CHAPTER 7

Emotional Energy, Humility and Systems Intelligence in Leadership

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Emotional energy (feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative) has an effect on all our activities. In leadership the dimension of emotional energy is essential. To utilize the possibilities that emotional energy opens up fruitfully the leader needs humility. Humility has been acknowledged as vital strength of leadership excellence. I suggest that Systems intelligence takes that insight one step further. By giving better understanding of systems we are in, uncovering the excellent actions and the significance of the context the Systems Intelligence opens up fruitful way to improve the systems we are in.

Introduction

Think about your feelings: have you felt today enthusiasm, elation or excitement? How about yesterday? Could things be different? Is enthusiasm possible? Is it possible in the workplace? It is amazing how easily the day can be filled with standard activities and lukewarm feelings that accompany them. Our interactions in the workplace are often emotionally controlled and goal-oriented. The spark of life can get lost. However, every interaction includes possibilities.

When did your colleague, workmate, subordinate or superior feel enthusiasm, elation or excitement? Have you contributed to someone's enthusiasm? We are easily trapped in our own subjective worlds and see others as objects. Our perspective inhibits us from seeing what is really significant and what is not. Humility is a great contributor to correcting that perspective.

Do you want the enthusiasm, elation and excitement in your workplace? Are you trapped into the systems which overrule your noble ambitions? This easily happens in our holding-back-systems, Hämäläinen and Saarinen (2006, p. 24) have emphasized. Systems intelligence seeks to highlight the problem and offers the tools for change.

This essay deals with all these important factors – emotional energy, humility and systems intelligence – from the leadership point of view. The aim is to look at emotional energy and humility in leadership and show how systems intelligence can vitally contribute when added in this context.

Emotional Energy

Randall Collins defines emotional energy (EE) in an individual as "a feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action" (Collins 2004, p. 49). He also says that emotional energy is a long lasting, strong, steady emotion. It correlates with the character strength of vitality as defined by Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 274). "At the psychological level, vitality reflects experiences of volition, effectance, and integration of the self at both intrapersonal and interpersonal levels". They see vitality as a positive emotional state which is active.

Collins shows that emotional energy is one outcome of a successful interaction ritual. The interaction ritual he defines as:

> "[R]itual is mechanism of mutually focused emotion and attention producing a momentarily shared reality, which thereby generates solidarity and symbols of group membership." (Collins 2004, p. 7)

In the centre of the interaction ritual is the common object, action or event. During the interaction ritual the common focus may change. Collins lists the following ingredients of the interaction ritual:

- Group assembly: "Two or more people are physically assembled in the same place, so that they affect each other by their bodily presence, whether it is in the foreground of their conscious attention or not." (Collins 2004, p. 48)

- Barriers to outsiders: "There are boundaries to outsiders so that participants have a sense of who is taking part and who is excluded." (ibid., p. 48)

- Mutual focus of attention: "People focus their attention upon a common object or activity, and by communicating this focus to each other become mutually aware of each other's focus of attention" (ibid., p. 48)

- Shared mood: "They share common mood or emotional experience." (ibid., p. 48)

The successful interaction ritual has the following outcomes:

- Group solidarity: Participants have a feeling of membership. This membership builds on the theme of interaction rituals where it is created. How much members appreciate the membership depends on the emotional energy which they get in the interaction rituals.

- Emotional energy in individual: "A feeling of confidence, elation, strength, enthusiasm, and initiative in taking action" (Collins 2004, p. 49).

- Symbols that represent the group (sacred objects): Visual icons, words and gestures can be the symbols which represent the group to its members and are pumped up with feelings of group solidarity.

- Standards for morality: Respecting group's symbols and protecting them from violation.

In unsuccessful interaction rituals, according to Collins, "there is low level of collective effervescence, the lack of momentary buzz, no shared entertainment at all or disappointingly little." (2004, p. 51). As an outcome the group solidarity is lacking, the individuals' emotional energy has decreased and the solidarity for the group's symbols is missing.

