

## Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence

# PRIMAL LEADERSHIP

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### **THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF**

*Great leaders move us. They ignite our passion and inspire the best in us. When we try to explain why they are so effective, we speak of strategy, vision, or powerful ideas. But the reality is much more primal: Great leadership works through the emotions. Humankind's original leaders earned their place because their leadership was emotionally compelling. In the modern organization this primordial emotional task remains. Leaders must drive the collective emotions in a positive direction and clear the smog created by toxic emotions whether it is on the shop floor or in the boardroom.*

*When leaders drive emotions positively they bring out everyone's best. When they drive emotions negatively they spawn dissonance, undermining the emotional foundations that let people shine. The key to making primal leadership work to everyone's advantage lies in the leadership competencies of emotional intelligence; how leaders handle themselves and their relationships. Leaders who exercise primal leadership drive the emotions of those they lead in the right direction.*

### **What You'll Learn In This Summary**

In this summary, you will learn the secrets of primal leadership by:

- Understanding what primal leadership is and why, when practiced correctly, it creates resonance in your organization.
- Understanding the neuroanatomy that underlies primal leadership and what emotional intelligence competencies you need to succeed.
- Understanding the six leadership styles you can use — from visionary to coaching to pacesetter — to inspire others, and when to use each one.
- Understanding who you are and what you need to change to become a primal leader, and then develop a plan to make those changes.
- Learning how to build emotionally intelligent organizations.

# 1. The vital emotional component of leadership

Gifted leadership occurs where heart and head — feeling and thought — meet. These are the two things that allow a leader to soar. All leaders need enough intellect to handle the tasks and challenges at hand. However, intellect alone won't make a leader. Leaders execute a vision by motivating, guiding, inspiring, listening, persuading and creating resonance.

As a result, the manner in which leaders act — not just what they do, but how they do it — is a fundamental key to effective leadership. The reason lies in the design of the human brain.

## *The Open Loop*

The brain is an open loop. We rely on connections with other people for our emotional stability. Scientists describe the open-loop system as “interpersonal limbic regulation,” whereby one person transmits signals that can alter hormone levels, cardiovascular function, sleep rhythms and even immune function inside the body of another. Other people can change our very physiology and our emotions. The continual interplay of limbic open loops among members of a group creates a kind

of emotional soup, with everyone adding his or her flavor to the mix. Negative emotions — especially chronic anger, anxiety or a sense of futility — powerfully disrupt work, hijacking attentions from the tasks at hand.

On the other hand, when people feel good, they work at their best. Feeling good lubricates mental efficiency, making people better at understanding information and making complex judgments.

Insurance agents with a glass-half-full attitude, for example, make more sales, in part because they are able to withstand rejection better than their more pessimistic peers. A study on 62 CEOs and their top management shows just how important mood is. The CEOs and their management team members were assessed on how upbeat — energetic, enthusiastic and determined — they were. They were also asked how much conflict the top team experienced. The study found that the more positive the overall moods of people in the top management team, the more cooperative they worked together and the better the company's business results. The longer a company was run by a management team that did not get along, the poorer the company's market return.

## **Laughter and the Open Loop**

A study at Yale University showed that among working groups, cheerfulness and warmth spread most easily. Laughter, in particular, demonstrates the power of the open loop in operation.

Unlike other emotional signals which can be feigned, laughter is largely involuntary. In a neurological sense, laughing represents the shortest distance between two people because it instantly interlocks limbic systems. This immediate, involuntary reaction might be called a limbic lock. Laughter in the workplace signals trust, comfort, and a shared sense of the world

## 2. Why good leaders must read emotions

Dissonance, in its original musical sense, describes an unpleasant, harsh sound. Dissonant leadership produces groups that feel emotionally discordant, in which people have a sense of being continually off-key. Ranging from abusive tyrants to manipulative sociopaths, dissonant leaders are out of touch and create wretched workplaces although they have no idea how destructive they are, or simply don't care. Meanwhile, the collective distress they trigger becomes the group's preoccupation, deflecting attention away from their mission.

