

Emotional Intelligence in Superior Knowledge Work

Timo Kultanen

Information Society Research Center
University of Tampere, Finland

Abstract

Last years have been a period of strong growth in Finnish economy. During the same period knowledge work has increased. It has been quite easy to sell knowledge work and products. This engagement period seem to over for this time. The knowledge work field is going to meet with “normalisation” process which means that for instance the superior work demands and challenges are increasing.

In changing and harder competition situation the emotional intelligence skills are coming more important. The concept of emotional intelligence can be divided in five areas: 1. Self awareness – skills which determines how a person manages him/herself, 2. Managing emotions – skills which direct person’s emotions, desires and resources, 3. Motivating – area of skills which are emotional properties to make it easier to achieve goals, 4. Empathy – skills which determine person’s ability to manage with other people, 5. Social skills – important in making desired reactions in other people.

The purpose of the study: 1. To describe the impact of the skills of emotional intelligence of superiors on knowledge workers’ motivation and engagement, 2. To build an emotional intelligence development program to knowledge work superiors, 3. To follow and measure the impacts.

Proposed results: 1. Emotional intelligence skills area is one of the key factors in successful superior knowledge work, 2. By identifying these development areas and then developing them a superior is able to remarkable development in these skills, 3. Developing these skills leads to better organisation atmosphere and better productivity of work.

Keywords : emotional intelligence, knowledge superior work, action research, productivity, difference of people, development

Introduction to the Topic Area

Last years have been a period of strong growth in Finnish economy. The amount of the knowledge intensive companies has increased a lot. It has meant that knowledge work has increased. It seems to be so that this development still continues. We talk about the new business and in Finland specially it means the growth and success of Finnish telecommunication cluster. The specialists in knowledge work are often quite young with a quite short work history. Also they are mostly well educated and often the interest to knowledge work has come from for instance their hobby. In fact the knowledge work is quite special because many of them have come as professionals in their 20's with quite long history on knowledge work area. Also it seems to so that a lot of the workers as well as the superiors have worked in other work areas and have only quite thin experience in knowledge work.

It has also been the situation that the knowledge work companies have had to compete of getting the best workers. Workers have known their value and for instance the salaries have been quite high. Now the situation is changing because of the market situation. The engagement period seems to be over and normalisation process is starting.

The normalisation means that knowledge work becoming more like other work. The high demand of knowledge work and products has lead to the situation in which selling the work and products has been quite easy. Also it seems to be so that there are a lot of knowledge work companies in which there has not been big need to develop the superior work.

Superior work has become more significant element in building and supporting the well-being of subordinates. The superior's mode of action and social behaviour style are important factors from the point of view of atmosphere and productivity. Many studies have shown that communication skills are one of the key areas in superior work and specially in specialist organisations. Superior work can be seen also as a social process.

The superior work seems also to become more demanding in different points of views. As a superior you have to have good skills in several areas. You have to make goal settings and have many kind of tools to achieve them, you have to have skills to avoid stress and to live with continuing pressure, you have to maintain discipline and orders, you have to motivate, to manage time in continuing busy conditions, to make successful recruitment, to manage in changing environment etc. And you have to make it better tomorrow than yesterday.

The tightening competition means that the successful organisations have to be more productive. The knowledge work superiors have to have the skills to make the workers do their job more productively and the same time to maintain and develop their well-being.

The new economy companies have to adapt their personnel strategies to new situations in which the competition for the the best and key workers is becoming more strict. The social atmosphere and comfort are becoming more important elements in knowledge work places. New technics of information and communication give the possibility to make working more mobile and less dependent on work place. Is distance work really significantly increasing?

The superior work is changing specially in knowledge work. We can say that the leadership skills are becoming more important. What kind of things do the knowledge workers and superiors expect from the superiors? We can look at some telework companies cases. How did the superiors and workers see superior work.