Interaction rituals constitute a chain. "Interaction rituals are connected in chains over time, with the result of the last interaction (in emotions and symbols) becoming input for the next interaction; thus EE tends to cumulate (either positively or negatively) over time." (Collins 2004, p. 118) However, Collins also points out that emotional energy is specific to particular kind of

situations or themes. It is possible to have low emotional energy at work but have high emotional energy in some hobby.

Power rituals as Collins describes them, operate in the micro-interactional level and power relations of agents are obviously relevant. Suppose somebody (or several persons) dominates the other in an interaction ritual. The dominant person's emotional energy might well increase in the interaction while the ones who have been dominated might suffer from emotional energy decrease; the bigger the power difference the bigger the emotional energy difference.

Status rituals as Collins defines them do not mean a hierarchical difference but sense of belonging or not belonging; in the micro-level inclusion or exclusion. He lists four different ways how individuals can differ in they status group participation. First one (micro-level) he calls ritual intensity which defines how much emotional energy is generated in the ritual. Second one (micro-level) he calls central/peripheral participation which defines the individual position in the interaction ritual. Third one (meso-level) he calls social density which defines how much time people are in each other's physical presence. Fourth one (meso-level) he calls social diversity (also called localism/cosmopolitanism) which he defines as the diversity of the group in the interaction ritual.

Emotional Energy and Leadership

According to Collins the emotional energy has an effect on our decision making process. "[I]ndividual behavior is motivated immediately and directly by EE-seeking; indirectly and implicitly individuals are driven to produce material goods, to just the degree that these resources are demanded by their favorite rituals" (Collins 2004, p. 173). Collins also presents the following formula.

$$\max \left\{ \frac{benefits\ (\text{EE})}{costs\ (\text{EE} + \text{material})} \right\}$$

This leads to the outcome that individuals are seeking interaction rituals which produce maximum EE and avoiding interaction rituals which do not increase EE or decreases it. If the work itself is not able to produce EE, the production of the material resources needed for the favoured EE-rich activities becomes the motivation for the work.

The organization hierarchy creates power and status difference. I would say that this difference creates emotional energy to leaders by its nature. This makes them more enterprising and loyal to the company. How leaders use the power and status difference offered for them effects to emotional energy of workers. Today, it is important to work efficiently in all levels of organization. Thus the emotional energy of workers should be taken into account in leadership.

Ghoshal (2005) reflects on negative and positive assumptions about people and how these affect management practices taken in use. These assumptions behind the theories in the science of sociology are self-fulfilling like Gergen (1973) points out. The emotional energy that workers shall get in the work place is closely related to leadership and the assumptions about the people that leaders have. Next we shall look at two different kinds of assumptions behind the leadership and how they affect emotional energy in the workers.

First assumption is that an individual is a *homo economicus*[1]. Ghoshal (2005) uncovers that this leads to pessimistic assumptions about the individuals and institutions. Individuals are seen to maximize their own benefit. This makes the leader to believe that the workers are just seeking a maximum salary with a minimum input. The obvious conclusion is that the motivation comes first and foremost from the material benefits (salary, bonuses and other material benefits). By connecting this to what Collins has said, it seems that workers are trying to maximize the emotional energy they will get from free time activities by maximizing the material benefits they can get from the work.

The other way to maximize the emotional energy is to maximize it in the work place. If it happens based on this homo economicus assumption I would say that it leads to seeking emotional energy via organizational status and power. This status and power difference compared to workers can even be a motivator because of the emotional energy it creates. In this case the power difference and status is not hidden but kept present in interactions. This kind of leader decreases emotional energy of the workers while increasing his own. From the company point of view this does not lead to optimum performance as workers emotional energy is decreased. If the leader also sees subordinates maximizing their own benefit with minimum input, the leadership style involves tight control, strict objectives and payment by measured results. As can be seen, this "ideology-based gloomy vision" like Ghoshal calls it, leads to the system of mutually holding back. "Holding back is a key form of human interaction. System of holding back traps us from everywhere … Such systems trivialize reciprocity, decrease vitality, and depress human life." (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006, p. 24)

Alternative assumption is what Hämäläinen and Saarinen (2006, p. 23) call basic human aspirations:

