

Unfeminizing Emotional Intelligence at the Executive Level

by

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Abstract:

As a result of the collapse of the U.S. financial systems, more regulations have emerged that will impact routines and transform cultures aimed to approach economic demands. To ease the chaos that may be associated with the implementation of the new regulations, mainstreaming the negotiation processes may be essential. This research show that women executives have negotiated in multi-facet environments approaching situations that require not only being flexible, but require being knowledgeable of and adaptable to situations, laws, regulations, and organizational policies that impact an industry.

Key words: emotions, female executives, gender perception, finance, negotiations

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After the monetary collapse of 2007-2008, the U.S. regulatory bodies have been under more bureaucratic pressure to establish stronger safeguards, accountability, and adaptability to the current economics demands of the United States and the global world (Gadinis, 2013). Accountability is at the forefront of corporate leaders to develop codes of conduct that focus on transparency, social responsibility, and fiscal responsibility (Arvidsson, 2010; Morris, Grippo, & Barsky, 2012). Because women, however, have been described as emotional, women have been hindered to a certain degree to progress in the executive ranks and contribute to the economic demands as a major organizational stakeholder (Haselton & Ketelaar, 2005; Medina, 2008; Nelson-Porter, 2004). During the negotiation process, although women demonstrate adaptability and accountability, women demonstrate capabilities to negotiate and form consensus to approach economic demands, placing women in the pool of qualified candidacies to hold more major organizational stakeholder positions.

Theoretical Background

Accountability has created a need for better decision-making and transparency (Marcus, 2012). Corporate social responsibility plays a fundamental role within organizations related to trust, ethics, empathy, adaptability, and integrity regarding all stakeholders (Cooper & Wagman, 2009; Chen, 2011). Emotional adaptability enables an individual to think, learn, and evaluate ones emotions during decision-making processes. Emotions, however, change with different environments, social, friendships, goals, work, or fear (Nesse & Ellsworth, 2009).

An individual's conscience, sub-conscience, and perceptions help with recognizing the importance of emotional intelligence (Garg & Rastogi, 2009). Growing beyond emotional adaptability and expanding beyond an individual's emotional capabilities, however, enable an

individual to move beyond limitations and expand into new areas, such as accountability, integrity, and leadership (Caust, 2009). Limitations may include bureaucratic politics and organizational cultures shaped by myths.

Conceptual Foundation and Literature Review

Bureaucratic politics. Economic and politics entrust an important component in understanding financial regulation (Kroszner, 1999). Politics or political policies that derive regulations are components of corporate, personal, and economical strategy developed to protect all stakeholders, employees, and customers (Kroszner, 1999). The U.S. regulatory bodies are independent of the U.S. government with strong monetary policies (Gadinis, 2013), but since the 2007-2008 financial collapse, more influence has resulted from the U.S. Executive, Legislature, and Judicial systems. The U.S. financial regulatory bodies include the Federal Reserve, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The 2007-2008 financial collapse focused on the paradigm of the prominent U.S. financial regulatory bodies that should have self-corrected if one event occurred, such as the bank failure, mortgage failure, or an organizational collapse (Gadinis, 2013). Pressure from bureaucratic regulators may have been a direct or indirect influence (Kroszner, 1999). Lobbyists' pressure on elected officials from special interest groups, unions, or other groups may influence the bureaucratic political game that happens within organizations operating in the United States or abroad.

Corporate hierarchy adds to the political bureaucracy within an organization (Bendor, & Moe, 1985). Budgeting and political goals and control are significant bureaucratic behavior (Bendor, & Moe, 1985). Oversight, accountability, negotiation processes, and support should be

components of organizational policies and budgets, but many opinions have aroused on who should lead and govern processes that impact the economic systems (Bendor, & Moe, 1985).

Emotional intelligence myths. When the discussion of leadership emerges, genders become stereotyped. The male gender is mythic as the dominate species (Medina, 2008). Women have been mythic as more emotional and nurturing than men (Medina, 2008; Nelson-Porter, 2004). This could be considered a fallacy, in the 21st century!

Various studies have been conducted about gender comparing nature and nurture (Medina, 2008; Nelson-Porter, 2004). Socialization may increase one's emotional awareness. Without socialization, understanding how our emotions are useful and how our brain receives and transmits one's emotional reactions has been found to be difficult (Medina, 2008).

