

Reel Leadership II: Getting Emotional at the Movies

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Abstract

Emotional intelligence (EI) is emerging as an area of interest in leadership development. Recent research stresses how valuable strong EI skills are to the success of the person, team, organization, and society. Unlike IQ emotional intelligence skills can be improved with focused training, coaching, and lifespan experiences. Effectively used, film can be a worthy instrument for educators, facilitators, trainers, and coaches to bring to their professional toolboxes to assist in EI skill building efforts.

Introduction

We present a sequel to last winter's *Journal of Leadership Education* article entitled, *Reel Leadership: Hollywood Takes the Leadership Challenge* (Graham, Sincoff, Baker and Ackermann, 2003). "Reel Leadership" focused on the application of film to leadership practices from Kouzes and Posner's popular book, *The Leadership Challenge*. In *Reel Leadership II: Getting Emotional at the Movies*, the long-standing interest in emotional intelligence (EI) motivates us to combine the use of film with applied leadership development through EI skill building. "Guided viewing" (McFarland, 2001) with movies is our focus, and we structure it according to the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) model developed by Reuven Bar-On (Table 1). We discuss practical issues and conclude with an EI resource for guided viewing of movies (Table 2).

Opening Credits: Background on Emotional Intelligence (EI)

We express cognitive ability as IQ (Intelligence Quotient) and define it as executive functions such as the ability to concentrate, plan, organize, articulate, comprehend, assimilate and interpret facts, and as including memory, reasoning, recall, symbolic thinking, and visual-motor performance (Stein & Book, 2000).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a term formally introduced by Yale researchers Salovey and Mayer (1990). Confirming its broad appeal, emotional intelligence is the topic of one of the most widely read Harvard Business Review articles. It was written by Daniel Goleman in the mid-1990s (Stein & Book, 2000).

The roots of emotional intelligence theory go back further. In the 1920s, American psychologist Thorndike discussed the existence of “social intelligence.” Two decades later, Wechsler expanded this concept by proposing that emotionally related skills are determinants of personal success (Stein & Book, 2000).

Several other researchers explored the early concepts of EI from the 1950s to the 1980s, notably Albert Ellis and his study of understanding emotions in a reflective, cognitive way – the source of his Rational Emotive Therapy (Stein & Book, 2000). In the early 1980s, emotional intelligence gained widespread recognition as representative of one of the distinct areas of education professor Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences – specifically, intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences that reflect non-intellectual abilities (Epstein, 1998).

Salovey and Mayer continued their research in the early 1990s, and Goleman further established EI in the public’s awareness with subsequent books about the topic (Stein & Book, 2000). Emotional intelligence integrates now into the academic, corporate, and social mainstream as both an area of research and a recognized skill set that individuals develop.

Reuven Bar-On’s research in the 1980s established a model for emotional intelligence. His in-depth, longitudinal study of emotional competencies as factors in achievement shaped his definition (Bar-On & Parker, 2000). He developed the Emotional Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) instrument to measure scales of emotional competencies (EI) distinct from the cognitive domain (IQ) (Bar-On & Handley, 1999).

Table 1 shows Bar-On’s identification of five realms from the EQ-i instrument containing 15 scales of emotional intelligence. He defines them as “an array of non-cognitive capabilities, competencies and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures” (Bar-On, as cited in Stein & Book, 2000, p.14).

Plot Summary: Why Should We Care About EI Skill Building for Leadership Development?

We acknowledge the self as the starting point for leadership development (Greenleaf, 1970). Our emotions, infused as they are with our inner development, factor into our leadership ability. Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) echo the findings of George and Bettenhausen as well as Ashkanasy and Tse when they declare “leaders’ emotional states and actions do affect how the people they lead will feel and therefore perform. How well leaders manage their moods and affect everyone else’s moods, then, becomes not just a private matter, but a factor in how well a business will do” (p. 18).