In a middle size new media company the general results were as follows: The possibility to plan your work and time tables was important. The second important thing was open discussion atmosphere. The directors of the company set and told about the goals and strategies but also workers were asked to tell their opinions and feelings concerning the goals and strategies. The third important thing was feedback given by superiors.

In a middle size internet service company the main results were partly different. Goal setting and strategy information were criticised. The point in goal setting was that goal setting was not clear and rapid enough. Specially workers appreciated assertiveness. Also in this company one result was that one should have the permission to plan one's work. In both of these cases the relationship between workers and superiors were quite close and companionable.

The superior has different kind of tasks. One of them is to create motivation and it's base. It means that the superior has to have some understanding of their subordinates' different social styles, different values, different knowledge levels, different self confidences, different needs, different strengths etc. Also the superior should be able to decrease social and work problems. Superiors has also the task to create co-operation, enthusiastic spirits and strengthen the collective identity. In all these kind of superior tasks the emotional intelligence skill areas are important.

Frame of Reference

This study's frame of reference is based on two different areas. The main reference is the emotional intelligence thinking. The secondary reference is the bio-social theory.

The concept and the idea of emotional intelligence became well-known 1995 by D.Goleman's book Emotional Intelligence. P.Salovey and J.D.Mayer used the term in 1990 in their book Emotional Intelligence: Imagination, Cognition and Personality. But the real emotional intelligence pioneer is said to be psychologist Reuven Bar-On who studied in 1980's the differences of men and women in different cultures. Quite close to the emotional intelligence concept is also H.Gardner's 1983 theory "seven different kinds of intelligence". Gardner says that intelligence concept includes traditional mathematical and verbal intelligence but also social ability and the knowledge of person's own inner world.

The roots of emotional intelligence concept are seen to be in E.L.Klondyke's book Intelligence and it's uses. The main concept in this study was Social Intelligence which is quite close to Emotional Intelligence concept. Emotional intelligence is also almost the same concept as what has been called personal intelligence.

One root for emotional intelligence concept is also A.Damasio's book "Descartes' Error", in which the author try to point that by brain physiology arguments is possible to explain that emotions have the most important role in most of the reasonable decision making. Damasio presents a case in which a businessman was not able to make reasonable decision making after his brain area responsible to emotions was destroyed. Thought his intelligence had remained ok. He made the same mistakes case by case. What ver happened he did not learned to be careful etc. Psychological tests gave the result that the man had lost his ability to feel emotions. So the emotion area has a significant role to evaluate reasonable alternatives and in learning by experience.

In book Emotional Intelligence (1995) D.Goleman says that the comprehension of intelligence based on abstract thinking is inadequate. The traditional IQ is not sufficient enough to explain the success of people in life or in work life. Goleman says Emotional Intelligence is more effective in explaining the success. Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence can be seen as a collection of theories from several researchers. As a criticism we could also say hat Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence is a popular scientific or easy to understand concept.

Goleman's concept of emotional intelligence is not sufficient enough to describe the success in work life because it is too thin to explain the success. But it is one of the interesting ways to look at intelligence and specially to the elements of successful superior work. We can say that emotional intelligence is not the only thing to success but there is no need to question it's value as an important element in success in superior work. It seems to be so that one of the most important things and skills in leading people is to understand people and the importance of understanding different kind of people. A good leader has to to be able to understand that people are motivated by their values. And to understand that, you have to understand that people are different and appreciate different kind of things.

Emotional intelligence could be defined as follows: First the ability to recognise different feelings and emotions in yourself as well as in other people, secondly the ability to motivate yourself and ability of effective management of your own states of emotions and thirdly the effective management of the states of emotions between other people.

The concept of emotional intelligence can be divided in five areas:

1. Self awareness, which means the ability to notice perceptions of yourself. It means also the abilities to recognise your emotions in real time. We can also talk about self understanding. This is the base for successful decision making. The real knowledge of your emotions gives a trusted feeling in what kind of consequences follow from different choices. The root of priority is here.