(1)   A person's sense of worth and desire to be respected

(2)   A person's desire to feel connected in the company of others

(3)   A person's desire to feel connected with something meaningful

This leads to optimistic assumptions about individuals. If these basic human aspirations are valued in the workplace, the individuals can develop reciprocal relations in the company. It can be fairly claimed that these basic human aspirations mentioned correlate positively with emotional energy. If the workplace resonates with these basic human aspirations, it produces successful interaction rituals which produce emotional energy to individuals and group solidarity. This moves the main motivation from material benefits to interactions with the group and to daily activities. The result is that workplace as a system is now increasing the emotional energy of the individual. This makes the individual more vital, gives a feeling of confidence, and makes people take initiative. This correlates with productivity.

"Positive emotions, positive energy, and positive human connections lead, in other words to mutually reinforcing upward spirals of meaningful experience and extraordinary performance." (Cameron et al. 2003, p. 364) The basic assumptions used in the systems intelligence seem to be powerful when maximizing emotional energy in the company. Systems intelligent leadership opens up a practical way to do it. This increases productivity to a new level.

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[1] Wikipedia: Homo economicus, or Economic man, is the concept in some economic theories of man (that is, a human) as a rational and "self-interested" actor.

Humility and Leadership

Giving up old assumptions about the individuals and the immediate need to increase one's own emotional energy is a challenge. It requires new perspective; ability to see things from the system level. When one is able to see himself as one actor in the system he is more capable to see other actors correctly. To see them as individuals who has previously mentioned basic human aspirations. This new perspective is closely related to virtue called humility.

Another problem emerges when one objectifies others. That easily leads one to one-sided conclusions and may even hide the humanity in others. After that the immediate touch is lost. The sensibility is gone. Humility gives the essential perspective needed to avoid the objectifying bias.

The essence of humility is the willingness to see oneself accurately, to feel no pressure to see oneself better than one actually is.

Humility is in a way the most hidden virtue because the one who boasts with humility proves that he does not have that virtue (Comte-Sponville 1995). Still I think we can easily sense humility and especially the lack of it. As Collins (2004, p. 54) says we monitor each other's actions when we are in the same room. The leader is likely to be monitored even more intensively. The microbehaviour is something that we cannot easily control. Real humility (or the lack of it) in the leader is visible in the micro-level behaviour. Minor details can well communicate the real attitude of the leader: e.g. going before someone in an elevator queue. If the leader's actions are not in line with his spoken words, problems are in the offing. Very often actions speak more than words.

Tangney (2002, p. 413) lists some key features in humility:

- An accurate assessment of one's abilities and achievements (not low self-esteem, self-deprecation).

- An ability to acknowledge one's mistakes, imperfections, gaps in knowledge, and limitations (often vis-à-vis a "high power").

- Openness to new ideas, contradictory information, and advice.

- Keeping one's abilities and accomplishments – one's place in the world – in perspective (e.g., seeing oneself as just one person in the larger scheme of things).

- A relatively low self-focus, a "forgetting of the self," while recognizing that one is but part of the larger universe.

- An appreciation of the value of all things, as well as the many different ways that people and things can contribute to our word.

Peterson and Seligman (2004) emphasize that humiliation does not create humility. Negative views of self i.e. shame, embarrassment and disgust with the self usually create a need to over-emphasize oneself and this decreases humility. In opposite to this "humble individuals have quite positive opinions of themselves if they base their sense of worth on their intrinsic value, their good qualities, a sense of compassion toward the self, their connections with other people, or their alignment with higher power", Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 23) emphasize. The essence of humility is the willingness to see oneself accurately, to feel no pressure to see oneself as any better than one actually is. When one sees his strengths and weaknesses accurately, he is able to improve himself efficiently.

In his well known paper, Jim Collins (2001) argues that in order for a company to become great it needs a level 5 leader. A level 5 leader differs from merely good leaders by having a fierce resolve and humility. He channels ambition into the company and not to himself. He does not bring himself up in the time of success but gives credit to others and external factors. When things are not running smoothly he does not blame others or external factors but looks where he might have failed and what he could do better. He is never boastful but instead demonstrates compelling modesty. He motivates through inspired standards and not through inspired charisma.

