

QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY IRC

© 2021 Queen's University IRC. This paper may not be copied, republished, distributed, transmitted or converted, in any form or by any means, electronic or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.



RESEARCH REPORT

Team Effectiveness: From Pandemic to Promise in the Learning Organization

Ross Roxburgh
Queen's IRC Facilitator

Industrial Relations Centre (IRC)
Queen's University
irc@queensu.ca
613-533-6628
irc.queensu.ca



Introduction to the Report

The global experience of COVID-19 has been the ‘great leveler’. Not one of us has complete answers, far less ‘revealed truth’! What we believed to be true, steady and perhaps even certain have come into question since early 2020.... and yet we need to carry on even as we ‘navigate’ from an uncertain, unpredictable environment to a new and changed ‘next reality’.

Quite simply, everything changed. Those who had never considered working remotely learned quickly and sometimes with more than a little pain. We soon learned what it meant to be ‘an essential worker’ and were grateful to those who put themselves at risk to maintain the services and protections we perhaps took for granted. School children’s routines as well as youngsters who had come to count on their daycare experience and care all had to adapt to a new set of circumstances. The support for parents vanished and forced people to scramble in order to find new ways to cope and support their children’s development. Finally, our seniors and those in need of different or greater support were faced with new and formidable challenges.

And we began to think of ‘risk’ across many dimensions, related to our own wellbeing, to the wellbeing of others and to the many elements of day-to-day life on which we depend for the necessities of life. Mark Kingwell, a philosophy professor at the University of Toronto, has written a little book on risk which puts into perspective the ways that we now think about risk as a consequence of the impact of COVID-19. It is a worthwhile, thoughtful and well-written book.¹

Those were the realities we were handed. At the same time, businesses and a range of organizations, public, private and para-public, had to find ways to continue their work on behalf of stakeholders and shareholders.

Turning to the work I do with organizations and leaders, it quickly became clear that the team level of system would come under pressure to navigate these new and uncertain times. Historically, teams have been a key force in moving organization strategies and priorities forward and they remain so even with the upheaval of a

¹ Kingwell, M. (2020). *On risk, or, If you play, you pay: The politics of chance in a plague year*. Windsor, Ontario: Biblioasis.

pandemic. Their focus, energy and overall effectiveness are central to the growth and stability of the organization.

In my own coaching and consulting work it was apparent from the onset of the pandemic that the effectiveness and wellbeing of teams and team members was being subjected to stresses and change which required ongoing attention; at the same time, expectations for sustained results remained critical in order for organizations to continue to thrive and meet the expectations of stakeholders. As well, early on in this global shift, these changes attracted the attention of thought leaders, many of whom also began to focus on the team level of organizations.²

As I continued my work with clients, I was being asked for ideas and suggested approaches to ensuring that teams continued to thrive and that individuals within teams remained healthy, productive and engaged. I had learned some things but my perspective was limited to my own work and further reading. My curiosity grew as to what others were experiencing in both their leadership roles and / or coaching and consulting work which included close connection with teams. I knew that I was not alone in the challenge of supporting clients and I also knew that I was part of an informal learning community where shared experience made each of us of more effective in doing our work.

A colleague suggested that a clear hypothesis would help if I were considering carrying out some primary research. That valuable ‘nudge’ helped me to clarify my request and the scope of the work. What became increasingly clear was that my interest and curiosity (and that of a number of clients) fell into two primary areas:

- First, the need to understand what we had learned around team effectiveness and leadership over the period of disruption; and
- Second, what would remain important and / or become more important as leaders at all levels planned and prepared to continue to support teams over the next months and perhaps years.

² For more information on this, please see: Dyer, W. G., & Dyer, J. H. (2020). *Beyond team building: How to build high performing teams and the culture to support them*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons; as well as various titles in the The Resilience Series <https://www.johnhuntpublishing.com/changemakers-books/our-books/jhp-search-results/?txt=resilience+series>.

From there, a succinct questionnaire was drafted, recognizing the need to discover relevant insights while recognizing the many demands on the time of prospective respondents. Again, a few 'readers' made the draft set of questions better and therefore the survey more effective. Offering a mix of Core and Optional questions was inspired by a colleague and proved to be a sensible way to avoid respondent fatigue....and perhaps annoyance! The key was to fashion a tool which would facilitate gathering empirical information from a thoughtful set of respondents in the most efficient way possible.

Roughly a third of those I included in the research request were able to make time to respond and they have my deep appreciation. All are busy and each found time to reflect and share what they had learned and what the important questions might be as we moved forward.

I am also grateful to those who helped me to prepare the survey as well as to those who shared their learnings of the past months – thanks to each one of you. (For reference purposes, a more complete discussion of Approach and Methodology, along with the survey questions are found at Appendix A).

As a final observation, I realize that implicitly I began to think about this research with a question of 'what was new' from the experience of the past several months and then realized that that was actually an 'interesting but not very helpful' question. I came to realize that a better question was:

“What took on greater importance for leaders, team and team members over the first several months of the COVID-19 Pandemic as they focused on effectiveness and what would be important for them in moving into the next phase?”.

In other words, what required re-examination, re-assessment, re-framing and re-thinking given what the new reality presented?

Findings

In this Findings section, we look first at the responses to the four Core questions, noting where there is alignment across the survey participants and where one or other groups pays particular attention to a theme. We then examine the Optional questions and capture the main observations and insights from respondents

Demographics

This survey was conducted in September and October 2020, when we had been in the uncertain period of the pandemic for about six months. Some lessons had been learned from experience, in some cases by trial and error, but our learning was ongoing as pandemic-fatigue began to emerge, stress levels increased, and we did not see any end in sight. At best we had experienced the first wave of the pandemic, but still had little notion of what the second wave would bring by way of challenges.

A rough segmentation of respondents for our purposes is:

- Senior Leaders in large organizations, often with indirect oversight for teams; several of these respondents operate in a global setting;

Direct coaching clients---past and current--- in such areas as professional services, health care and the financial sector for whom I have been engaged in an external coach and/or consulting role.
- They are also leaders in their organizations we should note and in all cases they have team responsibilities, some for intact dedicated teams, some for project-based teams and some for both; and
- A number of professional coaches and colleagues from among those in my network who work from an external perspective with individuals and leadership teams; again, in many instances these respondents are coaches, consultants or a combination.

Sectors represented included Financial Services, Health Care and Professional Services; the professional services organizations ranged from global organizations to

independent practitioners in both Canada and the US. We have not differentiated between Canadian and US responses as no discernible differences emerged based on geographies. Almost exactly one-third of those who were invited participate were able to make time to respond; and in many cases, they did so as an additional piece of work in already-busy agendas.

What is relevant from the empirical data we received is that each of the respondents is 'on the field'; they have been active through first few months of the pandemic as their organizations and their clients have worked at 'navigating' and finding appropriate ways of dealing with uncertainty.

