on each repair myself. I persuaded key people inside the company to listen and work directly with important people outside the company, even in cases where the internal folks were skeptical at first about the need for this direct connection. In a sense, I tempered my empathy and ratcheted up relationship building. Ultimately, with a wiser and more balanced use of empathy, I became more effective and less stressed in my role.

Question Authority

Ronald Heifetz (*ronald_heifetz@harvard.edu*) is a cofounder of the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a partner at Cambridge Leadership Associates, a consultancy in Cambridge.

Emotional intelligence is necessary for leadership but not sufficient. Many people have some degree of emotional intelligence and can indeed empathize with and rouse followers; a few of them can even generate great charismatic authority. But I would argue that if they are using emotional intelligence solely to gain formal or informal authority, that's not leadership at all. They are using their emotional intelligence to grasp what people want, only to pander to those desires in order to gain authority and influence. Easy answers sell.

Leadership couples emotional intelligence with the courage to raise the tough questions, challenge people's assumptions about strategy and operations—and risk losing their goodwill.




It demands a commitment to serving others; skill at diagnostic, strategic, and tactical reasoning; the guts to get beneath the surface of tough realities; and the heart to take heat and grief.

For example, David Duke did an extraordinary job of convincing Ku Klux Klan members to get out of their backyards and into hotel conference rooms. He brought his considerable emotional intelligence to bear, his capacity to empathize with his followers, to pluck their heartstrings in a powerful way that mobilized them. But he avoided asking his people the tough questions: Does our program actually solve our problem? How will creating a social structure of white supremacy give us the self-esteem we lack? How will it solve the problems of poverty, alcoholism, and family violence that corrode our sense of self-worth?

Like Duke, many people with high emotional intelligence and charismatic authority aren't interested in asking the deeper questions, because they get so much emotional gain from the adoring crowd. For them, that's the end in itself. They're satisfying their own hungers and vulnerabilities: their need to be liked; their need

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for power and control; or their need to be needed, to feel important, which renders them vulnerable to grandiosity. But that's not primal leadership. It's primal hunger for authority.

Maintaining one's primacy or position is not, in and of itself, leadership, however inspiring it may seem to be. Gaining primal authority is relatively easy. 

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