### *Emotionally Intelligent Resonance*

Resonant leaders, on the other hand, are attuned to their people's feelings and move them in a positive emotional direction. Resonance comes naturally to emotionally intelligent leaders. Their passion and enthusiastic energy resounds throughout the group. When there are serious concerns, emotionally intelligent (EI) leaders use empathy to attune to the emotional registry of the people they lead. For example, if something has happened that everyone feels angry about (such as the closing of a division) or sad about (such as a co-worker's serious illness) the EI leader not only empathizes with those emotions, but also expresses them for the group. The leader leaves people feeling understood and cared for. Under the guidance of an EI leader, people feel a mutual comfort level. They share ideas, learn from one another, make decisions collaboratively, and get things done. Perhaps most important, connecting with others at an emotional level makes work more meaningful.

### **Leadership and the Brain's Design**

New findings in brain research show that the neural systems responsible for the intellect and for the emotions are separate, but have intimately interwoven connections. This brain circuitry provides the neural basis of primal leadership. Although our business culture places great value in an intellect devoid of emotion, our emotions are more powerful than our intellect. In emergencies, the limbic brain — our emotional center — commandeers the rest of our brain.

There is a good reason for this. Emotions are crucial for survival, being the brain's way of alerting us to something urgent and offering an immediate plan for action — fight, flee, freeze. The thinking brain evolved from the limbic brain, and continues to take orders from it when it perceives a threat. The trigger point is the amygdala, a limbic brain structure that scans what's happening to us moment by moment, always on the alert for an emergency. It commandeers other parts of the brain, including the rational centers in the cortex, for immediate action if it perceives an emergency.

Today we face complex social realities with a brain designed for surviving physical emergencies. And so we find ourselves hijacked — swept away by anxiety or anger better suited for handling bodily threats than office politics.

Fortunately, emotional impulses pass through other parts of the brain, from the amygdala through the prefrontal area. There an emotional impulse can be vetoed. The dialogue between neurons in the emotional center and the prefrontal area operate through a neurological superhighway. The emotional intelligence competencies hinge on the smooth operation of this circuitry. Biologically speaking, then, the art of primal leadership interweaves our intellect and emotions.

### 3. The Four Dimensions of Emotional Intelligence

There are four domains to emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self management, social awareness and relationships management. Within the four domains are 18 competencies. These competencies are the vehicles of primal leadership. Even the most outstanding leader will not have all competencies. Effective leaders, though, exhibit at least one competency from each of the domains. The four domains and their competencies are listed below:

#### *Self-awareness*

- **Emotional self-awareness:** Reading one's own emotions and recognizing their impact and using "gut sense" to guide decisions.
- **Accurate self-assessment:** Knowing one's strengths and limits.
- **Self-confidence:** A sound sense of one's self-worth and capabilities.

#### *Self-management*

- **Emotional self-control:** Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses under control.
- **Transparency:** Displaying honesty, integrity and trustworthiness.
- **Adaptability:** Flexibility in adapting to changing situations or overcoming obstacles.
- **Achievement:** The drive to improve performance to meet inner standards of excellence.
- **Initiative:** Readiness to act and seize opportunities.
- **Optimism:** Seeing the upside in events.

#### *Social Awareness*

- **Empathy:** Sensing others' emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking active interest in their concerns.
- **Organizational awareness:** Reading the currents, decision networks, and politics at the organizational level.
- **Service:** Recognizing and meeting follower, client or customer needs.

#### *Relationship Management*

- **Inspirational leadership:** Guiding and motivating with a compelling vision.
- **Influence:**Wielding a range of tactics for persuasion.
- **Developing others:** Bolstering others' abilities through feedback and guidance.
- **Change catalyst:** Initiating, managing and leading in new directions.
- **Building bonds:** Cultivating and maintaining relationship webs.
- **Teamwork and collaboration:** Cooperation and team-building.

#### **A Visionary Leader**

When Shawana Leroy became director of a social agency, there were clearly problems. Her predecessor had mired the agency in rules that the talented staff the agency had attracted because of its mission found draining. Despite increased needs for the agency's services, the pace of work was slow. Leroy met one-on-one with staff and found out that they shared her vision. She got people talking about their hopes for the future and tapped into the compassion and dedication they felt. She voiced their shared values whenever she could. She guided them in looking at whether how they did things furthered the mission, and together they eliminated rules that made no sense. Meanwhile, she modeled the principles of the new organization she wanted to create: one that was transparent and honest; one that focused on rigor and results. Then Leroy and her team tackled the changes. The agency's emotional climate changed to reflect her passion and commitment; she set the tone as a visionary leader.