When we look in an overview way at similarities and differences between and among the groups, we noted the following:

- Leaders and client leaders responded to all four Core questions at length; Coaches and Consultants spoke to the first three of the Core questions but did not respond to the question of 'top-of-mind' priorities moving forward; in reading raw responses, it appears that the Coach / Consultant cadre implicitly spoke to the 'top-of-mind' point in both the first and second core questions;
- When it came to the Optional questions, leaders focused primarily on the first question, that of 'what remains central'. The other two groupings provided input on all three questions; the client / leader grouping had the largest input of all three segments. Our inference is that they are closest to teams on a day-to-day basis and therefore meeting challenges on a continuous basis. They find themselves in an 'always-on' learning and problem-solving mode.

Other points of difference and similarity of perspectives are referenced in the next section, that in which we examine both Core and Optional areas in a more detailed way.

The Central Questions: Where Were the Areas in Which Participants Were Most Heavily Engaged in Learning and Adapting?

The first question in this area – i.e most valuable conversations / most important questions and concerns – elicited a range of responses especially in respect of what teams and team members needed from their leaders. Leaders reported that they needed

to ensure that they acknowledged the challenges of their teams beyond the normal work requirements. Leaders found that they had to consciously think about the whole person, be courageous in initiating conversations and balance clarity around the work expectations with empathy and deliberate, continuous and active listening at all times.

The other two groups of respondents echoed the 'whole person' theme, emphasizing the need to balance flexibility and recognition of where people were with the ongoing requirement to ensure that the organization's priorities were being met.

These two groups (client leaders and coach / consultant colleagues) also identified explicitly the need to "leverage technology". It was interesting that while we recognize the immense power of technology in a virtual world, none of the respondents – in this or any other area of the survey – saw technology as more than an important enabler, "necessary but not sufficient". The human connection and effective and ongoing communication were always seen as paramount concerns. Even as technology advances and new applications are developed, technology remains an important support of effective engagement; it does not supplant person-to-person communication.

When we turn to the second core question, where respondents reflected on where greater clarity merged and where there were implications for their leadership style and approach, there was some distinction among the responding segments. The first group emphasized the ongoing need to be available to the team, beyond regularly scheduled meetings and again to remain conscious of the need to balance results with concern for the team. One client said explicitly that the team had to come first in these times. This was an important statement as her role is focused on direct client service each and every day. The challenge in her view was one of caring for the team, while also not losing sight of the responsibility to the client.

The coach and consulting cohort of respondents introduced the notion of continual learning as a key approach to supporting their clients. One senior coach put it in the clearest way possible when she responded: "*Continual learning has become much more; now we must be active around it rather than simply talking about it*". (We will have more to say on this point as it will be a major factor in how we emerge from these trying times and chart a new course in the months ahead).

The third core question focused on where respondents found themselves most challenged in their role of supporting colleagues and clients. For senior leaders, the virtual world has tended to make exchanges and communications more 'transactional'; that has required leaders to remain aware of specific team member needs and look for 'cues' and indicators of where direct support or probing questions may be required.

Some of the leaders who responded in this grouping found themselves on heightened awareness of where they needed to intervene or inquire on an ad hoc / 'as required' basis; workload was one example, specifically with reference to how it might unintentionally be contributing to the risk of burnout. One respondent noted that this was especially important in the case of "high performers". A further example cited was that of the "historically private" team member where the leader had to be attentive to those who were by nature quiet and in a virtual world, even less 'visible'.

In a related observation on this question of being most challenged, all groups noted that the importance of "unstructured social interaction" had become much more obvious. For one of the senior leaders, this led to his thinking that a major challenge of being remote from one another is that of "building a sustainable culture in a virtual environment". Without the potential for "regular touchpoints", leaders had to think seriously about what they might do to compensate and replace these once-normal points of contact.

Coaches, probably by virtue of the work and the close trust base that is foundational to the client/ coach relationship, were challenged in supporting clients especially as conversations became stressful or emotions were at play. One coach observed that without physical proximity and engagement and with the need to support her clients, she found herself more exhausted by the end of a day.

The fourth core question had a prospective focus, looking at what might be 'top-of-mind' for the respondents as they looked ahead to leading and working with teams in the months ahead. For senior leaders, the major theme was that of the need for "frequent communications", often of "short virtual nature". From one leader's perspective, what will remain key is the "support for the cohesiveness and sense of team".

Client responses fell into a few key areas. They identified the risk of “long-term fatigue for those [team members] who can’t function well from home”. A “safe and efficient work environment” while working from home was mentioned as were the uncertainty around what a return to the office would look like. (The mention of safety ties in to a pre-survey conversation we had with a coach who reminded me how critical ‘safety and security’ were for all of us, especially so when the unknowns associated with a life-altering pandemic are at play). Nothing was specifically mentioned under this question by the coach / consultant respondents.

The Related Questions to Prompt Further Reflection

Categorized as ‘Optional’ questions, these were the product my curiosity to probe further and take a more prospective look at teams and leadership, as we began to think about the next phase of organization life in terms of team performance and leadership. (Colleagues had cautioned me that ‘survey fatigue’ was emerging as a symptom of the new virtual world and that I should be deliberate around what I really wanted to know. Accordingly, I made no assumptions that all participants would have the time to respond to the optional questions; that said, some were able to share perspectives as they looked ahead towards a post-pandemic world.

The Senior Leaders group as noted earlier responded only to the first question, that of ‘what remains central’ in their role moving forward; Clients/Leaders and the Coaching/Consulting groups had observations in each of the three areas of questioning.

For leaders, it is almost as if this question helped them to consolidate and reflect on the past several months and their own ‘lessons learned’. One respondent noted that his primary insight was that “courage informs everything”. For another, the principal reality was that “words matter” and in another instance that “diversity of thought” will be of major relevance as we move into the next phase.

The theme of ongoing learning emerged as well. One leader expressed it in this way: in looking forward we must not forget to ‘merge’ the best of the earlier (pre-COVID) reality with new and evolving insights gained since the pandemic started. Part of any leader’s role is to think about risk and the pandemic has ensured that leaders remain mindful of potential risks that carried over from a pre-pandemic environment; what is

different perhaps is the observation by one responding leader that the increased “reliance on technology” also carries inherent risks to be managed with care.

Staying with the initial optional question, Clients and the Coach / Consulting group had more and different observations, speaking to all three of the optional questions.

On the initial question on what remains central, clients pointed to the need to remain aware of the mental “wellbeing” of the team members, overall safety and security and the need for strong “collaboration and communication”. At the same time, the concern for the individual and the team also carried with it a need “to monitor outcomes and demonstrate trust”. Again, the theme of being attentive to the necessary balance in order to fully support and remain connected with colleagues.

Coaches and Consultants also made a number of interesting points. Chief among these were the need to remember such points as:

- “every individual reacts differently to the same situation”;
- “shared leadership” has clearly been a major message from the last months, with “leader as hero” becoming increasingly less relevant;
- A major “challenge for leaders is to delegate and provide needed feedback”; and
- Learn as leaders to “relax their hold on making decisions”.

