

Leading with Emotional Intelligence

Beyond Emotional Intelligence:

Making Full Use of Your Intuition to Make Decisions

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The more a leader gets senior, the more decisions he has to make, and the less time he has for analysis before making each final decision.

Of course, the leader usually has teams to help him do a good part of the analysis. Still, he is the only one who can make the final call, and most often than not, he does not have all the data that he would have preferred to have.

In these cases, emotions can prove very useful, as they can bring precious messages that can help a leader in decision-making. Emotional Intelligence is therefore of huge benefit to the leader in these situations.

However, there are also cases when following our emotions to make a decision definitely isn't a good idea. Examples of such situations are:

- When emotions are running high. We are in the middle of an emotional episode. The emotional waves are high.
- When emotions are so mixed to the point of becoming confusing. In this case, there are so many emotional waves.

Understanding the emotional waves and what they mean is crucial.

However, sometimes we need to even deeper than the waves or beyond the realm of Emotional Intelligence.

This is where intuition comes in. Intuition is a fantastic resource for leaders. *Whenever we feel stuck at a rational level, and emotions are too mixed to be of any help, intuition brings clarity.*

Using intuition takes effort and practice, as it is something we were never taught. It is important here to realize that intuition is actually more than just a “gut feeling.” What many people call “gut feeling” and mistakenly call intuition is actually, as the term “gut feeling” suggests – a feeling or an emotion, for example fear or excitement. “Gut feeling” is certainly helpful in many cases, but it is not necessarily intuition.

In contrast to gut feeling, intuition is a place of great calm where there are no emotions.

But what exactly is intuition? Intuition is a source of messages that bypasses the conscious, rational mind. These messages can take different forms: a voice, a physical sensation, a picture. For some people, listening to their intuition is a spiritual experience, as they feel that they are tapping in a divine source.

On the other hand, intuition can be seen from a purely “non spiritual” angle. It can be described as resorting to the huge mass of information that is in our unconscious mind.

We perceive an enormous amount of information everyday. We are conscious of only a very small part of all these information, as the rest of it is stored in our subconscious mind.

Intuition utilizes the information in our subconscious to give us ideas borne not out of our rational mind or our emotions but from simply knowing.

Some leaders are not shy to admit and are even proud to say that they depend a lot on their intuition when making decisions. This is the frequently the case for many entrepreneurs.¹

However, most leaders are very reluctant to resort to intuition. Typical concerns are that it is doesn't look professional to be making decisions based on intuition, and how to

¹ For a good example, see the autobiography of Richard Branson, particularly the part where he describes the start of his airline, Virgin Atlantic.

explain to their peers, boss, and team members how they made the decision. Nobody wants to be branded as corporate fortunetellers or tarot readers!

These concerns make a lot of sense. Again, intuition is a tool that we were never taught to use anywhere, and therefore its use is not normal. Its use is surrounded by a cloud of mystery, generating distrust.

Another pitfall to avoid is overdependence on the use of intuition. When using intuition, one should not stop analyzing altogether. He should make sure to dedicate some time to look at the issue at hand with a sharp analytical approach, and then some time to use intuition.

Besides, even if one really prefers to use intuition, he always has the option to reflect on how he is going to present the decision to his boss, peers and team members with a sharp analytical eye. This is what one of my clients does. As he is massively using his intuition, he makes decisions quickly and with great clarity. And then works on developing an argumentation to present his decisions in a way that is understandable by his people.

Intuition is a resource that is always available and free, like a spring source. The problem is that this source of fresh water is located in a busy city with a lot of noise: our mind. Most of time, we don't hear our intuition because we are too busy thinking.

To use our intuition, we need to be able to consistently find this source in the middle of this busy city. This requires calming the mind and stopping incessant thoughts from covering the sound of the source.

