

IN THE LEAD

By CAROL
HYMOWITZ



Business Is Personal, So Managers Need To Harness Emotions

Managers often think they should be impassive and unemotional, and encourage their employees to be the same. But emotions drive performance, and bosses who don't acknowledge their own and others' temperaments can't inspire the best work from their staffs -- or even motivate themselves.

"If we're preoccupied by worry, resentment or boredom, our mental agility sputters," says Daniel Goleman, whose new book, "Social Intelligence," explores how relationships with bosses and colleagues, family and friends, shape our brains and affect our bodies. "Good relationships act like vitamins, while bad ones are like poison -- undermining our cognitive efficiency and creativity."

QUESTION OF THE DAY

• [How much emotion do you want to see from your boss?](#)¹

This isn't news to most employees. Those who have survived layoffs report that

whenever a new round of cuts is announced, productivity and the quality of work suffers. Others who work for intimidating or rancorous bosses say they have learned to be guarded and are reluctant to share information or new ideas.

Many chief executives, on the other hand, are too detached from employees to recognize this. They seem particularly self-absorbed these days, partly as a result of the rapid turnover at top jobs. CEOs who worry their tenure will be brief tend to focus on grabbing as much as they can for themselves -- negotiating huge compensation packages and golden parachutes, or trying to shore up their popularity with directors.

Adroit business leaders know the emotional messages they send through

the company are powerful. If they are arrogant or derisive, they may cause "emotional distress that impairs the brain's mechanism to learn and think clearly," says Mr. Goleman.

At Intuit, the Mountain View, Calif., maker of Quicken, TurboTax and other money-management software, CEO Steve Bennett understands that employees who are unhappy at work won't contribute their best efforts -- on the job or even at home. "It will cause troubles in their personal relationships," he says. He tells his Intuit managers to create a "psychological contract" with every employee, spelling out what is expected of them, how well they are performing and what they must do to advance.

When he joined Intuit six years ago, Mr. Bennett found a company where employees didn't know how to handle differing emotions and opinions. They were afraid to counter one another at meetings and couldn't make decisions without spending hours trying to reach a consensus. He subsequently urged all employees to voice their views frankly and without fear of offending anyone.

"We want everyone to aim for what we call True North objectives -- or better short-term as well as long-term results -- and we want everyone to feel enthused and connected at work," says Mr. Bennett, who spends half of his time coaching employees. "If you accept this contract and want to learn but aren't getting good results, we'll find you a job at the company where you can perform better."

This doesn't mean that CEOs should avoid controversy or protect employees from the stresses of work. They need to challenge subordinates continually to improve their work.

Mr. Bennett doesn't hesitate to give constructive criticism, but avoids angry attacks. At a recent meeting to discuss a possible acquisition, he listened while a senior manager who wasn't on the acquisition team dominated the conversation. He then told him, "You know, you don't know a lot about this."

"I tried to say it in a joking way rather than an angry way," he explains, "but I wanted the others at the meeting to know that even though the

manager was at a higher rank than them, they shouldn't be swayed by him."

After the meeting, Mr. Bennett met privately with the manager to talk further about what had happened. "His feelings were ruffled, but I told him, 'You have a job and doing acquisitions isn't part of it,' " he says.

Campbell Soup CEO Douglas Conant believes in working to focus employees' emotions toward their jobs. He says you have to get employees to "fall in love with your company's agenda." That means being engaged with them personally, helping them to solve problems and recognizing their achievements. "That doesn't mean compromising your standards," he said, or being so sensitive about feelings that you can't dismiss an underperformer, he adds.

As part of his turnaround efforts at Campbell over the past five years, Mr. Conant replaced 300 of the company's top 350 managers. The fact that half of the new leaders came from within sent a message to lower-level employees that they had a shot at promotions. He also spent heavily on the company's condensed-soup line, installing easier-to-access shelving in stores and launching a new line of low-sodium soups, among other things. The changes gave a sense of accomplishment to most employees.

Trying to keep emotions out of the workplace "is like telling the tide not to come in," says Kenneth Eisold, a New York psychotherapist. He advises his patients to seek a balance, and to learn to value themselves for qualities that are distinct from their work. "If your entire value as a person depends on your career success, any work setback or failure will crush you," he says.

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