Responses were more limited for the second optional question, that related to what “will assume even greater importance” in the times ahead. Apart from the safety and security theme noted earlier, there was reference to a heightened need for “developmental feedback”, effective communication and “new ways to communicate”. The earlier point on the need for continual learning was sharpened by one senior coach who observed that she was paying extra attention to being the one “to speak last” in a meeting or a coaching session. In other words, time to listen actively and to reflect was more important for that individual as she focused on supporting her client.

On the third question, that relating to “most important implications” for leaders, teams and team members, both clients and the coach / consultant groups made valuable observations. For clients it was important to “empower” the team members by offering support and behaving as a “democratic leader” by “engaging the team in decision making”. Further, clients with team responsibilities were mindful of “maintaining

developmental opportunities” for colleagues and “sharing broader information” e.g. organization-level priorities and initiatives or shifts in direction. Communications again remained central in this question with the continuing focus on contact to ensure the personal wellbeing of the team and its members and the obvious concern for the priorities of the organization being well understood.

For the coach and consultant respondents, four major points stand out as important areas for attention as we move into the next period of organization and team life:

- It will be important for leaders to assign and monitor work consistent with the “situational leadership stage that fits” the circumstance. Here is an example of where learnings and research from the past has real application as we move into a new phase or organization life; Hersey and Blanchard’s Situational Leadership model³ is a potentially useful tool for those working with teams;
- While careful and active listening of course remains important, there is an increased need as one respondent emphasized, “to listen for what is not being said”;
- Again, there was reinforcement of the view that “technology is necessary” but with a strong caveat that in the absence of professional judgement and connection, technology alone is insufficient in meeting the varied and complex needs of teams and individual team members; and
- Related to the above, a most important observation: “...it will be important for employees to provide a clear feedback loop so that leaders know if they are matching where the employee is with regard to his or her ability to take on tasks”.

Conclusions

When I was ‘growing up’ within a consulting environment, it was a generally-accepted truth that the ‘apprenticeship’ for new talented professionals included being able to do some specific things very well. The individual needed to demonstrate the ability to gather appropriate and comprehensive data and information, to then analyze those elements with the aid of models and tools and to organize all of it along thematic or

³ See Ken Blanchard’s work on Situational Leadership at: <https://www.kenblanchard.com>

other ordered lines in a logical and coherent way so as to present a complete and relevant set of findings.

What separated the more junior professional from those already at the Senior Consultant level, however, was the ability to move from and build on the findings to answer the key question: ‘So what?’ As in ‘So what does it mean?’ or ‘What is it that we think we know?’

So here is where we delve into the findings and try to answer that question.

At a summary level, the findings lead to or directly support conclusions in the following five principal areas:

1. The Expanded Role of the Leader
2. The Broadening Responsibilities / Accountabilities of Teams and Their Members
3. The Critical Role of Emotional Intelligence
4. The Foundational Nature of Trust
5. The Re-Thinking of What ‘Effective Communications’ Encompasses

Let’s explore each in turn to identify what has been most important during these past months and what will remain so in the months ahead, a time when we move into the next new territory in organization and team effectiveness.

1. The Expanded Role of The Leader

The Leader’s role is now clearly to pay explicit attention to balancing both the wellbeing of the team and its members with the equally-important responsibility to generate the results and outcomes the organization requires.

If team members feel safe and secure, however that translates for an individual, the ability to remain a high-functioning contributor is enhanced and focused engagement is possible. A recent Global Talent Trends Study from Mercer⁴ highlights the importance of this area. The report’s Exceptional Employee Experiences section focuses on four

⁴ Mason, L., & Sardone, M. A. (2020). Exceptional Employee Experiences. Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.asean.mercer.com/content/dam/mercer/attachments/asia-pacific/asia/asia-exceptional-employee-experiences.pdf>

aspects which define what employees crave”; the empathetic dimension speaks most closely to the “support and understanding” so necessary when “personal lives come rushing in”.

The response from leaders in our survey further emphasized that feeling safe and secure meant different things to each person; the leader’s challenge, therefore, is to discover what that meaning might be for each and build a conversation around how that need, or those needs, might be accommodated as the team member continued to carry out his or her role.

Leaders who responded were occasionally surprised at the need to focus on this area as it was less ‘visible’ in a pre-virtual world; that said, each and every respondent pivoted quickly to better understand and respond to the need.

In many instances, leaders came to know their team members in a more complete way by virtue of dealing remotely. The challenges to sensing reactions accurately or picking up on ‘cues’ in a face-to-face work environment force leaders to be more explicit, to probe respectfully and to remain curious about their colleagues and how they are really doing.

There are definitely challenges in having conversations which encompass personal as well as work-related issues, especially where the leader might feel that there was risk in perhaps becoming intrusive; at the same time, leaders also recognized that it is part of their job to create a safe space for those of their colleagues who might be ‘historically’ more private.

The main conclusions to be inferred from the input and observations of leaders are the following:

- This expansion of conversations and interactions is the new reality and is not going to disappear when we come out of the current environment; leaders as well as team members recognize its importance. For leaders, the learning lies in how to become more skillful in blending concern with an ability to discern what really matters for their colleagues and then to identify actions which answer the needs;

- In part, we are noticing a conscious effort to balance concern for task with concern for relationship. This is not a new topic and has been an important part of the work of organizations for many years. What the pandemic has fostered, however, is a more complete exploration of what is included in the scope of ‘relationship’.

Relationships now include more of the personal dimensions of a colleague’s life and greater candour in talking about their ability to balance those with the ongoing requirements of their work responsibilities; as well, employees are recognizing the need to ask for the support they need in order to maintain their strong contribution in support of colleagues and the wider organization goals.

We can’t of course be sure that lessons learned during the pandemic will all become new habits as we move forward. There is, however, strong potential for leaders and employee teams to move forward more from a stance of ‘relationship-based transactions’ as opposed to an earlier environment where we quite often saw ‘transaction-based relationships’ as the norm. The combined energy created by trust, empathy and shared learning has been figural in fostering this new habit.

In pre-pandemic times, these concepts were largely discussed in conversations related to the marketing and sales arena; given our experience over the past months, it is reasonable to assume that the concept will carry into ongoing communications and interactions between leaders and teams as well as among team members;

- The ‘more comprehensive’ conversation has also become a more inclusive discussion; the seemingly ‘watertight’ compartments of the past are giving way to a broader connection and greater openness which in turn can facilitate closer alignment in support of the organization goals; and
- Leaders and managers have recognized in a more complete way that they have a continuing responsibility to: share what they can about the wider organization direction and priorities; support team members and reports as fully as possible;

avoid hollow ‘rah-rah’ behaviour, platitudes and empty words; and model a way of showing up and behaving that inspires confidence and trust. As one respondent said so succinctly: “Responses are watched more closely than ever”.

2. The Broadening Responsibilities / Accountabilities of Teams and Their Members:

As noted above team members have recognized that they have a responsibility to both their team colleagues and their leaders and managers to speak up when their legitimate needs, both in the work-related realm as well as in the personal, require attention or understanding. In a pre-pandemic world we were aware of both of these dimensions, but our focus was largely on the former; it has now become necessary to attend *actively* to both aspects in ensuring the overall wellbeing and productivity of teams and their members.