The cultural gap between men and women and their emotional intelligence is how each balances or controls our emotions in specific environments. Home, work, and social life determine how each of us handle or control our emotions. The glass ceiling is a great example of where women have not broken through enough to make a massive difference. If women make mistakes, the error is blamed on the home life or emotions. If men make the same mistake, the errors are concealed. Gender perceptions exist, marginalizing the progression of women (Nelson-Porter, 2004; Medina, 2008).

The personal paradox of emotions may have created individuals pursuing specific goals rather than internalizing the various emotions that are involved with day-to-day decision-making (Haselton & Ketelaar, 2005). Organizational gender theory identifies significant evidence that women wield less power in the workforce, the pay structure is lower, and the career opportunities are not adaptable as they are for men (Portillo & DeHart-Davis, 2009). Even with more women attending college, two-gender income households, women have made huge leaps in

the workforce, but the recognition or lack of respect in many arenas still exists (Haselton & Ketelaar, 2005; Medina, 20008; Portillo & DeHart-Davis, 2009). Based on the organizational gender perception theory formed by Nelson-Porter (2004), when male executives immediate see a woman, male executives see a nourisher rather than a decision-maker. If both genders were viewed as equals, the culture of the organizations may become better adaptive, strengthening organizational learning networks.

In a study on Gender and Organizational Rule Abidance, Portillo and DeHart-Davis (2009) added validity to the argument that women are known to follow the rules while men are known to bend the rules. The ability to measure power or break through the glass ceiling for women by following the rules under organizational gender theories limits flexibility (Portillo & DeHart, 2009). Flexibility within the workforce is important, but adaptability and accountability are just as important within the emotional intelligence of reliability within workforce systems. Gender equity or inequality, thus, should not be based on evident. The ethical behaviors, traits, and skills of employees should be the core of which major stakeholders lead to shape organizational cultures and approach economic demands (Portillo & DeHart, 2009).

Negotiation skills. Men, at a young age, were considered to be the dominate ones in the verbal art of negotiation (Medina, 2008), but within the last 15 years, women have stepped up to the plate in the verbal art of negotiation. Negotiations are finding the ‘end game,’ which is results that benefit stakeholders (USIP, 2002). Many negotiators have an agenda of what must be accomplished or a wish list that oftentimes extend beyond as a bargaining chip (USIP, 2002). Flexibility and time are key when acting as a negotiator (Medina, 2008; USIP, 2002).

Conflict resolution, communication, listening, and attitude, however, do affect the art of negotiations (USIP, 2002). Technology, two-income families, and the influence of television

have influenced women to become open communicators (Medina, 2008; O’Leary, Choi, Gerard, 2012). Rather male or female, the critical art of verbal negotiation relies on the attitude, leadership style, emotional intelligence, and openness to change of the individual (Medina, 2008; O’Leary et al., 2012).

Methodology and Findings

In 2013, female executives were asked to reflect on a business negotiation onset whereby female decision-makers with diverse behaviors were able to achieve consensus. Data were analyzed based on the responses of the 5 female executives or senior managers by a representative from Brigitte’s Technology Consulting and Research Firm to show that emotional intelligence is not gender specific. Four research questions guided the current research. In phenomenological research, 5 to 10 knowledgeable participants are sufficient to understand a subject matter (Leedy, 1997). Of the female executives aged 42 and older (see Table 1), four had graduate-level education and four had 18 or more years of experience in the Accounting sector.

Table 1

Female Executive or Senior Managers Demographics

Sector	Title	Race	Age	Years in accounting sector	Highest educational level
Tax Services	Registered Tax Return Preparer (RTRP)	Caucasian	64	21	Doctorate’s
Credit Union	Manager	Caucasian	42	18	Some college
Federal Government	Budget Officer	African American	45	22	Master’s
Banking (former)	Temporary Director of Accounting	Caucasian	46	24	MBA/ACC and Master of Science in Accountancy
Publications	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	Caucasian	43	0	Completing Doctorates of Law degree

In regards to limitation, there was no way of verifying who answered the online questionnaire. Email distribution and social media were the primary source to find potential candidates. Many female executives listed on social media were not actually involved in finance, but were primarily involved in marketing. Furthermore, other members involved in the negotiations were not asked to give their perspectives on the processes, and no male perspectives were provided and only women perspectives about the flexibility of female actors were obtained. Findings show women who do not use emotions during the negotiation process are able to contribute to decision-making processes; and thus, should be held to the same standards as their male counterparts as having integrity and being accountable and adaptability.