## 4. The Leadership Repertoire

The best, most effective leaders act according to one or more of six distinct approaches to leadership. Four of the styles — visionary, coaching, affiliative and democratic — create the kind of resonance that boosts performance. The other two — pacesetting and commanding — should be applied with caution.

### *The Six Styles of Leadership*

**1. Visionary.** The visionary leader articulates where a group is going, but not how it gets there — setting people free to innovate, experiment and take calculated risks. Inspirational leadership is the emotional intelligence competence that most strongly undergirds the visionary style. Transparency, another EI competency, is also crucial. If a leader's vision is disingenuous, people sense it. The EI competency that matters most to visionary leadership, however, is empathy. The ability to sense what others feel and understand their perspectives helps leader articulate a truly inspirational vision.

**2. Coaching.** The coaching style is really the art of the one-on-one. Coaches help people identify their unique strengths and weaknesses, tying those to their personal and career aspirations. Effective coaching exemplifies the EI competency of developing others, which lets a leader act as a counselor. It works hand in hand with two other competencies: emotional awareness and empathy.

**3. Affiliative.** The affiliative style of leadership represents the collaborative competency in action. An affiliative leader is most concerned with promoting harmony and fostering friendly interactions. When leaders are being affiliative, they focus on the emotional needs of workers, using empathy. Many leaders who use the affiliative approach combine it with the visionary approach. Visionary leaders state a mission, set standards, and let people know whether their work is furthering group goals. Ally that with the caring approach of the affiliative leader and you have a potent combination.

**4. Democratic.** A democratic leader builds on a triad of EI abilities: teamwork and collaboration, conflict management and influence. Democratic leaders are great listeners and true collaborators. They know how to quell conflict and create harmony. Empathy also plays a role. A democratic approach works best when as a leader, you are unsure what direction to take and need ideas from able employees. For example, IBM's Louis Gerstner, an outsider to the computer industry when he became CEO of the ailing giant, relied on seasoned colleagues for advice.

### **The Case of Too Much Pacesetting**

The superb technical skills of Sam, an R&D biochemist at a large pharmaceutical company, made him an early star. When he was appointed to head a team to develop a new product, Sam continued to shine, and his teammates were as competent and self-motivated as their leader. Sam, however, began setting the pace by working late and offering himself as a model of how to do first-class scientific work under tremendous deadline pressure. His team completed the task in record time.

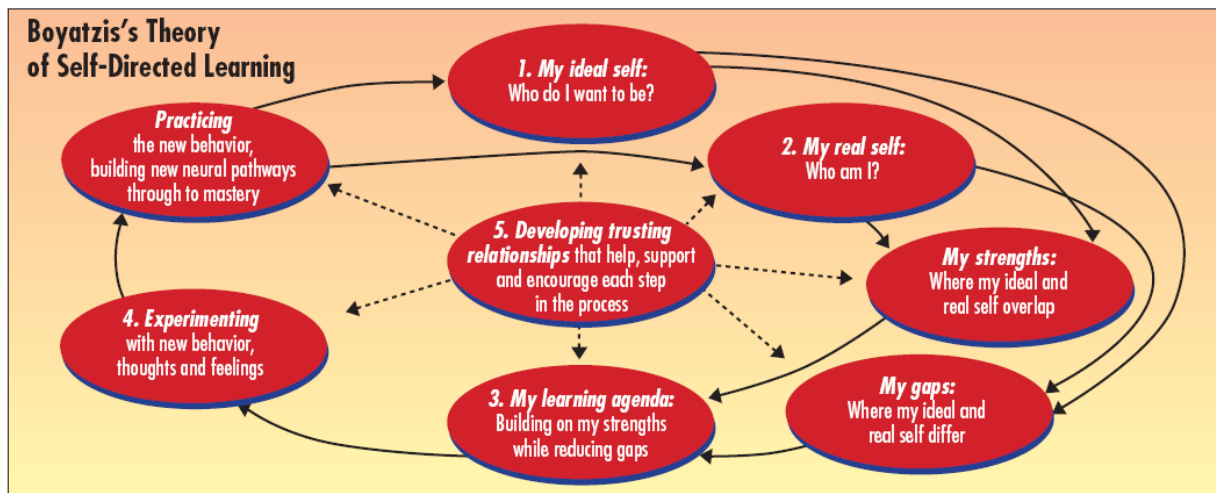
But when Sam was selected to head R&D, he began to slip. Not trusting the capabilities of his subordinates, he refused to delegate power, becoming instead a micro-manager obsessed with details. He took over for others he perceived as slacking, rather than trust that they could improve with guidance. To everyone's relief, including his own, he returned to his old job.

