

What makes a leader?

Emotional Intelligence

When asked to define the ideal leader, many would emphasize traits such as intelligence, toughness, determination, and vision—the qualities traditionally associated with leadership. Such skills and smarts are necessary but insufficient qualities for the leader. Often left off the list are softer, more personal qualities—but they are also essential. Although a certain degree of analytical and technical skill is a minimum requirement for success, studies indicate that emotional intelligence may be the key attribute that distinguishes outstanding performers from those who are merely adequate.

Psychologist and author Daniel Goleman first brought the term “emotional intelligence” to a wide audience with his 1995 book of the same name, and Goleman first applied the concept to business with this 1998 classic Harvard Business Review article. In his research at nearly 200 large, global companies, Goleman found that truly effective leaders are distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence. Without it, a person can have first-class training, an incisive mind, and an endless supply of good ideas, but he still won’t be a great leader.

The chief components of emotional intelligence—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill—can sound un-business-like, but Goleman, co-chair of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, based at Rutgers University, found direct ties between emotional intelligence and measurable business results. The notion of emotional intelligence and its relevance to business has continued to spark debate over the past six years, but Goleman’s article remains the definitive reference on the subject, with a detailed discussion of each component of emotional intelligence, how to recognize it in potential leaders, how and why it connects to performance, and how it can be learned.

Harvard Business Review 2004

Daniel Goleman is Co-Director of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations at Rutgers University, co-author of *Primal Leadership: Leading with Emotional Intelligence* and author of *The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights*, and *Leadership: Selected Writings*. His latest book is *A Force for Good: The Dalai Lama’s Vision for Our World*.