

## *Scratching the Surface: Being a more self aware leader*

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What's the value of being more self aware? How self aware are you? How can you become more self aware? To answer all three questions, I believe you have to start with the first one. If the value isn't understood or recognized, the second two questions don't much matter. Based on personal experience and research that has been done on emotional intelligence, the value is overwhelming both from a personal and professional development perspective. For the purposes of this article, my viewpoint will be that of professional development.

The focus of my experience and research in self awareness is in the realm of leadership development. We know, emotional intelligence is critical to successful leadership and is a key predictor of success. So the value in having a developed sense of self awareness is largely based on the fact that successful leadership is relationship driven and therefore the more developed your self awareness the more effective your interactions with people. I often refer to this critical dimension of leadership as our intra-personal compass. A compass is a tool that guides you. Your intra-personal compass represents how you feel and think in situations and helps you make effective decisions about yourself and others particularly during challenging or difficult situations. In other words, this helps you stay in tune with your emotions and how you tend to respond to specific situations and people.

Self awareness can be defined as your ability to accurately assess your strengths and weaknesses, and have a deep understanding of your emotions in different situations. The greater understanding you have of yourself and how you think and feel in situations and particularly when interacting with others, the more successful you will be at adapting and influencing others. The ability to adapt and effectively influence others starts with understanding yourself first, in other words understanding you from the inside out. Just as successful leadership doesn't happen in a vacuum, developing your self awareness cannot happen in a vacuum. Inquiry and self reflection are perhaps the most effective techniques to develop self awareness. This requires a willingness to examine our behavior, communication style, strengths and weaknesses.

Self awareness is a key predictor of leadership success. So how willing are you to begin the process of self reflection? It does require a willingness and commitment to your own personal growth and development which will pay you huge dividends over time. There are several tools available they range from simple to complex. Eliciting feedback from others, using self assessment tools, utilizing 360 degree feedback instruments will enable you to become more self aware.

I encourage you to begin scratching the surface of who you are and discover your opportunities to lead people more effectively.