Team leaders felt hampered initially by the nature of virtual communication. In the past, there was a heavy reliance on direct conversations with teams and members in close proximity. Conversations carried on in a natural way outside of the meeting setting as ideas evolved. With the pandemic, those natural ‘pathways’ were altered.

The resilience and inventiveness of teams and team members has quickly emerged. In a virtual environment, team members had time to think about and reflect on their roles and the larger question of personal and career priorities. A greater degree of clarity emerged and team members came more prepared to the important conversations they had amongst themselves and with their leaders. Team leads and colleagues learned to adapt and explore new ways of achieving a clear and authentic understanding, where being explicit removed ambiguity or a guessing game as to where individuals were.

The understanding of what it means to collaborate has undergone some change as well. In the past, collaboration implied a focus exclusively on the task to be accomplished, the project outcome, the solution to a problem. That remains a major part of the definition.

What seems to be new, however, is that teams and team members (and their leaders of course) have factored into the idea of collaboration the broader concern for the individual’s situation. As a consequence, there has emerged a more nuanced approach

to collaboration which while remaining focused on the necessary outcomes, also weighs the extent to which an individual might contribute at a given moment. This of course requires some level of vigilance by team members as well as leaders to ensure that some colleagues do not become overloaded. Balance, transparency and fairness become key for the team overall and for its members.

A further conclusion that emerged from the responses was that of the nature of feedback and its importance. Of course, being remote it became more difficult to have the informal exchanges in which employees had opportunities for 'in-the-moment' exchanges. That said, teams and team members identified a heightened need for clear and regular feedback as part of an overall ongoing communication focus. A more detailed discussion of feedback is found later in the communication section of the Conclusions.

The main conclusions to be drawn from the perspective of Teams and Team members are:

- Team members recognized quickly how interdependent they were and the extent to which each individual was balancing the demands of work with the challenges of personal wellbeing in a virtual environment. Moreover, to return to the point made earlier, that of the pandemic as the 'great leveler', empathy has become more evident in dealings between and among team members.

One coaching client, an extremely focused high achiever, is an excellent example of the point. The initial draft of her business case in support of an invitation to join a professional partnership made passing reference to team members. With a few months of working virtually, she began to think differently about the team's contribution. She revised her business case to make explicit mention of team members, their contributions and their photos – a simple example perhaps, but evidence of an opening of the 'lens', leading to a more complete acknowledgement of those who were part of her 'followership';

- Simply expecting that with the emerging post-COVID reality, life would return to what it had been and that the former ways of relating would return never

actually took hold with team respondents. Rather, innovative approaches emerged and many of these will endure as ways of working and being in the months to come and beyond. As a senior coach observed, the closing of usual paths for relating meant that individuals had to “work on other senses...in order to read expressions and pick up on remote cues”.

Other respondents noted that team members recognized that in the world of Zoom and Skype calls, they would need to pause at times in order to ‘check out’ what the understanding was by others, not taking for granted that their intention was clear to everyone. Time taken to assure clarity would repay in efficiencies and common understanding of direction and next steps. This is a ‘coping strategy’ that works given an imposed virtual reality; that said, we assume that it is also becoming a ‘habit’ that has been effective not only for these times but which will continue to serve us well as we move forward; and

- Teams and their members have recognized through the experience of the last several months that in a real sense they are ‘partners’ with their leaders. They are expected to provide feedback and perspective to leaders in all of their interactions as an integral part of enabling leaders in being able to pivot quickly in responding to the wellbeing and effectiveness of their teams. Boundaries remain as respective accountabilities are observed but two-way flow of information and exchanges across those boundaries become more important than ever in achieving shared goals. What might have been a hope in terms of collaborative behaviour in the past has become a clear expectation now and into the future.

3. The Critical Role of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence [EI] is increasingly viewed as an essential skill that leaders as well as those they lead, need to not only understand but also to incorporate into their overall development and ability to be as effective as possible in their roles. With deepened self-awareness, there is higher potential to ensure that intention and impact are more closely aligned.

Recent research from Merryck & Co. and the Barrett Values Centre highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence as a critical leadership trait. Their report, entitled 'Revealing Leaders' Blind Spots' notes that in areas requiring improvement, Emotional Intelligence ranks first across the ten leadership traits from the perspective of the assessor group of respondents and second with executives' self-assessments.⁵

Throughout the responses received to our survey, both in core and optional areas, emotional intelligence was very much an underlying theme; that said, it was referred to explicitly in only one response. Given its current interest as a management and leadership topic – for example, the 2015 collection from Harvard Business Review ('On Emotional Intelligence')⁶ – I had expected that it might have been referred to more frequently among the responses. My surprise, however, was quickly replaced as I examined responses in greater detail; *not seeing EI explicitly mentioned in no sense meant that it was absent in responses.*

I want to note that in thinking about EI, I looked at responses from the perspective of a coach and consultant who has been certified in and works with a specific EI instrument, i.e. EQ-i 2.0; I found that particular 'lens' to be useful in understanding responses.⁷

A number of respondents reported that they were increasingly conscious over the past months of their own emotions and the impact those emotions "have on one's own thoughts and actions and those of others". (See the Self-Perception dimension of the EQ-I 2.0 model in Appendix B for more on this).

Further, the process of "acknowledging" – a word used by some respondents – the impact of emotions both with teams and leaders alike was an important insight from across all of the respondent groups. From there, EI-related observations emerged through a regular use of such terms as 'empathy', 'courage', 'compassion', 'listening' and 'connecting'.

⁵ Shafer, J., Bryant, A., & Reimer, D. (2020, April 29). Revealing leaders' blind spots. Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.strategy-business.com/article/Revealing-leaders-blind-spots>

⁶ Goleman, D. et al. (2015). *On emotional intelligence (HBR's 10 must reads)*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review.

⁷ For reference, a one-page overview of the model with its five key dimensions of EI along with a summary page explaining the key elements in a little more detail are found at Appendix B.

While empirical data did not of course directly correlate survey responses with the EI model noted above, using the EQ-i 2.0 'lens' can provide valid linkages between responses and the specific elements of the tool.

With that 'lens', one can extrapolate and identify areas of EI which respondents were paying attention to or were observing in their work with leaders and teams. In the Self-Perception dimension of the model, self actualization and emotional self awareness were most obvious among the three categories. In the Self Expression segment, emotional expression and assertiveness seemed most prevalent across the groups while in the Interpersonal area responses touched on all segments i.e. interpersonal relationships, empathy and social responsibility. A sense of broader community, beyond only the 'work team' is an important aspect of that third area.

Decision making involves problem solving, reality testing and impulse control. In examining the data, most apparent was the attention to problem solving especially as it "includes the ability to understand how emotions impact decision making".⁸

The final segment of the model speaks to Stress Management. While there was an underlying sense of optimism and energy across the responses, most evident were the explicit references to 'Flexibility' and with that the implicit stress tolerance especially as it relates to "believing that one can manage or influence situations in a positive manner".⁹

Principal conclusions in the area of Emotional Intelligence are:

- Leaders and team members alike recognized implicitly that the ability to apply emotional intelligence to the reality of COVID 19 environment had direct impact on both the wellbeing of individuals and the productivity of their organizations;
- The extent to which emotional intelligence informs the dialogue between leaders and teams strongly suggests a positive impact on team effectiveness; and
- EI may now have taken its legitimate place among the essential skills that both leaders and employees on teams have available in achieving greater

⁸ Multi-Health Systems Inc. (2012). EQ-i Model of Emotional Intelligence sample leadership report.