Research findings in business case studies detail positive outcomes linking leadership success and strong emotional intelligence competencies (Cherniss, n.d.). Stein and Book (2000) cite studies that indicate on average 6% of job success relates to IQ, whereas EI predicts from 27% to 45% of it. Goleman (1995) suggests that IQ level may gain employment for oneself, but that one’s EI level accounts far more for career advancement. As Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) affirm, “The glue that holds people together in a team, and that commits people to an organization, is the emotions they feel. How well leaders manage and direct those feelings to help a group meet its goals depends on their level of emotional self-intelligence” (p. 20).

We consider high emotional intelligence integral to leadership ability. Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al. (as cited in Northouse, 2002) developed a skills-based model of leadership with components that include competencies and individual attributes that complement the Bar-On model of emotional intelligence (Stein & Book, 2000). The problem-solving and social judgment skills of the first model reflect similarities to several of Bar-On’s realms and scales of emotional intelligence competencies, including flexibility and interpersonal skills (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., as cited in Northouse, 2002; Stein & Book, 2000).

Table 1. BarOn EQ-i (Emotional Quotient Inventory) realms and scales

Emotional Quotient Inventory		Emotional competencies defined as:
Realms	Scales	
Intrapersonal the state of the “inner self” regarding feelings, and life direction	1. Emotional Self-Awareness 2. Assertiveness 3. Independence 4. Self-Regard 5. Self-Actualization	Understanding one’s own feelings Expressing and standing up for oneself Being self-directed and self-controlled Acceptance of oneself as good Attaining one's full potential
Interpersonal relating and sustaining with others	6. Empathy 7. Social Responsibility 8. Interpersonal Relationships	Awareness and understanding others’ feelings Cooperative and constructive member of one’s social group Establishing and maintaining mutually satisfying relationships
Adaptability comprehension of and flexibility to demanding situations	9. Problem Solving 10. Reality Testing 11. Flexibility	Defining problems with effective solutions Congruency in subjective emotions with objective reality Adjusting to changing situations
Stress Management managing duress and maintaining control	12. Stress Tolerance 13. Impulse Control	Coping successfully with adversity and strong emotions To resist or delay an impulse, drive, or action
General Mood life attitude and mental outlook	14. Happiness 15. Optimism	Enjoyment and satisfaction with one’s life and oneself Positive attitude, especially during adversity

Source: Stein & Book (2000). *The EQ Edge*. Toronto, CA: Multi-Health Systems.

The skills-based approach, like the Bar-On model, assumes that personal capabilities are acquired over one’s lifespan, thus allowing individuals the capacity for leadership development (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, et al., as cited

in Northouse, 2002). Therefore, in contrast to IQ, which peaks and stabilizes after age 17 (Stein & Book, 2000), EI improves throughout adulthood (Bar-On, as cited in Stein & Book, 2000; Bar-On & Parker, 2000).

Stein and Book (2000) maintain that because emotional intelligence is “made up of short term, tactical, dynamic skills that can be brought into play as the situation warrants...individual building blocks of emotional intelligence – and its overall structure – can be improved by means of training, coaching, and experience” (p. 21).

We use Bar-On’s Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Adaptability, Stress Management, and General Mood realms and their scales in Table 1 (as cited in Stein & Book, 2000) as our framework to show how we may enhance emotional intelligence competencies for leadership development through film viewing experiences.

Intermission: Movies as the Bridge to Developing Emotional Intelligence

Empowered leadership and management skills require self-awareness, personal strength, and relationship-building abilities – all components of emotional intelligence (Kruger, 1999; Drucker, 2001). Movies are an ideal framework to illustrate EI competencies.

Why use movies as a training tool to deliver a strong focus in leadership education? Our backgrounds are in organizational leadership education, assessment, and training. Our knowledge of adult education and student development reinforces for us the benefit of looking for qualities of design involving choices in novelty and variety – that is, effective, accessible methods and tools to engage learners at all levels (Schlechty, n.d.; Kuh, 2002). Movies are a universal experience for participants in leadership development and educational environments. The environments range from youth activities to adult education, from classrooms to community service groups, and from college-level student leadership programs to leadership degree curricula.