**5. Pacesetting.** Pacesetting as a leadership style must be applied sparingly, restricted to settings where it truly works. Common wisdom holds that pacesetting is admirable. The leader holds and exemplifies high standards for performance. He is obsessive about doing things better and faster, quickly pinpointing poor performers. Unfortunately, applied excessively, pacesetting can backfire and lead to low morale as workers think they are being pushed too hard or that the leader doesn't trust them to get their job done. The emotional intelligence foundation of a pacesetter is the drive to achieve through improved performance and the initiative to seize opportunities. But a pacesetter who lacks empathy can easily be blinded to the pain of those who achieve what the leader demands. Pacesetting works best when combined with the passion of the visionary style and the team building of the affiliate style.

**6. Commanding.** The command leader demands immediate compliance with orders, but doesn't bother to explain the reasons. If subordinates fail to follow orders, these leaders resort to threats. They also seek tight control and monitoring. Of all the leadership styles, the commanding approach is the least effective. Consider what the style does to an organization's climate. Given that emotional contagion spreads most readily from the top down, an intimidating, cold leader contaminates everyone's mood. Such a leader erodes people's spirits and the pride and satisfaction they take in their work. The commanding style works on limited circumstances, and only when used judiciously. For example, in a genuine emergency, such as an approaching hurricane or a hostile take-over attempt, a take-control style can help everyone through the crisis. An effective execution of the commanding style draws on three emotional intelligence competencies: influence, achievement and initiative. In addition, self-awareness, emotional self-control and empathy are crucial to keep the commanding style from going off track.

## 5. Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leaders

The key to learning that lasts lies in the brain. Remember that emotional intelligence involves circuitry between the prefrontal lobes and the limbic system. Skills based in the limbic system are best learned through motivation, extended practice and feedback. The limbic system is a slow learner, especially when trying to relearn deeply ingrained habits. This matters immensely when trying to improve leadership skills. These skills often come down to habits learned early in life. Reeducating the emotional brain for leadership learning requires plenty of practice and repetition. That's because neural connections used over and over become stronger while those not used weaken.



### *Self-Directed Learning*

To work, leadership development must be self-directed. You must want to develop or strengthen an aspect of who you are or who you want to be. This requires first getting a strong image of your ideal self, and an accurate picture of your *real* self. Self-directed learning involves five discoveries, each representing a discontinuity. The goal is to use each discovery as a tool for making the changes needed to become an emotionally intelligent leader. People who successfully change move through the following stages:

- **The first discovery:** My ideal self — Who do I want to be?
- **The second discovery:** My real self — Who am I? What are my strengths and gaps?
- **The third discovery:** My learning agenda — How can I build on my strengths while reducing my gaps?
- **The fourth discovery:** Experimenting with and practicing new thoughts, behaviors and feelings to the point of mastery.
- **The fifth discovery:** Developing supportive and trusting relationships that make change possible.

## 6. The Motivation to Change

The first discovery — the ideal self — is where change begins. Connecting with one's passion, energy, and excitement about life is the key to uncovering your ideal self. Doing so requires a reach deep inside.

### *You, Fifteen Years from Now*

Think about where you would be sitting and reading this summary if it were fifteen years from now and you were living your ideal life. What kinds of people are around you? What does your environment look and feel like?

What would you be doing during a typical day? Don't worry about the feasibility. Just let the image develop and place yourself in the picture. Write down your vision, or share it with a trusted friend.