⁹ Ibid.

effectiveness; in other words, EI moves from a 'nice-to-have-but-kind-of-soft-skill' to an essential tool for learning and growth at the individual, team and organization levels.

4. The Foundational Nature of Trust

For as long as leaders have been thinking about teams, their effectiveness and wellbeing and organization development, trust has been a central topic. What it takes to build, strengthen, nourish and sustain trust underpins overall effectiveness and has implications for leaders, managers and their teams. And during the stresses and changes engendered by a pandemic, the issue of trust has never been so central.

Trust assumed additional importance as organizations 'navigated' uncertainty. In some cases, their very survival was at stake; in others, steps were being taken to protect the essentials but not without having an impact on employees who were declared surplus, were being asked to take on as burden both financial and in workload terms, or seeing colleagues leave or being impacted in new ways. What could be trusted when leaders and teams could no longer take for granted or count on norms or the predictable behaviours?

Trust is directly aligned with the degree to which people feel safe in being open, sharing concerns and expressing doubts and concerns. Looking at the responses, two points stood out as central to maintaining and building trust:

First, team members looked for 'honesty' from their leaders, frequent updates and contact and messages which were as "explicit" as possible". In an insightful piece from 'The Economist' – its Bartleby column of April 18, 2020 – we read:

"[Leaders] must replace forgettable memos---all too often an exercise in jargon-filled banalities---with clear, and frequent, communication".¹⁰

¹⁰ "Bartleby" (April 18th 2020). "Lessons From the Front Line". The Economist. London: The Economist Newspaper Limited.

And in that same column the author again anticipated a point which emerged from the survey responses: “More than ever, speed is of the essence. This can be uncomfortable for managers who rely on analysis to inform decisions”.

Second, the extent to which both leaders and team members demonstrated through new continuing behaviours that we were dealing with something closer to enduring ‘sea change’ than simply a passing ‘blip’ in our normal working lives again directly contributed to strengthening trust.

Seeing the behaviours applied in a consistent way added to the trust. For example, including team members in decisions would be trusted if it became a continuing practice as appropriate, rather than a short-term tactic to cope with a virtual reality.

Main Conclusions on Trust

- Leaders have learned a great deal about how to lead and build trust by doing two connected things really well: first, listening to their teams; and second, considering carefully what the implications are for their own style and approach. Without strong two-way trust, the effectiveness of teams is not fully realized as individual energy will be held back; and
- Central to their work in strengthening of trust and ensuring cultural cohesion, leaders need to be clear and transparent in their messages; allied with the need for those messages to be deliberately focused on a few select areas are some key behaviours. And note how often there is *the sense of the necessary balance* which the leader, with the help of the team, is accountable for creating and maintaining:

“Ensure productivity and results *while also* practising empathy and compassion”

“Ensure diversity of thought and input *and* make space for all to contribute”

“Recognize the individual *while also* supporting the full team”

5. The Re-thinking of What 'Effective Communications' Encompasses

Communicating effectively emerges at every turn during these times of virtual connection. In the Merryck & Co. research referenced earlier, Communication was identified as the second most important leadership trait by assessors but only the fifth across the executive respondents. Assessors are a proxy for teams and individual team members and their assessments translate into key 'levers' leaders have available to support team effectiveness.

Based on our survey, my strong sense is that if our survey respondents were to participate in the Merryck research project today, it is very likely that Communication as an element in the overall 'Connecting with Others' category would receive a much higher rating than a '5'; the direct experience of the last few months would have been the 'teacher'.

But can that assumption be attributed solely to the experience of the pandemic and what it has required of us? Perhaps in part, but that is not the entire answer in my view.

When we examined the responses, especially those related to the final question in the Core section i.e. 'Top-of-mind priorities in leading and working with teams in the months ahead', we found clear and focused insights in the area of communication.

A clear theme that emerged was that "frequent" but "short virtual meetings" were central to "supporting cohesiveness and the sense of team". The frequency seems to me to be important in that it provides an equivalent to 'real-time' contact, something very useful as confirmed by respondents as they needed to remain aware of and address such issues as:

- "risk of fatigue" for those who do not function well at home;
- "technology reliability";
- "clear goals" requirement to support team members; and
- "safe and efficient work environment at home"

Without clear and ongoing communication those issues would not have been fully understood or in some instances even recognized as being important.

Performance Management, especially as it relates to contributions at team and individual levels, depends on constant and clear channels for two-way information exchange; the strong program that has been developed and refined through experience by Queen's IRC emphasizes this point.¹¹ **And where an organization depends so heavily on the effectiveness of teams and team members, the challenge of providing useful feedback becomes central** to effective two-way communication.

Once again, feedback is not a new topic among leaders and teams. During the pandemic, however, it has taken on even greater importance where normal interactions and exchanges can no longer be relied upon as key elements in facilitating effective feedback. Individuals and teams need to know how they are doing in clear terms and what they can do to become even more effective. And more than ever, they need and expect to know what they can count on from their leaders by way of support, whether developmental and / or directly-related to improving effective execution of role responsibilities.

The survey revealed some important aspects related to feedback which emerged or became more clear during the first few months of the pandemic, but which also will probably continue as we move forward.

They connect to some of the earlier conclusions around engagement, trust, participative decision making and accountabilities.

First, feedback is seen as a vehicle for learning and growth. It is an opportunity to speak about aspirations and potential areas of development which meet individual needs in a team setting and quite often the organization needs as well;

Second, feedback is tangible evidence of a partnership approach in achieving goals of the organization. Leaders invest time not simply for altruistic reasons but rather for the impact it has on the engagement and channelling of energy by employees in line with organization needs and priorities;

Third, feedback is effective only to the extent that both leader and employee invest time in making the conversations as rich and valuable as possible. In working with a client

¹¹ See more about the Queen's IRC Performance Management program at: <https://irc.queensu.ca/training/performance-management>.

in a large social media firm who in turn has team members who are geographically remote by design, some of the coaching has focused on the need to invest significant time in preparing for the feedback conversation as well as commit to ongoing time investment to support the employee's continued growth; and

Fourth, respondents in one global organization pointed to a formalized Upward Feedback Program as an important strand in a comprehensive communication network. It allows leaders to consider their approach to feedback in the management of performance and where appropriate adjusting style and scope of conversations to meet team and individual needs more closely.

Looking Forward

Respondents to the survey are a resilient and thoughtful group of professionals. They exhibit a clear sense of optimism and purpose as they look forward. They confidently carry the most important lessons and clear insights from the months of grappling with COVID-19 into the next period of organization life.

Teams have learned a great deal about themselves and about their leaders; moreover, teams and team members have clarity as to what they will want, expect and need from those leaders in the months ahead.

