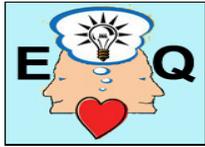


Ockham's Razor, EQ, And Management¹

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In the 14th Century, a Franciscan logician, Father William of Ockham, wrote: “entities must not be multiplied beyond necessity.” Today, this is known as *Ockham's Razor*. In plain English, it means: *the simplest explanation is more likely the correct one*.

I've often thought about *Ockham's Razor* as I've studied the various theories and concepts described in numerous books and articles about psychology and organizational behavior. So many theories. So many concepts. It almost seems that the only way a professional in these fields can gain a reputation is by inventing a new theory, a new approach to an old problem.

Maybe we should all be listening to Ockham when we ponder the complexities of behavior in an organization. It seems to me that it all revolves around two major concepts: *self* and *relationships*.



William of Ockham

My central premise has always been that people are the most important resource of any organization. Individual people, each with his or her own personality, interacting with other people in pursuit of an organizational mission. It thus seems reasonable to me that the more those individuals know about themselves and the more capable they are relating to others, the more successful will be the organization.

In 1995, Daniel Goleman published his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, which comes closest to this point of view. In his book, Goleman talks about EQ, the emotional equivalent of IQ. Whereas IQ refers to intellectual intelligence, EQ refers to *Emotional Intelligence*. It focuses on our ability to be aware of and deal with our emotions and the emotions of others.

In 2002, Goleman listed four elements of *Emotional Intelligence*, two dealing with self and two dealing with others: (1) *Self-Awareness*; (2) *Self-Management*; (3) *Social Awareness*; and (4) *Relationship Management*. Each of these is profoundly important to organizational functioning.

Managers play a critical role in both modeling and promoting *Emotional Intelligence*. Following are several tips to help them do so.

1. Self-Awareness



Self-Awareness is the bedrock of *Emotional Intelligence*. EI starts with you being aware of your thoughts and emotions and how those are affecting your behaviors. This means self-observation and self-reflection. It means knowing yourself at a deep level. Ultimately, it means feeling comfortable with yourself and your level of self-esteem.

Following are tips for you, as a Manager, for modeling and promoting Self-Awareness:

- ◆ Challenge your thoughts and evaluate whether they are working for you at the moment.
- ◆ Practice self-reflection—what you are thinking, what you are feeling, what your intentions are, and what you are expecting from others. Be honest with yourself.
- ◆ Be clear to yourself about what you are thinking. What you are thinking will determine how you feel. Experiment with changing your thoughts in a given situation and notice how you feel differently by doing so.²

¹ From: http://www.arniedahlke.com/101130_EQ_And_Ockham's_Razor.pdf Please take a moment to look at Arnie's site: <http://www.arniedahlke.com>

² Read more about managing your thoughts and feelings at http://www.arniedahlke.com/You_Are_What_You_Speak.pdf and http://www.arniedahlke.com/Beware_Of_Hurt_Feelings.pdf, respectively.

- ◆ At the same time, learn how to be more aware of your feelings through their physical manifestations. For example, notice your face getting warm when you are embarrassed of or a churning stomach when you are nervous.

2. Self-Management



Once you are aware of thoughts and emotions, the next step is managing them, dealing with them in constructive ways. You manage them by using your self-awareness to guide you toward dealing with situations productively.

Following are tips for you, as a Manager, for modeling and promoting Self-Management:

- ◆ Be aware that every behavior of yours has an impact or a potential impact on other people in the organization. Guided by this understanding, take the time to think through any decisions you make and any communications you have with others before acting.
- ◆ Be aware of how your feelings are affecting your behavior and think about how you may handle a situation differently. For example, an employee may disappoint you by doing something wrong. Instead of blaming the employee, treat the situation as a problem to be solved, as a learning opportunity for the employee—as a coaching opportunity for you as a manager. In other words, turn this situation into a constructive experience.
- ◆ Be aware of your expectations. Many times, we end up frustrated or disappointed because someone doesn't act the way we think they should act. The other person is a different person than you. He or she may not look at the world the same way you do and may not respond to situations the same way you do. Keep this image in mind: A rabbit may be able to jump but you can't expect it to fly.



3. Social Awareness



Being socially aware means recognizing and understanding the emotions of others, being sensitive to their feelings and concerns. It means being able to analyze a relationship so that you can navigate a productive course through it. It means communicating at appropriate levels and in appropriate ways so that information is exchanged effectively. It means being aware and respectful of the perspectives of other people.

Following are tips for you, as a Manager, for modeling and promoting Social Awareness:

- ◆ Learn how to actively listen to others. This means truly hearing what other people are saying and understanding why they are saying it.
- ◆ Listen with empathy, This means you are able to comprehend the other person's feelings, to identify with them as much as you can.
- ◆ Be constantly aware of your tone of voice and your physical expressions and gestures so they don't communicate negative feelings.

4. Relationship Management



Managing relationships means effectively communicating with others with empathy and understanding, building mutual trust, constructively handling disagreements, and creating and sustaining strong relationships. Remember that effective communication is at the heart of good relationships.

Following are tips for you, as a Manager, for modeling and promoting Relationship-Management:

- ◆ Avoid critical words, ill-advised gestures, or misunderstood meanings when you communicate. These can lead to very nonproductive outcomes.
- ◆ Practice open, honest communication, and let people know that you expect the same from them. Make it safe for them by assuring and demonstrating to them that there will be no negative consequences for their being open with you.
- ◆ Share information with your people and involve them in important decision-making. Help them feel an active, collaborative ownership of their work.

These are just a few tips for improving your EQ. Practice them daily.

By developing your *Emotional Intelligence* in the above four areas, you will find yourself becoming more productive and successful at what you do.

You will also help others to be more productive and successful.