How to develop humility? At first glance it seems that there is not much you can do. Humility seems to be something that you have or do not have. Indeed, Peterson and Seligman (2004) and Collins (2005) say that it is still unclear how humility can be developed. However, Peterson and Seligman (2004) give some ideas which may promote humility development.

– Sense of security. This seems to be connected to basic assumptions of the individuals and I would call it emotional platform for humility.

– Close relationships. They make life deeper. Peterson and Seligman connect this to a character strength called perspective.

– New perspective. This is the change from self-focus to system-focus. Others are no more objects but subjects in this same system. It can be compared to a change from geocentric thinking to heliocentric thinking.

Systems Intelligence and Understanding the System

"By systems intelligence we mean intelligent behaviour in the context of complex systems involving interaction and feedback." (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2004, p. 1) Systems we are involved in are like this by nature. "We have to act without knowing for certain what our choices will bring." (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006, p. 1) Systems intelligence is acting intelligently in these systems.

To be able to act intelligently one needs to understand the ongoing system as well as possible. For this reason handling two or more different and even opposing perspectives simultaneously is important. Especially important are two perspectives based on insider's (subjective) view on the system, as opposed to an outsider's (objective) view.

Insider's view to the system

"[O]ne needs to be sensitive, situation-conscious, emotionally alert, sufficiently distanced, and sufficiently connected; one needs to be fine-tuned to the nonrational undercurrents in the context in order to make things work and in order to flourish." (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2006, p. 23) In systems intelligence being correctly tuned and sensitive is important. It enables one to recognize the weak signals that are undercurrent but important in the interaction.

The system tunes the individuals and individuals tune the system.

The system tunes the individuals and individuals tune the system. Stacey (2001) claims that we resonate bodily. Collins (2004, p. 75) talks about the microbehaviour and says that according to several studies speakers and listeners start to time bodily movements to the rhythm of the words been spoken. Whatever the exact mechanism of tuning is, it seems to happen at least in emotions and in the mental state. This tuning enables us to get more accurate view of another person's thoughts, feelings and intentions. Goleman (2006, pp. 88–90) sees this as one factor of social intelligence and calls it empathic accuracy.

If we look at the system from the outside objectively, this tuning does not happen. In an objective study we lose this component. In his power lab studies Barry Oshry (1999) has taken an outsider's and an insider's view to the system. He gives the following advice when one is inside the system. "Let your systems wash over you. Attend to your feelings. Use these feelings as clues to the condition of your systems and your relationship to them, and as cues to what action you need to take." (Oshry 1999, p. 187)

An insider's view requires tuning to the system by feeling and sensing the system; being a subject in the system. Feelings and thoughts that emerge to consciousness can be the trigger to take an outsider's view to the system.

Outsider's view to the system

We need to be connected enough to have emphatic accuracy. However, if we are too connected, we lose control to the system. We are not able to see the ongoing system. While being connected to the system one needs to be distanced enough to see the system also from a wider perspective. What does the ongoing system look like when you look at it from the outside?

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An outsider's view is detaching oneself from the system emotionally and mentally. It is challenging to do it on the fly. Emotions and mental tuning bind you to ongoing system. What you can do is to try to see yourself from outside as an agent in the ongoing system. The humility contributes well for unbinding yourself emotionally and mentally from ongoing system to be able to see it from new perspective. For humble individual the ongoing system is not defining his worthiness.

The outsider's view makes one capable of recognizing the "System Story" as Oshry calls it. "[T]he ability to recognize the System Story as it is happening, step out of the story, and create a new story." (Oshry 1999, p. 94) However, the insider's view gives some essential information of the system so that one is able to understand it more deeply than just having an outsider's view.