How do your emotions impact your performance. What do you think? From different things. This area includes also the knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses and also the evaluation of things person has done and the ability to read feedback and the ability to learn from the feedback.

These skills determine how do you manage with yourself.

2. Managing Emotions, which means mostly self discipline. Can a person manage his/her desires and the other side can a person manage his/her anxious emotions. It includes also the skills to manage the emotions of angry, fear and depression. This ability or skill helps a man to avoid emotional over reaction and primitive reaction. This is important because these over reactions and primitive reactions destroy our discrimination. We can say that if a human is in not controlled emotional situation, he/she is not the best one to make important decisions. As well managing emotions can include the "courage" to change your point of view and to think for the truthful of the truths a person have.

Managing emotions is also important in the situations in which he/she is carrying worries, troubles, irritability etc. As well is quite clear that worried and irritable superior is not the best one to motivate subordinates or to maintain a good atmosphere. If a superior do not manage his/her own emotions, it is not very probable that he/she is good in understanding the complicated emotion net of the subordinates.

These skills direct your emotions, desires and resources.

3. Motivating oneself, which include three different areas: The first one is initiative and optimism, which mean the ability to catch the things with optimistic emotions. This is important in situations where we meet difficulties. The second one is engagement, which means the adaptation and acceptance of organisation's goals. The third one is ambition, which means the desire to develop yourself. Finally the motivation area means how to find the power to make the motivation possible.

These skills are the emotional properties, which make it easier to achieve goals.

4. Empathy, which means the understanding other people and to feel their feelings and emotions. It also means that you should understand the needs of other people and the ability to see different people as a strength. The empathic superiors has the perceptive faculty to draw conclusions from small signals what do the subordinates want or need. The superiors with low empathy are not good in perception small signals. This means that the empathic superiors know better "what's going on" in the workplace. Empathic superiors are also discreet. They have the skill to avoid hurting the emotions of other people.

These skills determine how do we manage with other people.

5. Social skills, which can be described as different skill areas: human relationship handling, effectiveness, understanding of nets importance, communication skills, starting changes, conflict management, leaderships and ability to change. The superiors with high level social skills have the ability to use these skills in leading people, in persuading, in negotiations and in team work.

The social skills area includes also the understanding of the difference of people in their behaviour, values, beliefs etc. This is important because the motivating factors vary. Superior should understand the short period motivators and also the long period motivators of different people. A superior should understand his/her own behaviours impact to other people and have the ability to make changes when the situation demand changes. In communication skills this means that the most important thing in communication is not the real message but the impact and reaction it makes.

These skills are important in making desired reactions in people.

By Goleman these are the skills to manage our emotions and this management is the most important key to success. Goleman tells several cases in which the lack or insufficient emotional intelligence skills has been reason to the failure in important situations. Organisations and managers with good emotional intelligence skills are more successful in their work.

The secondary reference is the bio-social theory. This theory is based on the idea that people are different via two different ways. First people are different because of their biological background. This means that one part of human's behaviour comes from his/her genetics and this part is quite permanent. So we could say that this genetic part makes some characteristics to the person's nature. What is the role of this genetic part is not known. Most of the nature of a human being comes apparently from the person's history and past and on-going social life. It seems to be so that this bio-social nature determines our behaviour. It also seems to be so that our bio-social nature determine at least some of our strengths and also weaknesses also in emotional intelligence skills.

The bio-social theory does not claim that a human's nature and characteristics are determined to be the same the whole life. But we could think that in a point of time, in a point life everybody has his/her own individual social style. And it means we all have some elements in our behaviour which are not the best in some situations? Emotional intelligence skills development could give the keys to make changes which could be needed to better success.