How can one calm the mind? There are many ways, but one of the most potent is by going through a short process mixing visualization and breathing, in a similar way as processes we reviewed in the chapter on emotional management. Please note that this process is a simplified version of a longer process that was developed by one of the real experts on intuition called Judy Gee. This is the version that I use when introducing intuition to the senior leaders I work with. Judy Gee wrote a fascinating book called "Intuition" that I really recommend to you if you want to go deeper.

Let's create a first experience.

FIRST STEP

Think of a decision that you have to make, for example about hiring a candidate for an important position. As it is a very close call, you have been struggling with it for some time: there are quite many arguments in favor of hiring the candidate, but you have some reservations as well.

SECOND STEP

Then, follow the short process below to connection your intuition.

Find of comfortable position. Make sure that nobody is going to disturb you. Switch your mobile off.

Imagine that you are walking on a path in the nature. Feel the air around you. Feel the sun gently warming your body. Feel the air coming in and going out of our body as you are breathing.

In the distance, you can see a building. It could be a house or a temple. Keep walking on the path in its direction.

As you keep walking, imagine that there is a thread that is connecting you to the sky from the top of your head. Take some time to appreciate this connection to the sky.

Then, as you keep walking, imagine that there is another thread connecting you to the center of the earth from the lower part of your backbone. Take some time to appreciate this connection to the center of the earth.

You are now connected both to the sky and to the center of the earth. As you kept walking, you are now in front of the building that you could see earlier in the distance. It is a place where you feel "at home". It doesn't have to be a real building. Just imagine the place where you feel totally "at home".

As you are entering the building, make the movie in your mind as precise as possible. What is the color of the walls? What is the shape of the room? Are there windows?

Once you have a clear picture of the interior, imagine that you are sitting in the middle of the room. Your mind is very calm now. You can feel that there are very thoughts coming to your mind, like there are few clouds in a clear sky.

THIRD STEP

Ask to your intuition if you should hire this person. You can even create a dialogue with your intuition. If you are truly using your intuition, you should be able to feel that answers are not coming from your mind (in my own case, it feels like they are coming from an area around the chest). There are no emotions either. Answers come with clarity and certainty. Clarity and certainty are good signs that you are connected to your intuition.

In the example we chose (hiring a new person), it is likely to be a clear “Yes!” or “No!”

The whole process may seem too long to you. It is certainly not easy to get started on your own. It is very helpful when started to develop your intuition to join a workshop on this topic. Although it is not mainstream, there are now some professionals of personal development who organize sessions on developing intuition.

However, with some practice, you will be able to tap in your intuition anywhere and in a very short time (a few seconds). You will have to create new neural pathways to access your intuition.

But can you really trust your intuition? Isn't your intuition going to be wrong at times.

This is a very valid question. Especially because answers you receive can very surprising, and even take an opposite direction from what you had in mind. For example, if you were inclined to hire the candidate, although with some reservations, your intuition may give you a clear and loud “No way!”

This question whether you should trust your intuition or not can be answered by you only, after you experiment the process. In my case, consciously has proven extremely rewarding. At the same time, it is extremely difficult to build a strong case for others. Again, one of the hallmarks of intuition is that answers come with an incredible degree of

clarity. Once you have this experience, you don't even ask yourself any more if you should trust your intuition. It has become obvious.

I am well aware that for many leaders in organizations, particularly business leaders, the whole thing sounds very weird. However, my experience practicing this process with senior leaders makes me absolutely confident that, past initial reservations:

- most of us can access the benefits of intuition in a reasonably short time and
- it is a precious resource for leaders for decision-making.

A few pages is definitely too short to cover a topic as fascinating and rich as intuition, but this section is meant to give you an introduction and create some interest to go deeper. Again, the book by Judy Gee (simply called "Intuition") is highly recommended. But be aware that it was not written for business leaders. You won't find examples from business situations, and you will need discipline and determination to apply the content to your daily life as a leader. But it is really worth the effort.

Let's keep progressing with purpose!

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