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## THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### What makes a leader?

The ability to lead is highly coveted in business and politics as well as in academia. In fact, there are currently over 1,300 books in print (in English) on the subject illustrating its popularity.

The most scholarly research on leadership has been conducted by Daniel Goleman of Harvard. He is widely recognized in both business and academia as the leading expert on the subject.

He has even addressed the most controversial questions such as, "Are leaders born or made?" "Can leadership be learned?" and "Can anyone lead unless their constituency is willing to follow?"

He found that all effective leaders share one attribute, emotional intelligence. Additionally, he defined and characterized the five components of emotional intelligence. His *HBR* paper\* provides guidance on how to recognize them (helpful when filling executive/managerial positions).

He found that many qualities traditionally associated with leadership such as intelligence, toughness, determination, vision, and ambition are indeed necessary, but only as a foundation. These attributes, while important, are in fact fairly common in executives. The one that distinguishes the most outstanding leaders from the "also rans" is emotional intelligence.

Its components include:

- **Self awareness**, the ability to recognize and understand one's moods, emotions, and drives as well as their affect on others.
- **Self regulation**, the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods. It also includes the propensity to suspend judgment and to think before acting.

• **Motivation**, not only a passion for work, but a passion to achieve for reasons that go beyond money or status.

• **Empathy**, the ability to understand the emotional makeup of others. Additionally, it includes skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions.

• **Social skill**, includes proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, as well as the ability to find common ground and build rapport.

The next question is usually "Can emotional intelligence be learned or improved upon?" One thing is certain, emotional intelligence increases with age. The old-fashioned word for this phenomenon is maturity. Even with maturity, however, most executives can benefit from additional education and practice.

Unfortunately most educational programs which claim to teach leadership are a waste of time. These programs simply focus on the wrong part of the brain, the neocortex. They focus on increasing awareness which presumably alters behavior...but not always. Mr. Goleman's research proves that the limbic system should be the focus of this education. It learns best through motivation, extended practice, and repeated feedback. This takes much more time than conventional educational programs, months not days, as some "unlearning" must be done. Enlisting the help of a private coach is sometimes necessary.

**The point.** Emotional intelligence is the key to leadership. It cannot and will not improve without a sincere desire and concerted effort.

**Suggested reading.** "*Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*," ISBN# 1559277440 by Daniel Goleman

\* "*What Makes A Leader*," *HBR* 2003