According to Higgins and Striegel (2003), “What movies do more than anything else is to provide a fictional situation that can be translated into a hypothetical situation in the workplace. They serve as launching points for discussions about real life cases” (p. 4). Movies, therefore, are learning conduits that bring focus to issues dealing with the human aspects of an organization (Graham, Baker, Sincoff & Ackermann, 2003).

We explore why movies appeal to people as a popular learning application. As Hofman (2000) states, people praise “films that grapple with ethical and personal quandaries played out by realistically nuanced characters”, allowing viewers to “vicariously gather the life experience that is crucial to the exploration of [EI skill] formation” (Frank & McBee, 2003, p. 5).

Leadership educators communicate to learners that movies offer a bridge to learning capabilities that affect their personal and professional growth. Thus, we support that:

- EI skill development is elemental to individual and organizational growth.
- EI skills are improved with targeted training.
- Movies are an entertaining and persuasive way to boost EI learning.

The remainder of our article shares recommendations for facilitators of leadership programs. Readers will find a table of select movies matched to EI competencies to apply as a teaching resource in their development of leaders.

Action! Using Movies to Develop Emotional Intelligence

Guided Viewing

- **Definition and Purpose:** The “guided viewing of film” facilitates the lesson for participants (Hebert & Spiers Neumeister, 2001, p. 33). Viewers watch movies or selected scenes, and structured questioning explores the concepts observed. People relate the movie content to aspects of their own lives, and “the information and understanding engendered by this interaction may then be used to cope more effectively with difficult situations or emotions” (Frank & McBee, 2003, p. 5).

The prerequisites to such learning are: (a) adequate preparation by the presenters prior to the guided viewing, which leads to (b) skilled, focused facilitation during the process. It is, however, the knowledge of the process, enthusiasm for the audience, and integration of the EI learning objectives that make facilitators effective. Learners respond to this use of movies and, in turn, significantly enrich their grasp of the targeted concepts.

- **Process:** Learning takes place during the viewing, mid-point, and the final debriefing process (McFarland, 2001). According to Shrodes (as cited in Frank & McBee, 2003), the stages of the guided viewing process are the same as those used for guided reading. While observing the actors and scenes in context to themselves, viewers may experience:
 1. Identification (seeing similarities).
 2. Catharsis (experiencing the emotions depicted).
 3. Insight (reflecting on their identification).
 4. Universalization (employing newfound concepts to their own relevant scenarios).

Our experience with students confirms that when they are debriefed in class after viewing the movie clips, their concepts emerge for discussion. Some of the ideas were not grasped by *all* students at first. However, after continued discussion of the scenes, these varying concepts became clearer for all.

- Method: Viewing the films follows this typical sequence:
 1. Pre-screen movies and selected scenes for the EI skills highlighted.
 2. Plan for the movie scene(s) selected to run, usually five to 15 minutes.
 3. Cue the DVD or videotape to the start point ahead of time.
 4. Set-up the scene: Introduce content, characters, relationships, and EI points to observe.
 5. Break at “pause points,” if needed, to reflect and discuss (McFarland, 2001).
 6. Follow with a debrief session of questions targeted to EI learning outcomes.
(Graham, Baker, Sincoff & Ackermann, 2003; McFarland, 2001)

- Benefits using movies via the guided viewing process: There are several benefits, including:
 1. The media are easily available and inexpensive to rent or buy. This includes videotape, DVD, cable subscription, or internet download rental for one-time viewing.
 2. The ease of administration and simpler technology appeal to us since our environments are becoming increasingly multi-tasked and overloaded.
 3. Movies are tailored to the audience and setting since they represent a variety of EI competencies and interactions.
 4. Movies appeal to visual learners, who engage several senses.
 5. Popular movies hold audience interest readily because of the pervasiveness of them as an entertainment form in our culture.
 6. Movies are inspirational, challenge thought, and stimulate free-flow discussions that promote learning.
(Clemens & Wolf, 1999; Frank & McBee, 2003; Higgins & Streigel, 1999; Jones, 2002).