Systems Intelligence and Leadership

An individual's emotional energy is important from the company point of view. It enables him to work initiatively using the competence he has. It is also important that everyday work increases the individual's emotional energy. It motivates him to work. Humility in leadership is an important factor when creating a work environment where emotional energy is generated to individuals. It redirects the focus from what is best for me to what is best for the whole system. It is still possible that the system overrules our good intentions and the best for the system is not reached. Systems intelligence recognizes the influence of the system on the individuals and the overruling possibility it holds. It also makes visible the intelligent practices which can change the overruling system better to the individuals. Systems intelligent leadership is leadership which puts this intelligence into the practice.

Systems intelligence and emotional energy

In systems intelligence the interaction rituals are seen as a systems. These systems have some common characteristics but every system also has its own unique characteristics. To understand these common and unique characteristics of the systems one needs to be sensitive to the system and also see it in a wider perspective: to have an insider's and outsider's view. The emotional energy in an individual can be seen as an output from the system. The characteristics of the

system define how much emotional energy is generated to the individual. A systems intelligence leader recognizes the characteristics of the system and improves them. The result is that more emotional energy is generated to individuals.

For a systems intelligent leader the initial setting for interaction is "respect the other".

A systems intelligent leader is careful about his assumptions concerning others. He recognizes that it is easy to make conclusions about others according to their behaviour. Still the behaviour is dependent on the system. A systems intelligent leader keeps in mind the human basic aspirations and acts according to them. For him the initial setting for interaction is "respect the other". By this initial setting the interaction system gets better tuning from the beginning. It affects the shared mood that the system generates. This enables a deeper encounter. In the most optimal case it can be a "shared flow" as Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) call it.

Systems intelligence and humility

To be able to improve systems, the systems intelligent leader needs humility. Systems intelligent actions are often not so visible. Like humility they are hidden but work efficiently. Everybody feels that the system works better but often participants are not able to name the reason; someone or some actions that somebody has taken. In many cases the systems intelligent leader does not get applause for the systems intelligent actions he has taken. The reason is that all the agents in the system can act better but the trigger which changed the system is not visible. The systems intelligent leader just triggers the change in the system.

As can be seen one needs a perspective to be able to step aside and let others flourish. This perspective comes from a systemic view. Tutu (1999) brings up a broad view where the systemic connections between individuals are realized with the term *Ubuntu*. It is a central part of South African world view. It means that we are connected to each other. My humanity is connected to you and intertwines with your humanity.

To be able to have a neutral view of the system one often needs humility: the ability to acknowledge one's own contributions and mistakes, to be able to see what the system really is and still feel worthwhile. This base-feeling of worthiness maintains the systems intelligent leader's capability to act. The ability to see the system correctly makes him able to act intelligently.

Beliefs and belief leadership

 "Belief management and belief leadership, accordingly, will become cornerstone of systems intelligence." (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2004, p. 10) Here lies the emergent possibility which systems intelligence utilizes. Hämäläinen and Saarinen (2004, p. 10) list three critical dimensions of the systems intelligent belief orientation:

−   Thinking (believing) about one's own thinking (and believing), and realizing the opportunities therein.

−   Thinking (believing) about what others are thinking (and believing), and realizing the opportunities therein.

−   Thinking (believing) about the interaction systems, rituals, social habits and their chains, and realizing the opportunities of influencing those systems.

The quality of one's thinking and believing of others is crucial and contributes much to the shared mood. One's own thinking about others is visible in one's microbehaviour. The others can see the

microbehaviour and sense one's beliefs about them. It seems that they more or less start to embody one's beliefs in their behaviour if they have lower emotional energy or power in the ongoing system. This decreases their emotional energy if one's beliefs about them are negative. If one's beliefs about them are positive, it increases their emotional energy and gives them the possibility to express those attributes. A systems intelligent leader is able too see realistically the contributions of others but at the same time he keeps in mind that there are some possibilities in others which can become visible if the system changes to better. The task of a systems intelligent leader is to make the system better.