After doing this exercise, you may feel a release of energy and optimism. Envisioning your ideal future can be a powerful way to connect with the real possibilities for change in our lives. Next, determine what your guiding principles are. What are your core values in the areas of life that are important to you, such as

family, relationships, work, spirituality and health. Write down everything you want to experience before you die. Doing so will open you up to new possibilities.

### **How One Leader Changed**

When Nick, a star salesman, took over as head of an insurance agency in a new city, he knew he needed help. The agency was in the bottom quartile. He hired leadership consultants, who determined what type of leader Nick was. He fit the pacesetter mold, with elements of the commanding style. As pressure mounted, the atmosphere grew increasingly tense.

Nick was encouraged to focus on his salespeople's performance rather than his own. This required he use the coaching and visionary styles. Fortunately, some of the traits that made him a great salesman — empathy, self-management and inspiration — transferred well. He seized the opportunity to work one-on-one and stifled his impulse to jump in when he got impatient with someone's work. Eighteen months later, the agency had moved from the bottom to the top and Nick became one of the youngest managers to win a national award for growth.

### *Look at Your Real Self*

Once you see your ideal self, you need to look at your real self — the second discovery. Then, and only then, can you understand your strengths. Taking stock of your real self starts with an inventory of your talents and passions — the person you actually are. This can be painful if the slow, invisible creep of compromise and complacency has caused your ideal self to slip away. How do you get to the truth of your real self? You must break through the information quarantine around you. Actively seek out negative feedback. You can do this using a 360-degree evaluation — collecting information from your boss, your peers and your subordinates. Multiple views render a more complete picture because each sees a different aspect of you. Once you have a full picture of yourself, you can examine your strengths and gaps. Do this by creating a personal balance sheet, listing both. Don't focus solely on the gaps.



### ***Metamorphosis: Sustaining Leadership Change***

It's now time to develop a practical plan to learn leadership skills, which is the third discovery. Focus on improvements you are passionate about, building on your strengths while filling the gaps. Craft specific manageable learning goals that are tied to the goals that motivate you.

When goal-setting, consider that:

- Goals should build strengths.
- Goals must be your own, not someone else's.
- Plans must be flexible and feasible, with manageable steps.
- Plans must fit your learning style.

### ***The Experimenting Stage***

The fourth discovery requires you to reconfigure your brain as you practice new behaviors to the point of mastery. You can only do this by bringing bad habits into awareness and

consciously practicing a better way. Rehearse the behavior at every opportunity until it becomes automatic. Improving an emotional intelligence competency takes months because the emotional centers of the brain are involved. The more often a behavioural sequence repeats, the stronger the underlying brain circuits become,

as you rewire your brain. Like a professional musician, you must practice and practice until the behavior becomes automatic. A powerful technique you can use is the mental rehearsal. Envision yourself repeating the behavior you want to master over and over again. This, coupled with using the behavior as often as possible, will trigger the neural connections necessary for genuine change to occur.

#### **Are You a Boiling Frog?**

If you drop a frog into boiling water, it will instinctively jump out. But if you place the frog in a pot of cold water and gradually increase the temperature, the frog won't notice the water's getting hotter. It will sit there until the water boils. The fate of that poached frog isn't so unlike some leaders who settle into a routine or let small conveniences solidify into large habits — and allow inertia to set in.

### ***Supportive and Trusting Relationships***

Finally, begin applying the fifth discovery — the power of supportive relationships. For anyone who has gone through leadership development that works, the importance of the people along the way is obvious. Having supportive people around when you want to change can make a big difference. Positive groups help people make positive changes, especially when the relationships are filled with candor, trust and psychological safety. For leaders, that safety may be crucial for learning to occur. Leaders often feel unsafe in the spotlight, and avoid risk-taking change. Where can you find these relationships? One approach is to find a mentor. Another is to hire an executive coach.

## 7. Building Emotionally Intelligent Organizations

When it comes to leadership, changing a single leader is only the beginning. The rest of the job is to develop a critical mass of resonant leaders and thereby transform how people work together.

### *Parallel Transformations*

The most effective leadership development works hand in hand with parallel transformations in the organizations that those leaders guide. Groups only begin to change when they understand how they work, especially if there is discordance. They must understand what the underlying group norms are, and then develop the ideal vision for the group.