Frame of Reference Figure

Emotional intelligence skills in superior work in engagement and motivating

The importance of EI skills	Social styles	Skills of EI
a. from the point of subordinates b. from the point of superiors c. doers motivation d. analytical empathy	a.dominating b.boyant social skills	self awareness managing emotions
Evaluating by interviewing the social behaviour style of the superiors		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self evaluating - 360 degree evaluating (subordinates evaluate also) 		
Learning of Emotional Intelligence Skills		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal Superior Development Program - Superior Development program 		
Measurement of the impact of the Program		

Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is

1. to describe the impact of the skills of emotional intelligence of superiors on knowledge workers' motivation and engagement
2. to build a emotional intelligence development program to superiors
3. to follow and measure the impacts

The research question are as follows:

1. How does the personnel see the importance of the superiors' skills of emotional intelligence from the point of motivation and engagement
2. What are the most important superior's emotional intelligence skills from the point of knowledge worker
3. How do the superior's self evaluation and the workers' evaluation differ from each other
4. What are the skills of emotional intelligence that each superior should develop personally
5. What are the practical tools to develop the emotional intelligence skills
6. The practical results: how did the emotional intelligence skills developed during the program
7. How did the program of superiors influenced to the motivation and engagement of workers

Methodology

The main method of the study is action research. The concept of action research is originally from American psychologist Kurt Lewin in his studies in which he studied different management styles influence in productivity in industry companies. He also studied the group dynamics and how to carry out changes in organisation. He thought that it is not enough just to see problems and the reasons of the problems but the researcher could also try to find better practical ways to do work and to organise it. In action research is important that the researcher and the actors of the organisation are in a firm co-operation during the process.

The change process stages by Lewin are: 1. to "smelt" the stiffen situation, 2. to make the change process and 3. to stabilise the new situation. Susman and Evered described action research as a cyclic process, which starts from a basic problem or situation analyse and continuing to vision creating, measurement developing and evaluating the results of the process. Typical cycle by Susman and Evered was as follows: 1. Diagnose, in which the researchers by interviewing the personnel have the

goal to find out the needs to develop the organisation. 2. Mapping, in which the researchers together with the personnel arrange a work conference to build the development plan 3. Realise the plan, 4. Evaluation, 5. Learning. And then the cycle diagnose... learning several rounds.

Action research process has two types of goals to achieve: To develop the organisation and to make research. These two different characteristics leads in action research to following process: First action research includes quite practical orientation. It means the purpose to cause both theoretical knowledge but also practical solutions. The important task is to solve problems found in organisation. The problems are not defined by the researchers but the personnel of the organisation. The second feature is a bit exceptional attitude to knowledge compared with the traditional concept of science. From the point of view of action research the workers' experience and interpretations are important knowledge as well as the theoretical concept. Action research is a good method in mapping practical problems and in solving those problems.

Research process

In the study there are four to six organisations participating the University of Tampere's INSOC research project "New Knowledge Work Cultures". This study is part of the project.

The study process starts by work conferences in the participating organisations. The work conferences have several participant from the organisation. It is important to have in the working conference so many participant as possible to ensure sufficient knowledge about what the personnel is thinking and what they want to develop. The maximum amount of the participant can be even 50 persons. In the conference the most important function is to serve an open dialogue forum between people doing different kind of work in the organisation. The goal is to find different things and circumstances to develop in the organisation.

The next stage of the is to interview part of the personnel. It is important also to get the personal ideas and thoughts of the personnel. The participants of the interviews are people from different units and different organisational levels of the organisation. In the interview the researcher ask them for instance to describe their job, atmosphere, organisational issues, work life issues, strategy issues and management and superior work issues.

The next level is the preliminary analyses which is a collection of the background information and the information and ideas collected from the work conference and from the interviews. This preliminary analyses acts as a guide to make the plans to find and to decide about the measures to go on. So the first step of the development process is significantly based on this preliminary analyses.

The developing programs or processes results are evaluated in certain points of the processes. The researches check and develop the processes with the people of the organisation within the process.

This study process of emotional intelligence in superior knowledge work study goes side by side with the "New Knowledge Work Cultures". The emotional intelligence in knowledge work study proceeds as follows:

The information collected from the work conference, basic interviews and preliminary analyses are one important base to the emotional intelligence study process.

