



# Excel Leader Advisory Letter

ISSUED BY THE EXCEL LEADERSHIP GROUP

April 2010

## Excel's Mission Statement

To help business leaders achieve higher profits by creating a high performance culture and unleashing the talents of all associates.

## Thought for April

“What does it mean to be a leader? The first natural law of leadership answers this fundamental question: A leader has followers. No leader exists without gaining the support of others. Yet this core element of what it means to be a leader is typically overlooked.”

-Warren Blank



Effective leaders create their own high performance work environment based on high levels of employee engagement and discretionary effort. Their cultures in turn contribute directly to producing sustainable world-class results and higher profits. Therefore, despite the current economic climate and all its related challenges to your bottom line, you should continue investing in the development of your own leadership skills and those of your management team.

Last month, I shared an article on emotional intelligence that I wrote for the February 2010 issue of [InterBusiness Issues](#), a Central Illinois monthly business magazine. This month, I would like to share another article that I contributed to the April 2010 issue that further discusses this topic. Given the important connection between emotional intelligence, effective leadership and business results, I thought it timely to include in this month's advisory letter. Enjoy.

In the February issue of IBI, I wrote about emotional intelligence (or EQ) and its impact on effective leadership, as well as business performance and results. I mentioned one of the most popular EQ assessment tools, the EI Profile, which measures emotional intelligence competencies in four quadrants: 1) Self-awareness; 2) Self-management; 3) Social awareness and 4) Relationship management. This month's article shares tips and advice for how you can improve your performance in quadrant 1) Self-awareness. Future articles in this series will focus on improving performance in the other three EQ quadrants.

As a reminder, here's the short version of what the EI Profile assessment tool measures by quadrant:

1. Self-Awareness—The ability to recognize one's emotions, internal states, preferences, resources and intuition
2. Self-Management—The ability to manage one's emotions and impulses, and adapt to changing circumstances
3. Social Awareness—The ability to sense, understand, and react to others' feelings, needs and concerns while comprehending social networks
4. Relationship Management—The ability to inspire, influence and develop others while managing conflict

1) Self-Awareness: Where Increasing EQ Begins

Enhancing our self-awareness begins the journey to achieving higher emotional intelligence, or increasing our EQ. We simply must be aware of our own emotions before we can manage them effectively. Self-awareness of our emotions also helps us to empathize, so we can better understand what others are experiencing.

People with high emotional self-awareness know how they feel at any given time, can identify the source of those feelings and can recognize how the feelings manifest in physical symptoms, such as sweaty palms and headaches. Among the many methods for enhancing emotional self-awareness, I often recommend these three to my coaching clients as a place to start:

1. "Check in" with yourself. Set aside time during your day to assess your emotional state. Ask yourself a series of questions and answer them honestly. For example, you might ask: What am I feeling? What is the source? How are these feelings manifesting themselves in my body? Am I experiencing symptoms, like: tensing in my shoulders; teeth clenching; feeling worn down; anxiety; fear; euphoria?

2. Label your emotions. Once you determine what and how you feel, if you learn to label these emotions, it can help you identify the source or "trigger" of negative feelings. Some common examples of labels for emotions include anger, fear, surprise and passion. I suggest writing down the labels for your emotions, along with your thoughts on what you think triggered a particular emotion. Because once you can identify the source of a feeling and see it on paper, it becomes clearer what you need to do to improve your response to a trigger.

3. Be in the moment. "Listen" to what your emotions and feelings might be telling you at any given moment. You can learn to use the information you "hear" from within to gain added insight and guidance in working through an issue or problem.

### Accurate Self-Assessment is Key

From a leadership point of view, it is crucial for an organization's leaders to possess high levels of emotional self-awareness. In other words, effective leaders need an acute understanding of how feelings can affect their behavior, mood and performance—and how their moods can impact others in the organization, as well as the organization itself.

To measure their self-awareness and other EQ factors, leaders need to honestly assess their emotional intelligence shortcomings and strengths. There are a number of proven EQ measurement tools available, including the EI Profile's four quadrant method.

Leaders can also self-assess their respective EQ using less formal methods. For example, to evaluate their self-awareness, they can proactively seek feedback from others, including those they manage. When leaders go looking for candid feedback from others, it's imperative to remain open and receptive to what they hear—without being defensive. They also want to thank those offering the feedback for their candor.

Actions like these help leaders create a culture, an environment where honest and open feedback is not only accepted, but expected. They also help show a commitment to employees' personal and professional development that makes learning, growth and continuous self-improvement a priority.

### Tips for Increasing "Personal Power"

Accurate self-assessment of our self-awareness can increase personal power. A good way to think of personal power is to equate it with self-confidence. In other words, it is an inner belief in our ability to attain our goals and achieve the things we want in life. People possessing a highly developed level of personal power believe they can set the direction of their lives—and they do.

Here are a few coaching tips that can help you build your personal power:

1. Make a list of your strengths. Keep a journal to track your significant accomplishments.

Ask yourself what you excel at to identify your strengths. Writing them down helps you to imagine how you feel when using one of your strengths and succeeding. Remember, emotions and feelings, especially positive ones, can be powerful motivators for future performance.

2. Ask for feedback. Don't hesitate to ask for input about your actions from a trusted colleague or your coach. Their input can prove invaluable in helping you recognize how well you handle various situations—and point to areas where you can grow even stronger.

3. Move on from failures. Don't dwell on what you consider a failure as lasting or permanent. Recognize what you can learn from a mistake, and then take that information and apply it to future situations.

As always, I encourage you to contact me anytime at [mike@excelleadership.net](mailto:mike@excelleadership.net) with your comments and questions. Also, if I can be of assistance with your leadership needs, please contact me. We'll talk again in May. Be well and best regards.

Join our Web-based “community” devoted to open and honest discussions on topics related to leadership challenges and solutions. To join, simply visit [TheExcelLeadershipGroup.net](http://TheExcelLeadershipGroup.net) and click on “Community.”



phone: 309-370-5040

e-mail: [mike@excelleadership.net](mailto:mike@excelleadership.net)

website: [www.excelleadership.net](http://www.excelleadership.net)

*Experience what coaching can do for you and others  
on your company's leadership team.*