### *The Power of Group Decision-Making*

Group decision-making is superior to that of the brightest individual in the group — unless the group lacks harmony or the ability to cooperate. Even groups with brilliant individuals will make bad decisions in such an environment. In short, groups are smarter than individuals when (and only when) they exhibit the qualities of emotional intelligence. Leaders ignore the power of the group at great cost. You can't assume that the force of your leadership alone is enough to drive people's behavior. Don't make the common mistake of ignoring resonance-building leadership styles and steam-rolling over the team using the commanding and pacesetter styles exclusively. To lead a team effectively, you must address the group reality.

Leaders who have a keen sense of the group's pivotal norms and who are adept at maximizing positive emotions can create highly emotionally intelligent teams.

***Groups are smarter than individuals when (and only when) they exhibit the qualities of emotional intelligence.***

### *Maximizing the Group's Emotional Intelligence*

A group's emotional intelligence requires the same capabilities that an emotionally intelligent individual does — self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. A group expresses its self-awareness by being mindful of shared moods as well as the emotions of its members. Emotions are contagious, and a team leader needs to understand how to keep a bad mood from spreading. For example, imagine a meeting held in an out-of-the way location and a team member arriving late exclaiming that the meeting location is very inconvenient for him. If the member's anger is allowed to fester, it will infect the whole team. But if instead, the leader acknowledges the sacrifice the member is making and thanks him, the anger dissipates. The leader who wants to create an emotionally intelligent team can start by helping the team raise its collective self-awareness. This is the true work of the team leader. Initiate the process by looking at what's really going on in the group. Uncover the team's less productive norms and work with the team to change them.

## 8. Reality and the Ideal Vision

Just as was the case with teams, a leader who wants to change an organization must first understand its reality. Change begins when emotionally intelligent leaders actively question the emotional reality and cultural norms underlying the organization's daily activities and behavior. To create resonance and results, the leader has to pay attention to people's emotions. Even toxic organizations can change.

### *Dynamic Inquiry*

A process called dynamic inquiry can help you discover an organization's emotional reality — what people care about, what is helping them, their group, and the organization to succeed, and what's getting in the way. The process uses focused conversations and open-ended questions intended to get to feelings. Themes become apparent from these conversations, which are then taken to small groups for more discussion. The conversations that ensue about what's right and what's not create momentum. People feel inspired and empowered, willing to work together to address their collective concerns. Once they do, you will be able to help the organization define its ideal vision — one that is in sync with individual hopes and dreams.

## 9. Creating Sustainable Change

How does a leader create sustainable resonance in an organization? Every large organization has pockets of resonance and dissonance. The overall ratio determines the organization's emotional climate and performance. To shift the ratio toward resonance, cultivate a dispersed cadre of emotionally intelligent leaders. To do that, leadership training must be the strategic priority and be managed at the highest level. Commitment must come from the top. That's because new leadership means a new mindset and new behaviors, and in order for these to stick, the organization's culture, systems and processes all need to change. Let's say that as a leader, you get it. You've set the stage by assessing the culture, examining the reality and the ideal. You've created resonance around the idea of change, and you've identified the people who will take top leadership roles.

The next step is to design a process that lets those leaders uncover their own dreams and personal ideals, examine their strengths and their gaps, and use their daily work as a learning laboratory. That process must also be self-directed and include the following elements:

- A tie-in to the organization's culture.
- Seminars emphasizing individual change.
- Learning about emotional competencies.
- Creative learning experiences.
- Relationships that support learning, such as executive coaching.

### **Shoney's Transformation**

The Shoney's restaurant chain had a close-knit group of executives at the top — people who knew each other well, shared history and beliefs, and generally thought they knew how to run their business. In reality, they were an old-boy's network of white male senior executives with an underlying culture that left people of color behind.

All that changed when the company paid \$132 million to settle a class-action lawsuit by employees and applicants who alleged discrimination. A cadre of new leaders have changed the company's culture and broadened opportunities so much that ten years later, the company was listed as one of the top 50 companies for minorities by Fortune magazine.

The change occurred because the lawsuit was a wake-up call regarding the reality of the company's dissonant culture. The new leaders identified an ideal vision that would guide hiring practices, and the organization embraced that vision.