1. The researcher become to be acquainted to the companies by interviewing supervisors themselves, their chiefs, colleagues and subordinates. By an inquiry is purpose to try to get information of the importance of emotional intelligence, the superiors' emotional intelligence skills in different situations and areas and to find out the possible lacks in those skills. Of course this information and opinions are subjective but they give important information how do the personnel think about emotional intelligence skills and also about the issue do the superiors see themselves and their emotional intelligence skills and lacks compared with the other interviewed persons.
2. The results of the information is the base to build the development program to develop the emotional intelligence skills of the superiors. The researcher and the superiors build the development plan together. The development plan can include both group and personal programs.
3. The superiors follow the programs for a year and the researcher acts as a consultant if needed.
4. After the one year period is time to the re-evaluation and reporting the results

This study is part of University of Tampere's INSOC's research project "New Knowledge Work Cultures" (See Kasvio, A., Haapakorpi, A., Ruohonen, M. (2000): Joustavat työjärjestelyt. Esitutkimusraportti. Tampereen yliopiston tietoyhteiskunnan tutkimuskeskuksen työraportteja 12/2000. Tampere: TAY.)

Proposed Results

1. Emotional intelligence skills area is one of the key factors in successful superior knowledge work
2. By identifying development areas and then developing them a superior is able to remarkable developing in these emotional intelligence skills
3. Developing in emotional intelligence skills leads to better organisation atmosphere and better productivity of work.

References

- Boyatzis,R.E., Goleman, D.,Rhee,K. (1999): Clustering competence in emotional intelligence: Insights from the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI). In Bar-On, R., Parker,J.D. (Eds.) Handbook of Emotional Intelligence. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cherniss,C.: Emotional intelligence: What it is and Why it Matters, The Consortium for research on emotional intelligence in organizations, Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, New Orleans, April 15, 2000.
- Cherniss,C., Goleman, D.: A technical report issued by Consortium for research on emotional intelligence in organizations, October 7, 1998.
- Cherniss,C., Goleman, D.: The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace, Chapters 2 and 3 from the upcoming book.
- Goleman, D (1998): Working with Emotional Intelligence, Bantam Books, New York.
- Grandey,A.A.(2000): Emotional regulation in the workplace: A new way to conceptualize emotional labor, Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5 (1).
- Irvine, S.H., (1988): Emotions of normal people, Thomas Lyster Ltd., Alden Press Ltd, Oxford.
- Järvinen,P., Järvinen,A.,(2000): Tutkimustyön metodeista, Opinpajan kirja, Tampere.
- Kasvio,A., Haapakorpi,A., Ruohonen,M. (2000): Joustavat työjärjestelyt. Esitutkimusraportti. Tampereen yliopiston tietoyhteiskunnan tutkimuskeskuksen työraportteja 12/2000. Tampere, TAY.
- Lewin,K. (1946): Action research and minority problems, Journal of Social Issues 2, 34 - 46.
- Pihlanto,P.: Ihmisten johtaminen, tunneäly ja ihmiskäsitys, Kanava 2/1999.
- Ramanath,A.M.P, Macredie,R. Understanding interorganisational systems development, Paper presented at the Proceedings of the Sixth European Conference on Information Systems, Aix-en-Provence, France.
- Sala,F.: Do programs designed to increase emotional intelligence at work-work?, Paper published by Consortium for research on emotional intelligence in organizations, 2001-08-14.
- Selin, R.: Tunteet palkkatyössä, Helsingin Sanomat, Tiede ja ympäristö, Oct 30 1999.
- Simmons, M.Ed., Simmons J.C.(1997): Measuring emotional intelligence, The Summit Publishing Group, Arlington, Texas.
- Susman,G.I., Evered,R.D. 1978: An assessment of the scientific merits of action research, Administrative Science Quarterly 23, 852 – 603.