

Relational Intelligence™

- What's Your RQ? -

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You've heard of IQ (how smart you are). You may have even heard of EQ (your emotional/social intelligence). But, have you heard of RQ (relational intelligence)? It is our contention that an individual's RQ, more than any other factor that differentiates between average leaders and truly exceptional leaders.

Over the years, we have worked with thousands of leaders from almost every industry, both profit and non-profit and at all levels. The majority of these leaders (especially at higher levels) are highly intelligent... but being smart has not always guaranteed their success. In a study based on a national databank of 60,000 executives, having high levels of intelligence was found to play no significant role in determining a leader's effectiveness on the job. Indeed, many highly intelligent individuals have derailed as leaders. Why?

Well, some say it is because they lack EQ (emotional intelligence). In the decade of the 1990's, much has been said and written about a leader's emotional intelligence and how emotions and intuition play a critical role in a leader's success (or failure). EQ also emphasizes that leaders need an ability to "connect" with those they are trying to lead or influence.

In reality, leadership requires using both the head (IQ) and the heart (EQ). However, neither IQ nor EQ in and of themselves can guarantee successful leadership. Make no mistake, they are both necessary. However, the value of IQ and EQ can only be truly realized when they are utilized in the framework of **Relational Intelligence**.

A Relational Approach To Leadership

Our approach to leadership isn't so much about the traits and competencies a "leader" needs to be successful. It is about the **RELATIONSHIP**, over time, between the leader and those the leader wants to influence and motivate (their employees or other leaders). It is only within the *critical context* of the ongoing **RELATIONSHIP** that leaders can make the most of both their IQ and their EQ.

To some extent, business has acknowledged the value of building and maintaining relationships, but most of these approaches focus on relationships with customers: relationship banking, relationship marketing, etc. What has received far less attention is a focus on the relationships leaders can forge with their employees and with other leaders. It is within a relational approach that truly great leadership can manifest itself.

What is Relational Intelligence (RQ)?

Relational intelligence (RQ) is a leader's ability to accurately perceive and utilize the dynamics of day-to-day interpersonal interactions with others **and** understand how these interactions impact the relationship over time.

On a micro level: A leader's IQ and EQ do not operate independently or in a vacuum. Rather, IQ and EQ combine to come into play within a relational context where the history of a particular relationship greatly impacts the behavior exhibited during any specific interaction within that relationship. In other words, past relational interactions affect current interactions, which, in turn, affect future interactions. Thus, the relationships leaders build over time become very significant elements in determining the success or failure of any particular individual interaction the leader has with employees or other leaders.

On a macro level: The relational dynamics inherent in individual interpersonal interactions become magnified when applied in the group setting of a team or organization. A leader's interactions with individual members of a group are combined and translated into a collective relational framework that becomes applicable across all members of the group. Thus, leaders not only maintain individual relationships with employees and other leaders, but they also maintain a macro-level relationship with their entire organization.

Conceptualizing Relational Intelligence (RQ)

Every relational interaction is actually 3-in-1. Within any one interaction, a leader must be aware of:

1. **The Relational Prologue**: the history of past interactions that have occurred in the relationship.
2. **The Current Relational Interaction**: the issues and dynamics at play within the context of the interaction at hand.
3. **The Relational Epilogue**: the impact that the current interaction, as well as all past interactions, will have on future interactions in the ongoing relationship.

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The Relational Intelligence (RQ) Approach



A leader's most important power today is influence... not command and control. A leader must be aware that every interaction (both large and small) either *adds to* or *detracts from* the influence they have in any ongoing relationship. However, it is during major interactions where relational intelligence becomes the most critical and where leaders need to place a strong emphasis on long-term win/win scenarios. One of the keys to relational intelligence is knowing that there are times when you will want to leave something on the "relationship table" to maintain the vitality of the long-term ongoing relationship.

Given the hectic pace of day-to-day, on-the-job interactions, leaders don't always take the time to think about RQ and what long-term effects their interactions might have. What to do?

Relational Intelligence (RQ): Getting Started

All of us have had the experience as we drift off to sleep at night of reliving a particular relational interaction that did not go well and wonder... why? The relational framework presented above might provide some insights. Did the relational prologue perhaps affect the current interaction in some way that you had not considered at that moment? Was the interaction tempered in terms of a long-term win/win scenario for both parties in the ongoing relationship? These questions are what RQ is all about.

In addition, there are three other considerations that might help you leverage your RQ when interacting with others.

1. Be Aware Of Stamp Collecting: On occasion, you may be party to an interaction where an individual's reaction to the current situation is far more volatile than the situation would appear to justify. These excessive reactions are frequently not an accurate reflection of the current interaction but a result of *past interactions*. Like collecting stamps, people can collect issues from past interactions that they never make known to the other person in the relationship but have internalized within the relational prologue. In this way, a relatively minor interaction can sometimes be the final stamp that "completes the relational stamp book" and triggers a much stronger response than you anticipated.

2. Use The Correct Psychological Currency: When trying to foster a win/win scenario during any particular

interaction, you, as a leader, must take care that your contributions to the interaction are actually valued by the other individual. In many instances, leaders have gone to great lengths to give something to the relationship that the other person doesn't really value (i.e., they offer them the *wrong* psychological currency). In order to know what is actually valued and desired by the other individual in the relationship, leaders must be able to engage in clear and open communication. Sometimes, this will involve putting aside personal agendas and issues so that you can really listen to what the other individual is trying to communicate. However, take care to not only listen to the words being spoken, but also listen between the lines. In reality, only 7% of communication is language. The other 93% of communication is expressed non-verbally. So, be sure to listen to the total message being communicated.

3. Elevate Interactions To The Level Of Agreement:

If a disagreement arises during an interaction, the standard approach is to delve deeper into the details to support and defend your position against the other individual. A more advantageous approach is that if disagreement is arising from the details of an interaction, elevate the discussion back to a level of agreement as to why the interaction was perceived as mutually beneficial to both parties in first place. From that position of major of agreement, then continue working on specific issues. Never hesitate to go back up to the level of mutual agreement whenever you reach an apparent impasse.

High RQ = Win/Win Relationships

Leadership really is a combination of IQ (the head) and EQ (the heart). But both IQ and EQ only reach their greatest potential when they are employed within a relational framework.

Relational intelligence requires that, rather than trying to gain the most benefit out of every interaction, there are times that leaders will want to focus on the long-term benefits of the ongoing relationship... even if that means sacrificing an immediate benefit in order to maximize the relationship over the long-term. Exceptional leaders use their relational intelligence to make the most of all relationships, even ones where mutual benefit can only be found in ending the relationship. However, the primary focus for leaders with high levels of RQ is to build and maintain long-term win/win relationships. ♦