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# Great Leaders Recognize and Value the Power of Emotions

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Summer internships are a great way to learn. Of course they give you an opportunity to develop the skills you will need to be successful at a chosen career. More importantly, though, they introduce aspiring young professionals to all the nuances of the workplace; that stuff you can only discover by living the 9-to-5 reality.

The story of one summer intern is burning up the Internet these days for just that reason, lessons learned in a painful way. On June 28, the intern posted a question to askamanager.org. He and several other interns, provoked by a strict dress code they felt was unfair — especially since one employee was seen regularly wearing shoes that didn't fit the code — wrote and signed a proposal asking for leeway under the dress code. After submitting their petition, all those who signed it were promptly released from their internship positions. That's right, fired.

Toward the end of his question, in which he seeks guidance for addressing this sudden dismissal, the intern says, "We weren't even given a chance to discuss it. The worst part is that just before the meeting ended, one of the managers told us that the worker who was allowed to disobey the dress code was a former soldier who lost her leg and was therefore given permission to wear whatever kind of shoes she could walk in. You can't even tell, and if we had known about this we would have factored it into our argument."

This last line has prompted outcry from business bloggers. Take, for example, *Inc.* columnist Justin Bariso. In a piece published on July 4, he says, "After acknowledging the situation of the colleague who was given an exception because of her physical condition, the reader writes: "You can't even tell, and if we had known about this we would have factored it into our argument." Man oh man. If you read my column, you know I write a lot about the role emotional intelligence (EI or EQ, for emotional intelligence quotient) plays in the world of business. EQ involves the ability to recognize and understand your emotions, and to use that information to guide decision-making. Building EQ can prove very useful by shaping our communication in a way that gets people to listen with a more open mind."

Both Bariso and the askamanager responder Alison Green go on in their posts to make some great points about how emotional intelligence could have helped the intern in this situation. Check out the toolbar accompanying this story for "Related Links" to those articles. In the meantime, we want to address some of the basics, like why emotional intelligence is so fundamental to your success in business.

In June, Edward Yu, a partner in the health industries strategy practice for PwC, a professional services firm with 200,000 employees around the world, presented on this very topic during our Seminar for High School Educators at Wharton San Francisco. Yu, who mentors many young PwC professionals, talked about what corporate executives want to see in young leaders, and why emotional intelligence tops the list. "What allows young people to be successful is your ability to manage behaviors that promote getting along with others," said Yu.

Here are a few valuable takeaways from Yu's presentation on leadership and emotional intelligence:

- Relationships matter. People who are going to be successful in the job market are those who are able to have live, interpersonal interactions with people. Plenty of people will type at each other. But those who can develop a relationship with someone will be successful. You must have emotional intelligence in order to develop relationships and trust.
- Empathy is the most crucial leadership skill. Simply put, empathy is the ability to communicate (send and receive messages) and lead by understanding others' thoughts, views and feelings. To better understand empathy, think

of the African word Sawubona, which means “I ‘see’ you,” said Yu. “When you meet somebody, you really see them — not just because you notice them, but because you respect them and understand where they come from.” Empathy – connecting with a coworker or a client on a deeper level than just quoting numbers or business studies – is extremely important to effective leadership.

- Situational leadership demands both technical and emotional skill. Effective leaders understand the situation and lead accordingly. How well can you read a room? “When you meet with somebody, you have to figure out very quickly how to make connections,” explained Yu. “This extends to how you look at non-verbal cues.” What is the vibe, and how will you adapt your leadership approach to meet it?
- Emotional intelligence requires self-management. In other words, capable leaders stay calm under pressure and are resilient. Resilience is especially important in that you must learn to persevere through failure. You may want to throw your hands up in despair, but the best approach is to take constructive criticism, learn from your mistakes, and move on. “Rapid failure means rapid learning, and that means refining your strategy. What didn’t work and what would you do as a result?” said Yu. “Students who can fail and learn will be much more successful.”
- Getting along means getting ahead. Strong leaders don’t command and control, they connect. Relationship-building, social skill, empathy, collaboration and awareness of yourself and others are all key components of emotional intelligence. Laura Guillen, professor of organizational behavior at ESMT in Berlin, says, “EI allows individuals to engage in interpersonal processes, thus promoting getting-along behaviors at work, which in turn impact getting-ahead leadership behaviors.”
- RULER is a true measure of emotional intelligence. Remember this guide as you work on building your emotional intelligence skills for the workplace:

**R**=Recognizing emotions by paying attention to facial expressions, vocal tones and body language.

**U**=Understanding emotions by being able to identify the causes and consequences of various emotions.

**L**=Labeling emotions and developing a vocabulary to express a full range of emotions.

**E**=Expressing emotions and learning to do so with different people, contexts and cultures.

**R**=Regulating emotions by developing strategies to manage your own emotions and help others to manage theirs.

Bottom line: it’s not enough in the workplace to choose the right emoji for how you are feeling in the moment. You need to explore emotions – both yours and others – more deeply if you want to begin building your path to great leadership.