Negotiation environment. The environment of which negotiations commence may contribute to the outcome. Most of the negotiations conducted by the female executives or officers commenced in an office environment either face-to-face or by phone, email, or social media. Face-to-face negotiations to include disciplinary conversations seem to be the most popular method whereby female and male employees find a meeting of the minds. Negotiations may commence in an isolated environment whereby two parties discuss issues in a closed door office setting or in a more open and inclusive environment whereby a team of employees discuss issues in a conference room. One may debate whether a closed “glass” door whereby others can be seen constitutes a total isolated environment whereby emotions can be limited or an inclusive environment whereby emotions may be discerned from the expressions of viewers.

Influential factors associated with consensus. The female executives or senior managers learn that openness, understanding, flexibility, and commitment are important in the negotiation processes. Two of the female executives select acts that pose the less harm or impact. In regards to prioritization, one female executive suggested that leaders should “provide

enough time for all stakeholders to be successful and set deadlines that are realistic and mutually beneficial.” The results of the negotiation experiences, however, materialized a more profound realization of how state and federal laws, circumstantial evidence, credibility, and urgencies influence behaviors, acts, and decisions.

Flexibility of female actors during the negotiation process. Striving for a “win-win” situation, as one female executive responded, is ideal. Experiencing flexibility from most or all parties in a negotiation process, based on the perspectives of other women, do not reflect reality. Based on three perspectives, being inflexible was perceived as a negative approach. Inflexible negotiators were said to cause psychological reactions: to flight (leave the environment), freeze (become quiet/nonresponsive), or fight (result in misery/become reactive). One executive shared, “Though she (supervisor) was frustrated, she did not voice her opinion until after the change to the disciplinary action was made.”

Inflexibility, however, can be viewed as having a level of confidence in how to approach a situation. One female executive responded that a female negotiator who was more familiar of the behaviors of the employee under review “pleaded and convinced the panel to allow this employee to receive a pay increase versus a one-time bonus.” Inflexible negotiators may also perceive that hidden support systems, who more likely are stakeholders of a higher ranking than the other parties involved in the negotiation, will support their acts if they stand their grounds.

Outcome of negotiations. Despite the results of any negotiations, the outcome of the negotiations may not be revealed until the implementation processes. Resistance to the decision on how to implement processes is common; resistance to decisions made by a woman is even more common. In many cases buy-in is influenced by the acceptance of others. One female executive shared, “Initially, one of the males were reluctant but was convinced when the female

provided reasons why it was a better decision. The other males concurred with the decision after the first male was convinced.”

Despite showing and explaining statistics to some male stakeholders about the process, some men continue to implement processes based on visions held by men, with claims that the information that formed the basis of the decision is inaccurate. In some cases, women who are not flexible during the negotiation process often do not share their perspectives about the implementation process, but view the process from a distance. Two female executive shared, though team participation and adjustments to the implementation processes, the outcome of the implementation processes will be successful contributing to a more healthy organizational culture to approach the economic demands.

Results and Conclusion

The specific art of verbal negotiation links to the bureaucracy within an organization, the industry, and around the nation (Medina, 2008; O’Leary et al., 2012). Looking at the nature versus nurture aspect in the art of negotiation, some female executives are great at the verbal negotiation while others take time to learn this negotiation (Medina, 2008). Yes, negotiation takes time to learn, but the process does take commitment to survive in the organizational bureaucratic process to learn to succeed (Medina, 2008; O’Leary et al., 2012).

If inaccurate financial reportings made by women continue to generate anomalies, more seasoned male executives may consider becoming visionary mentors and provide women with the essentials to ensure more profound decisions. Visionary mentoring involves establishing close rapports and ensuring protégées have the appropriate opportunities, measures, and leads to conduct quality research and make quality decisions and accurate reportings (Brenda Nelson-Porter, personal communication, December 15, 2008). Because state and federal laws impose a

direct or indirect influence on corporate decisions (Kroszner, 1999), political policymakers should not be excluded from the corporate mentoring process. With the emergence of a diverse team of visionary mentors embodying knowledge on finance and economics, more protégées may gain broad insight, enhanced negotiation and reporting skills, and better opportunities to become part of the decision-making process at the executive level subduing any gender perceptions and stereotypes, as well as any corporate or governmental financial collapses.

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