Leaders for their part have become increasingly aware of the full extent of their roles and responsibilities to themselves as well as to their teams.

Looking ahead, we believe that the following areas will be central to the health, wellbeing, productivity and sustained success of individuals, teams and leaders at all levels of organization:

Evolving Roles

The Team Role

Teams will recognize that they are intrinsically part of leadership in their organizations. Teams have always been focused on problem solving. What will be different will be the 'open channel' which allows rapid and focused exchanges with leaders as new facts emerge, circumstances shift and priorities are re-ordered.

Further, the understanding of what problem solving entails will be expanded to take account of the emotional dimensions which are often part of problem solving, but sometimes in the background in pre-pandemic times. Again, this aspect implies that teams and leaders are in continuing conversations so that 'course-correction', innovation and issues of resiliency are always 'open channels'.

The **definition of collaboration will be expanded** as we move forward. It has always been clear that cooperation and coordination are part of the team reality; collaboration has sometimes been more elusive as it usually requires making choices for the overall benefit of the team. In the new reality, collaboration will be expected as teams determine workloads based on each member's ability at any point to balance work and non-work responsibilities in order to maintain both overall wellbeing and expected results.

The Leader's Role

Leaders will become **more conversant, effective and comfortable in a 'shared leadership' model**. That sense of 'partnership' has in the past extended to other leaders and peers; in the months ahead, it will broaden to include teams.

Further, leaders will become more conversant with the range of technologies available to support them in their expanded role and more comfortable in utilizing modalities which bolster effectiveness and impact.

Participation in decision-making, clear channels and modalities for feedback to and from leaders and an enhanced understanding and execution to do with all aspects of Performance Management will become more the norm.

Leaders will be much more engaged in balancing their accountability for results with the need to pay close and active attention to the mental health and general wellbeing of their colleagues in teams. With the recognition and commitment to that balance by leaders, an important support to the effectiveness of teams will be easier to achieve.

Finally, leaders will increasingly recognize that deeper self-awareness, including emotional intelligence, will enable them to be as responsive and as supportive as

possible of teams and individual team members. (This theme is expanded in the 'Learning and Growth' section which appears below.)

Enabling the Team and Leadership Levels of Organizations

Technology

Technology will continue to be a major enabler of effectiveness within organizations. During the pandemic it has shown its value in maintaining linkages between and among teams, leaders and individuals. A strong theme was as noted above, that technology is 'necessary but not sufficient'.

Those who use technology have become more thoughtful as they experience then reflect on that experience of what it can do and what it cannot, or should not be asked to do. Technology is a most powerful tool; when informed and guided by teams and leaders in organizations it will continue to support overall effectiveness.

Perhaps the most crucial application of technology for teams, their members and the leaders will be in continuing to enhance the connection between and among these groups. Technology can continue to help in managing remote conversations and can continue to be important to the gathering, synthesis and dissemination of data and information to support the organization in its essential problem solving and decision making.

While difficult to predict with any level of certainty, it may be that those with the deepest appreciation for what technology can do will now enter into different, closer and potentially more valuable ongoing conversation with those who are end users of the technology platforms on which organizations depend.

Learning and Growth

Early in the Findings section we heard one senior coach observe that over the course of the pandemic she had noticed that continuous learning had become an active area for leaders and teams and part of the overall effectiveness. Previously, she noted, that aspect of organization growth had simply been "talked about".

As I mentioned earlier, Emotional Intelligence was implicit and ran through many of the responses across both core and optional questions. The theme of Continual Learning joins EI as the second largely implicit area of discovery for leaders and their teams. Leaders and colleagues did not have answers and in some cases they did not have all of the relevant questions. Together they engaged in learning through identifying needs brought about or accentuated by the need to work in a virtual way.

An unintended but powerful result of being forced to join colleagues in a virtual world, with no certainty as to its duration or ultimate direction and no 'operating instructions', has been the imposed need to learn together. A colleague coach, consultant and friend with whom I spoke used a wonderful phrase as we spoke about change a while ago: "Batteries not included!". I laughed and then thought that the phrase sums up the reality we have come to know in the months since the pandemic started.

That lack of "batteries" has meant that we had to fall back on what we know and bring that to the conversation, whether as leaders, teams or individual team members. We learned together, worked on getting it 'approximately right' and then tested it under real conditions. Answers were not readily at hand and in some instances, individuals worked diligently to ensure that the questions were right. A search for the real problem and challenge – going beyond treating a 'symptom' – became more the habit. We learned quickly through trying new approaches in response to identified needs and then pivoted quickly when solutions fell short or needed further work. In working through a pandemic, the 'learning app' was always on.

Learning together can be messy; we scratched our heads during the pandemic in pursuit of responses and options, then gladly put those same heads together to share what we thought we knew and what we knew we didn't know.... yet.... but needed to find out. We became more conscious of what mattered to us and with the help of teams, of the questions and concerns which mattered to them; in turn, we took those insights into account as we moved the organization priorities forward. It was informative and it was sometimes a bit scary. If the pandemic was the 'great leveler', then it was also the 'great teacher'.

That learning 'mindset' was fostered by a recognition that no one could claim to have all the answers. It is possible that this commitment to learning will become a new

embedded habit; as such, it will show itself as an active commitment to discovery and ongoing learning in the service of supporting colleagues and achieving shared goals at the team and other levels of organization. The idea as Mark Kingwell has written, may be “not so much new as more vivid”.¹²

Several years ago, Robert Kegan et al wrote an important paper entitled ‘The Deliberately Developmental Organization’ [DDO]. Two short excerpts capture their central thesis:¹³

“A DDO is organized around the deceptively simple but radical conviction that organizations will best prosper when they are deeply aligned with people’s strongest motive, which is to *grow*.”;

“Deep alignment with people’s motive to grow means fashioning an organizational culture in which support to people’s ongoing development is woven into the daily fabric of working life,”.

The insights remain relevant today. What has changed is that beyond growth, people also expect to be safe, secure and have leaders who care actively about their wellbeing as they learn together. And the support for ongoing development is enlarged to include not only “working life” but to extend to include the personal dimensions as well.

Now and into the future, leaders will increasingly master the ability to both respond to the new realities e.g. balancing concern for the wellbeing of individuals and teams and what it means to ‘stay connected’ with the equally-challenging need to achieve organization goals. Several respondents highlighted a return to thoughtful and useful models from past experience which can be adapted and applied to tomorrow’s team and organization challenges.

Leaders will increasingly look for resources from which to develop and test their own perspectives as they deepen they grow towards mastery of the leadership challenge, share insights with colleagues in teams and actively learn with others.

¹² Kingwell, M. (2020). *On risk, or, If you play, you pay: The politics of chance in a plague year*. Windsor, Ontario: Biblioasis.

¹³ Kegan, R. et al. (2014). Noted in, Anderson, J (2014, April 1). On Deliberately Developmental Organizations. Retrieved January 15, 2021, from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/14/04/deliberately-developmental-organizations>

What it means to learn has been more broadly defined. While we are still expected to be deep and current in our subject matter expertise, we are doing something more. We are learning new coping strategies, how to 'navigate' effectively while paying attention to both work and personal priorities, how to learn with and from others, what it means to be 'resilient' as a learner and how to develop new habits which serve us best, while setting aside those which are no longer as useful.