Selection of Movies and Scenes

- Movie Genres and Range of Selections: Decisions, Decisions: Facilitators and viewers are receptive to recognizable, easy-to-find movies full of scenes that are great discussion starters in guided viewing sessions. Movies that are recent offer a fresh perspective on emotional intelligence since well-known, older films are used extensively in management and leadership training environments.

Hollywood filmmakers deliver the majority of popular films used in training applications. Drama, comedy, adventure, and animation are a few of the film genres that facilitators select, ranging from classic to contemporary movies.

Locate lesser-known movies, such as independent (“indie”) or international productions, by scouting online and print reviews or word-of-mouth recommendations. They yield scenes, as well, that are worth seeking out.

- Audience: Who’s Here? The learning audience may influence your effective selection of movies. Is the group representative of a corporate, non-profit, or dot.com culture? Is the session for youth programming (e.g., 4-H clubs) or university-level programming (e.g., college student leadership programs).

The generational mix can be evenly distributed across the generations or weighed toward a particular type, such as the 1950s and 1960s “Boomers” or the 1970s and 1980s “Gen-Xers.” Pop culture media like movies influence generations and organizational groups differently (Strauss & Howe, 1991).

Consider, for example, *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946), *Star Wars* (1977), or *Miracle* (2003). Which of these movies will speak to your audience? Our criteria for selecting the best choice of film include choosing classic, fantasy or reality-based movies to motivate better group interaction.

- Criteria for Scene Selection: Who Views? Facilitators consider scenes that reflect an appropriately matched use for the training objectives, setting, and participants. While the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) movie ratings of G to PG-13 lend themselves to most training environments, critically acclaimed movies with more restricted view ratings may contain scenes that are valuable and appropriate for viewing by general audiences.

Copyright Considerations: Yes and No: Facilitators benefit by remaining aware of copyright regulations and fair use guidelines. Recording videotaped or digitized media for personal or educational use has a fine line of protection or restriction that may vary by circumstances. If unclear, facilitators may do best to rent, buy or otherwise gain the appropriate permissions or institutional policy interpretations for using videotapes, DVDs and other media versions of movies for educational or non-commercial, professional purposes.

- Technological Realities: Glitches Happen: As always, back-up training materials are advisable when using technology-reliant training approaches since technical mishaps may prevent movie viewing. As usual, having alternate internet access, back-up discs, overhead transparencies, and appropriate printed handouts safeguard the presentations.

One Tool for the EI Toolbox: Movie Guide Showing EI Competencies

In Table 2 of *Reel Leadership II: Getting Emotional at the Movies*, a movie resource guide presents EI competencies as defined by Bar-On (1999). It is based on the following points:

- Table 2 applies attention to EI competencies based on the Bar-On model (as cited in Stein & Book, 2000) applied for the first time here, rather than more widely used leadership and management themes.
- The film focus is beyond the standard and often overused films (e.g., *Dead Poet’s Society*, *Apollo 13*, and *Norma Rae*). Movies tied to EI competencies are presented that are more recent (2002 and later) than those usually seen in leadership and management applications.

Table 2. Movies selected for an emotional intelligence (EI) focus for guided viewing based on the BarOn EQ-i model

Movie Title (2002 and later)	BarOn EQ-i Emotional Scales	Plot Summary with EI Focus
Amelie	Happiness Optimism	A whimsical film wherein the protagonist overcomes a lonely childhood and consciously brings joy and kindness to the lives of others in an inventive and surprising fashion.
Antwone Fisher	emotional self-awareness, self-regard impulse control	A young man with gifted abilities gains understanding on the origins of and control over his temper. Aided by his Naval psychiatrist, he achieves closure for himself and his family members. Based on real events.
Around the World in 80 Days	Independence problem solving flexibility	Around-the-world, fantasy adventure. Independence, flexibility, and innovation are shown by misfit travelers on a voyage of inventions and discovery of inner strengths.
Changing Lanes	Social responsibility stress tolerance impulse control	A failure of several emotional competencies results when a traffic encounter turns to confrontational, then into a vendetta when two people face critical business and personal deadlines on the same day.
Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World	Independence self-actualization problem solving	A well-crafted, historical sea adventure with a comparison and contrast of the emotional and intellectual competencies of two leaders – the ship’s captain and the ship’s surgeon/naturalist.