"Systems intelligence is based on a principle of dynamic humbleness, which acknowledges that my perspective of other might be drastically mistaken, particularly regarding what the true aspiration of those others might be." (Hämäläinen and Saarinen 2004, p. 15) Everyone more or less adapts to the system. In particular, those who have lower emotional energy or power in the ongoing system adapt more. In this case they true thinking and believing is not visible in the system. The systems intelligent leader keeps in mind the basic human aspirations and reflects own beliefs of others actions, thinking and believing based on those. If there is a paradox between these, the systems intelligent leader acknowledges that the information which he has might be insufficient to make exact conclusion. Handling the paradoxes is important in the leadership like Kauremaa (2007) points out.

Systems intelligent leadership highlights this possibility – the uniqueness factor in us.

Interaction systems and social habits play a significant role in producing emotional energy. Often these can be improved in bringing some small change. This can be done by bringing something new which makes the system humanly richer. For example, having a relaxing conversation in the beginning of a meeting instead of going straight to the business leads to a different kind of shared mood. The systems intelligent leader is able to recognize interaction systems and social habits which do not provide sufficient quality to a shared mood. He is also able to see what actions would improve the system.

Systems intelligent leadership in practice

There is no strict definition of what the systems intelligent organization means in practice. The system is always constructed from parts. The possible combinations that can be made from the parts seem infinite in human systems. Also the interactions between the humans seem to happen in many layers. It can happen at least in emotional, mental and spiritual layer but probably better and more exact naming can be done someday. Anyhow, I would like to emphasize the uniqueness possibilities that every interaction includes. The system can flatten out this uniqueness but the possibility for better is still there. Systems intelligent leadership emphasize this possibility – the uniqueness factor in us. It promotes the interaction forms where the individuals are able to find and use their strengths. Nevertheless, there is not a fixed form for this. The complexity of individuals and systems makes the standard agenda impossible. However, there are some attributes that can be connected to a systems intelligent organization. This kind of attributes are usually accepted, appreciated and expected in systems intelligent organization.

- Atmosphere of safety

- Appreciating diversity

- Giving attention

- Giving appreciation

- Listening

– Giving positive feedback when ever it is possible

– Creating an environment that says back to people 'You matter'

– Seeing the great possibilities in others

– Every interaction is taken as unique

Think about Marion Keisker in the Sun records studio Memphis in July 1953[2]. Young truck driver walks in and says he wants to record two songs. This 18 years old man looked very different with his long sideburns and his loud clothes. Marion did see the possibilities in this young man. She recorded one and half songs and played them to Sam Phillips and the rest is history of rock music. It was impossible for her to guess what her actions started and what this young man became. Everyone holds potential which does not have to be as huge as Elvis's, but still it has significance to some system if cultivated. Seeing possibilities in others helps them to cultivate and bring up the hidden potential.

The systems are always on the move. There are some states in the system that seem to be unchangeable but still the system is on the move. The changes can be so small that we do not notice them. Heraclitus[3] brings this fact clearly visible. He says you cannot step two times in the same river. The water and you are not same anymore in the second time. Every interaction is unique. It seems that same habits are repeated. Still there is some variation.

Conclusions

This article has argued for the importance of emotional energy, humility and systems intelligence for leadership. Starting from emotional energy and its significance to performance and motivation of an individual. Moving on to leadership which utilizes emotional energy for the benefit of the company. This leadership requires humility. The importance of humility for leadership and for an individual has been brought up. Systems intelligence in understanding the system better by opposite views was looked at. Finally systems intelligence was connected to emotional energy and humility and the systems intelligent leadership was presented. Special attention was given to beliefs and belief leadership which are a key part of systems intelligent leadership. Finally some issues about practical systems intelligent leadership were dealt with.

Key notions of this article are:

– The basic human aspirations need to be taken into account in leadership.

– Humility is an essential part of leadership.

– To be able to understand the system and lead the system one needs subjective and objective views simultaneously.

– Understanding significance of beliefs is important in leadership for one to be able to improve systems with systems intelligence.

The interaction systems are an important part of leadership. They bring in practice the leadership and the values. Leadership which is based on the value of virtues builds an effective and healthy organization. Systems intelligence leadership brings these virtues to daily life.

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[2] http://www.elvispresleynews.com/WhoDiscoveredElvis.html

[3] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraclitus

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