For the evolving or aspiring 'learning organization', this may well be a breakthrough moment. Perhaps 'always-on' learning will be the key to shedding light on the path ahead.

About the Author



Ross Roxburgh is a leadership coach and organization consultant with several decades of experience with a wide range of clients, both domestic and international across the private, public and para-public sectors.

He has a strong interest in the effectiveness of individuals and teams in complex organization environments; in many cases he brings both coaching and consulting experience to client engagements.

Ross positions his client work in a deliberate way. He works *with* his clients as opposed to adopting a prescriptive approach. Initially he focuses on understanding where the organization is positioned today and what the key challenges are in realizing the preferred future. Respectful challenge is central to his approach and he is committed to developing solutions with the client which meet current priorities and also position the organization for future challenges.

Recent client engagements have included a number of coaching assignments in such sectors as professional services, financial services and health care as well as recent co-facilitation of executive education programs in the health care sector.

Ross is a Facilitator with Queen's IRC where he has had the privilege of working with long-time Queen's IRC Facilitator Ian Cullwick, on a range of programs related to Board effectiveness, Committee evolution and Performance Management.

Ross is committed to ongoing learning through focused reading, writing, conference participation, facilitation and formal development. His formation and relevant credentials include the designation of Certified Management Consultant (CMC) as well as that of Master Corporate Executive Coach (MCEC).

He has been certified in the use of the EQ-I 2.0 instrument as well as the LEA 360. He has continued to deepen his learning through the globally-recognized graduate program in Organization and Systems Development developed by the Gestalt Institute of Cleveland as well as a number of related programs through the International Gestalt Centre in Wellfleet and the National Training Laboratories (NTL) offerings.

Prior to his coaching and consulting career, Ross completed an interdisciplinary Masters Degree in Canadian Studies as well as an Honours BA, both from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada.

Ross is based in Toronto with offices there and in Eastern Ontario.

References

- Assess your emotional intelligence, EQ-i 2.0/EQ 360. (n.d.). Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.eitrainingcompany.com/eq-assessment/>
- Dyer, W. G., & Dyer, J. H. (2020). *Beyond team building: How to build high performing teams and the culture to support them*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Coggan, P. (2020, April 18). Bartleby | Lessons from the front line. Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.economist.com/business/2020/04/18/lessons-from-the-front-line>
- Create Success With A Situational Approach to Leadership. (n.d.). Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.kenblanchard.com/Products-Services/SLII>
- Edmondson, A. C. (2012). *Teaming: How organizations learn, innovate, and compete in the knowledge economy*. Kbh.: Nota.
- Gervès-Keen, J. (2019). *Show up like a coach: It will change your life*. Toronto: Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada.
- Goleman, D. et al. (2015). *On emotional intelligence (HBR's 10 must reads)*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review.
- Kegan, R. et al. (2014). Noted in, Anderson, J. (2014, April 1). On Deliberately Developmental Organizations. Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/14/04/deliberately-developmental-organizations>
- Kingwell, M. (2020). *On risk, or, If you play, you pay: The politics of chance in a plague year*. Windsor, Ontario: Biblioasis.
- Mason, L., & Sardone, M. A. (2020). Exceptional Employee Experiences. Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.asean.mercer.com/content/dam/mercer/attachments/asia-pacific/asia/asia-exceptional-employee-experiences.pdf>

Multi-Health Systems Inc. (2012). EQ-i Model of Emotional Intelligence. Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.eitrainingcompany.com/eq-assessment/>

Patwell, B. (2020). *Leading meaningful change: capturing the hearts, minds and souls of the people you work with and serve*. Vancouver / Berkeley: Figure 1 Publishing.

Shafer, J., Bryant, A., & Reimer, D. (2020, April 29). Revealing leaders' blind spots. Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.strategy-business.com/article/Revealing-leaders-blind-spots>

The Resilience Series (2020). Various Titles. Hampshire, UK: Changemakers Books
Retrieved January 08, 2021, from <https://www.johnhuntpublishing.com/changemakers-books/our-books/jhp-search-results/?txt=resilience+series>.

Appendix A

Approach and Methodology; Survey Questions

Teams in organizations is a large and complex topic; one has only to scan the literature to appreciate how central teams are in any organization. As well, I am a coach and consultant and not overly-experienced in conducting primary research.

With that in mind, a colleague coach and client urged me to first articulate a working hypothesis to ensure a focused approach to the research.

That sound advice resulted in the following positioning for the work:

As we move from the uncertainty of the 2020 pandemic into the next phase of organization life, learnings from the past months will serve to highlight behaviours and approaches which will serve us well as we continue to build effective teams. In addition, the experience of a virtual world, one which is here to stay, will also point to areas where we will need to develop new habits, modify earlier ways of working and potentially wean ourselves of approaches which no longer now serve us well in the new reality.

As organizations re-think the role of teams, the work they do and how they approach and carry out that work, the research focus became:

First, an examination of what we have learned at the team level of the organization from the experience and challenges of moving through a pandemic; and second, what has taken on greater clarity for leaders, managers and supervisors in terms of priority areas as teams strive for sustained effectiveness over the next period of uncertainty.

With that 'framing' in place, I was also very mindful that these are among the most challenging of times for all of us. That led me to consider carefully those to whom I would reach out to request some of their valuable time to provide direct experience and perspective. As a colleague and friend noted from his recent conversation with a large health care system, the client observed that it was survey-saturated and would become much more deliberate about those requests in which they might choose to participate!

With that caution in mind, I decided to do three things before launching the research:

1. Test the invitation with a colleague who conducts this type of current research in order to position my 'ask' in the strongest way possible;
2. Have three colleagues take a critical look at the questions I wanted to probe to ensure that they were as succinct, as clear and as relevant as possible; and
3. Choose with care a range of clients, coach colleagues and fellow consultants who would have direct and ongoing experience with teams and who in turn would potentially benefit from the findings of the research and its application to their own work.

As a final point--again a direct result of candid conversations in the pre-survey stage—I decided to focus on four key questions which I wanted all participants to consider and then offered some optional questions subject to their interest, curiosity and available time. I also thought that the extent to which I received responses to the optional questions was a fair indicator of whether these were in fact relevant questions for respondents.

Finally, I offered an “Anything else?” option at the close of the survey. And perhaps not surprisingly, some respondents chose to think further in a prospective way about issues and conversations as we attempt to discern what any ‘new normal’ might imply for organizations.