<p>The Matrix Reloaded</p>	<p>social responsibility problem solving stress tolerance</p>	<p>Philosophical, high-action science fiction sequel regarding the heroic efforts of embattled inhabitants to save their world down to the deadline in this futuristic setting. Personal and team relationships.</p>
<p>Miracle</p>	<p>Assertiveness self-actualization stress tolerance</p>	<p>Based on the USA 1980 Olympic gold medal hockey team, it gives a notable perspective on the concepts of team building and leadership strategy, centered on the character of its coach. Inspired from the coach's life story.</p>
<p>Seabiscuit</p>	<p>emotional self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, problem solving</p>	<p>With intuitive recognition, strongly held beliefs, and unwavering commitment, a team of three men transforms an underdog racehorse of questionable pedigree and ability to an inspiration for the nation and as the winning, best-loved sports legend of the 1930s Depression. Based on real events.</p>
<p>Secondhand Lions</p>	<p>Assertiveness interpersonal relationships, reality testing</p>	<p>A boy's summer with two uncles with colorful backgrounds leads to their trust and understanding of one another. The uncles' empathy responds to their nephew's needs. Under their care, he learns to assert for himself what he needs as an individual.</p>
<p>Something's Gotta Give</p>	<p>Emotional self-awareness, interpersonal relationships</p>	<p>Self-realization and relationship development are the focus for a mature couple in this lighthearted comedy.</p>
<p>Spider-Man 2</p>	<p>self-regard social responsibility reality testing</p>	<p>Explores the person behind the hero's mask, including doubts, angst, and frailties. Emotions are shown which impede self-regard, and how even superheroes overcome bad days for better ones.</p>

The Terminal	Empathy problem solving flexibility	A foreign traveler left with no country or passport must adapt with ingenuity and flexibility to inhabit the safe zone of an airline terminal while avoiding officials and deportation.
Under the Tuscan Sun	Independence problem solving happiness/optimism	A newly divorced American woman establishes outward independence and finds inner strength after transplanting herself to the Tuscany region of Italy, where she transforms her forsaken home, her friendships, and herself into something better and beautiful.
Veronica Guerin	Assertiveness social responsibility stress tolerance	Based on the life of the Irish journalist assassinated for exposing the extent of the organized drug trade in mid-1990s Dublin. Her death galvanized public response and forced major changes in Parliamentary law.
Whale Rider	Assertiveness self-regard self-actualization	A young, Maori girl comes of age in present-day New Zealand, challenging the segregation of tribal rites and traditions of leadership for males. She defines her role within herself and for her Maori community.

Sources: Stein, & Book (2000). *The EQ Edge*. Toronto, CA: Multi-Health Systems.

The Internet Movie Database (<http://www.imdb.com>).

The Closing Scene

Because people are storytellers at heart (Thornburg, 2003), movies were created as just one of many forms used for telling human stories. They serve to bridge emotionally significant insight and personal growth. Our learners construct personal meaning through this medium on their journey of leadership development. Their enhanced emotional capabilities extend from inside themselves outward to each other and their communities.

Ultimately, we hope to encourage leaders who are not only cognitively intelligent, but also emotionally wise. With that wisdom, they may seek out organizations “worthy of their respect...where their intelligence is exploited in the right way,

where it is put to its best use, while it is appreciated and rewarded” (Daughten, 2004, D-2).

So dim the lights, hand out the popcorn, and pass the tissues. Now settle back and encourage your leaders that there really is something to get emotional about at the movies!

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