

The Relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Learning

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Introduction

Organizational learning is one of the key components to success for corporations. It is often defined as “...the process of gaining knowledge or insights that can potentially influence the behavior of an organization...” (Hunt and Lambe 2000, p. 26). Understanding new industry developments, product innovations, changes in customer needs and competitive threats represent some of the issues that should rank high among organizational learning requirements. Even in situations with minimal competition, continuous learning is necessary for an organization to thrive and survive.

We propose that one of the factors in successful organization learning is emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence was initially proposed as a way to link the concepts of human emotions and cognitive ability (Mestre, et al., 2016). At its core, the concept is a reflection of how individuals process emotions and the corresponding emotional information (Mestre, et al., 2016; Mayer et al., 2008). Although, there have been numerous definitions proposed (Barling, Slater and Kelloway, 2000; Goleman, 2001; Scott-Ladd and Chan, 2004), we use the definition proposed by Mayer, et. al (2000) “the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others” (Mayer, et al., 2000, p. 396).

Emotional Intelligence supports organizational learning by facilitating the relationships which make organizational learning possible. The new information that is acquired and shared in the organizational learning process is reliant upon healthy network relationships both within and external to the organization. Healthy network relationships are established with the ability to recognize, regulate and express appropriate emotional response.

Although there is a recognized relationship between EI and organizational learning in the extant literature, there is a need for better understanding of the relationship. Scott-Ladd and Chan (2004) suggest that employees with high EI are more efficient at contributing to organizational learning. While Anderson and Kumar (2006) suggest that emotions play a critical role in

initiating, developing and maintaining long term relationships. These long-term relationships are a key underlying factor in organizational learning. Considering that both organizational learning and emotional intelligence deal with modification of behavior due to external stimuli, this is a relationship worthy of study.

Consequently, the following research questions are addressed: (1) What determines the strength of the influence of emotional intelligence on organizational learning and (2) What components of organizational learning are more influenced by emotional intelligence?

Model

This paper explores the relationship between emotional intelligence and organizational learning. For this paper, our definition of emotional intelligence is defined as “the ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others” (Mayer, et al., 2000, p. 396). We use the Sinkula (1994) definition of organizational learning, “as the process of information acquisition, dissemination, and development of a shared interpretation, which eventually becomes embedded into organizational memory.”

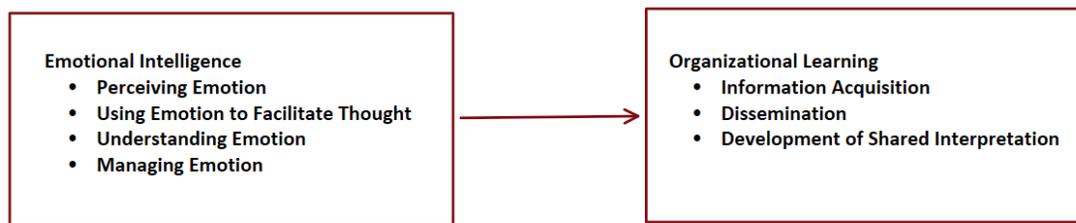


Figure 2: Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Learning Model

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Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Learning

Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers, and Practitioners:

This paper addresses the relationship between Organizational learning and Emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence is pivotal to the organizational learning process, as high levels of both independent EI and team EI assist in the successful establishment and maintenance of the relationships that feed the organizational learning process.

Track: Marketing Strategy

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