Survey Questionnaire

Teams: Their Essential Role, Effectiveness and Wellbeing

I. First, a few questions to better enable review of the information:

Your Primary Role: Team Leader_____ Coach to Teams_____ Consultant to Teams____

Primary Sector: Private____ Public____ NFP/Para-public____

Your Industry Focus: _____

II. Core Questions:

Please consider the following questions especially in light of your experience over the past several months of operating in a virtual way:

- 1) What were the *most valuable conversations and the most important questions and concerns* which emerged at the team level? Consider areas in which the team had specific needs of you as a leader, coach or consultant in terms of guidance, support.
- 2) As a direct leader of a team(s), what particular aspects took on greater clarity for you? What were the implications for your leadership style and approach?
- 3) Where did you find yourself most challenged by team needs as you supported them in remaining as effective as possible in a virtual environment?
- 4) What will be 'top-of-mind' priorities for you in leading and working with teams in the months ahead?

III. Optional Questions:

Please choose from among the following the questions those *which most interest you as being most relevant for the effectiveness and wellbeing of Teams as we move into the next phase of organization life:*

- 1) *What remains central in the leader's role* as Teams move into the post-COVID reality?

(You might consider such dimensions as collaboration, safety and security within the team, the mix of virtual and in-person connection, developmental feedback, effective two-way communications, shared leadership, etc.);

- 2) *What will assume even greater importance and/or emerge for leaders to deal with given the times ahead?;* and

3) What are the most important implications:

- for *leaders of teams with respect to style of leadership*;
- for *individual team members*; and
- for *teams as part of the overall organization system*.

Anything else?.....

Thank-you very much for both the time you have taken and the thoughtfulness of your input to this research!

Ross

Appendix B – The Emotional Intelligence Model EQ-I 2.0



Copyright © 2011 Multi-Health Systems Inc. All rights reserved.
Based on the original BarOn EQ-i authored by Reuven Bar-On, copyright 1997.

EQ-i 2.0 Model of Emotional Intelligence

SELF-PERCEPTION

Self-Regard is respecting oneself while understanding and accepting one's strengths and weaknesses. Self-Regard is often associated with feelings of inner strength and self-confidence.

Self-Actualization is the willingness to persistently try to improve oneself and engage in the pursuit of personally relevant and meaningful objectives that lead to a rich and enjoyable life.

Emotional Self-Awareness includes recognizing and understanding one's own emotions. This includes the ability to differentiate between subtleties in one's own emotions while understanding the cause of these emotions and the impact they have on one's own thoughts and actions and those of others.

STRESS MANAGEMENT

Flexibility is adapting emotions, thoughts and behaviors to unfamiliar, unpredictable, and dynamic circumstances or ideas.

Stress Tolerance involves coping with stressful or difficult situations and believing that one can manage or influence situations in a positive manner.

Optimism is an indicator of one's positive attitude and outlook on life. It involves remaining hopeful and resilient, despite occasional setbacks.



SELF-EXPRESSION

Emotional Expression is openly expressing one's feelings verbally and non-verbally.

Assertiveness involves communicating feelings, beliefs and thoughts openly, and defending personal rights and values in a socially acceptable, non-offensive, and non-destructive manner.

Independence is the ability to be self-directed and free from emotional dependency on others. Decision-making, planning, and daily tasks are completed autonomously.

DECISION MAKING

Problem Solving is the ability to find solutions to problems in situations where emotions are involved. Problem solving includes the ability to understand how emotions impact decision making.

Reality Testing is the capacity to remain objective by seeing things as they really are. This capacity involves recognizing when emotions or personal bias can cause one to be less objective.

Impulse Control is the ability to resist or delay an impulse, drive or temptation to act and involves avoiding rash behaviors and decision making.

INTERPERSONAL

Interpersonal Relationships refers to the skill of developing and maintaining mutually satisfying relationships that are characterized by trust and compassion.

Empathy is recognizing, understanding, and appreciating how other people feel. Empathy involves being able to articulate your understanding of another's perspective and behaving in a way that respects others' feelings.

Social Responsibility is willingly contributing to society, to one's social groups, and generally to the welfare of others. Social Responsibility involves acting responsibly, having social consciousness, and showing concern for the greater community.

Appendix C – Additional Resources

Examples of thought leadership abound especially as we emerge from the challenging times of 2020 as the world grappled with the pandemic. The following may be useful to those looking for perspectives from a range of thought leaders:

1. Beverley Patwell, Principal of Patwell Consulting, is a published author – most recently of ‘Leading Meaningful Change’ – and a recognized expert in the Change Management field. Bev has created the CARE model from her extensive experience as a practical tool for leaders to use as they grow in their roles; an overview of her CARE model appears below.

| Strategies to take CARE of Yourself & Others | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| © Patwell Consulting | | | |
| C | A | R | E |
| COMPASSION CONNECT- COMMUNICATE | ADAPT | ROUTINES & RITUALS | EXERCISE |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Listen to understand, walk in the shoes or a day in the life of your employees. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has changed for you? • What do you need? 2. Conduct regular/daily check-ins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are you doing really?- Personally and professionally? • How are you feeling? 3. Communicate and share information regularly and in a timely, relevant manner. Sort out the fake from the real and relevant news 4. Provide opportunities for regular dialogue and discussion so people can make sense and meaning of the changes. 5. Provide resources, tools and supports for people to help each other, and or themselves. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Put in place ways to obtain sound and current data. Things change quickly. 2. Talk to your employees, customers to find out what they need to adapt to the changes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What guiding principles will you use to lead change? • What mindset, values, behaviors and actions are needed? • What do the people you lead or manage need from you? • What do you need from them? • What tools and supports do people need to adapt? • How will you measure success? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep a healthy routine. 2. Get dressed for work. 3. Maintain a structure to your workday. 4. Set boundaries between work, life and play. 5. Assess and prioritize realistic work, processes, policies and guidelines 6. Maintain or put in place new routines and rituals that help the team to work together, collaborate, problem solve, learn from each other and achieve their goals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What routines and rituals do you and the team need to be your best selves? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exercise daily 2. Put in place strategies to take CARE of yourself and others 3. Eat healthy 4. Get regular sleep 5. Take time, away from work to recharge and reenergize <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you doing to take care of yourself? • How well are you doing, taking CARE of your team? • Your family, friends? • Others? |

Patwell, B. (2020). Leading Meaningful Change: Capturing the Hearst, Minds and Souls of the People You Work With. Vancouver / Berkeley: Figure 1.

www.patwellconsulting.com

2. Another valued and thoughtful colleague, Jennifer Gerves-Keen, also provides a valuable resource for both leaders as well as teams in her 2020 publication, 'Show Up Like a Coach'. A particularly profound part of Jen's book is its emphasis on reading widely such that our learning journey is seen through a wider 'lens', informed by broader experience then adapted to enrich the specifics of our own work in support of clients.

Gerves-Keen, J. (2019) Show Up Like a Coach: It Will Change Your Life. Vancouver / Toronto: Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada. www.jgkonline.com

3. Over the years, Professor Amy Edmondson has established a solid body of work related to Teams. See her book 'Teaming: How Organizations Learn, Innovate and Compete in the Knowledge Economy' from 2012, (HBR).

Later works included 'Teaming to Innovate', 'Extreme Teaming Lessons' and 'Building the Future'.

Professor Edmondson coined the term "psychological safety" as an important need of teams, a reality which became so very clear during the pandemic.



Industrial Relations Centre (IRC)
Queen's University
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6
irc.queensu.ca

