“Emotional intelligence is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships.”

– Daniel Goleman,
*Working with Emotional Intelligence*

With the economy still in the doldrums for many regions of the U.S., the demand for high-performance workers, and the continued strain on business leadership, maybe now is the time for a different perspective.

In my travels, I’ve had the opportunity to meet some forward-thinking leaders. Probably at the top of that list is Daniel (Dan) Waldschmidt, who views himself as the Chief Antagonist. He has not only managed successful companies but is now advocating for a more common-sense and caring approach to organizational and individual success.

I caught up with Waldschmidt as he was just leaving a keynote address at the Wharton School of Business and flying out to deliver another presentation.

**LHS:** “Dan, much has been written about leadership by well-known business executives and experts. Now the term ‘transformational leadership’ seems to be picking up speed, especially during these economic times. How would you define or describe this term?”

**DW:** “Leanne, simply speaking, transformational leadership is about ‘being by doing.’ Business executives and managers are confused about what things they should be doing. Many of these are external behaviors and, in some cases are quite corrosive, like ‘cracking the whip.’ When those behaviors do not work, then these individuals look to a management behavior or what some call the next ‘flavor of the month.’ You must change who you are, change from within you.”
LHS: “So to ensure clarity, from what I just heard, transformational leadership returns to self-leadership, but what makes it different?”

DW: “The difference is emotional intelligence. However, to truly embrace emotional intelligence begins with what I call the EDGY attitude. After completing hundreds of hours of personal research, and from my own observations as a CEO, I recognized four qualities that were always present for highly successful people who were transformational leaders.

First, these leaders behaved in Extreme manners. Now, don’t confuse “extreme” with dangerous or radical. These individuals engaged in relatable behaviors that got them noticed. Having Discipline followed. EDGY leaders disengaged from any actions that were contrary to their plans, to their goals, to their overall purposes. Excuses of not getting something done to blaming others were not part of their DNA.

Embracing a Giving mindset is another quality. This is not about giving dollars or money, but truly about delivering more value than people pay for; much of that value is emotional in nature.

Finally, being human is where it starts and ends. As I share, being human with a Y means that these EDGY leaders pulled at the human heart string. They told compelling emotional stories that others shared and retold.”

LHS: “Dan, you mentioned emotional, and that being emotional is essential. What impact does emotional intelligence have on leadership?”

DW: “More and more studies continue to support that the lack of emotional intelligence is directly connected to leadership flaws and contributes to ill health. The result is higher business costs.

For example, Daniel Goleman’s research suggests that 95 percent of the difference between an average leader and a superior leader was emotional intelligence. Another more recent survey from Global Mindset revealed that almost one in four employees had five or more of the key factors for depression. In this same survey, 92 percent said their ‘emotions were reliant on workplace results, rather than factors such as self-belief and intrinsic work ethic.’ The negative impact of this can be directly attributed to the over $11 billion lost to absenteeism, $26 billion to health treatment costs, and the almost $25 billion to low productivity at work.”

LHS: “Speaking of Goleman, in his books Working with Emotional Intelligence and Primary Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence, Goleman discusses the relationship between change and emotional intelligence, and how a cognitive shift is required. What is your perspective?”

DW: “I agree there must be a shift, but I believe it is an attitudinal shift. Our founding fathers believed being here was better than being there. Each generation wants it better for the next generation. These folks worked harder.

I am reminded of Colonel Sanders, who shared his recipe with 1,000 investors who all turned him down. During this process, he continued to revise his secret seasonings a total of 127 times. Through hard work, he finally succeeded. Many business leaders give up too soon.”

LHS: “One of the consistent topics with regard to the economy is uncertainty, given the political environment and pending legislation, as well as world events. How do you advise business people to deal with uncertainty?”

DW: “Ignore it! Uncertainty is a human emotion. During a recent management team meeting, one of my vice presidents shared that he was overwhelmed and frustrated. In this state of mind, he was not productive. So the focus turned to what he could do to manage those feelings by taking control of what he could manage.”
"...don't just think about something (logic), but put a plan in place that is relatable to you as well as to those who work with you. This demonstrates a leader with high capacity for emotional intelligence."

Ask yourself what you can do. For example, is it to make money? Then make a plan around that goal."

LHS: “So uncertainty, from your perspective, creates a lack of clarity and leads to possibly a malaise, lethargic feelings and behaviors? If that is correct, then how does one gain greater clarity?”

DW: “Yes, to answer your question; and to regain clarity begins by applying the EDGY elements or qualities. Is your behavior extreme? Are you being relatable to others? Are you pushing the envelope, or is the envelope pushing you?

Are you disciplined in your behaviors? Are you doing what you say you are going to do? Are you setting goals, working your plan, and taking control of life?”

Is having a giving mindset part of your behaviors? How can you give more value than the people (customers and others) are paying for? This isn’t just about the dollars; it is an investment of emotions.

Where is the human element in your behaviors? This isn’t just about you, but about being a person that others trust. People want to be assured that what they’re doing is correct. Your role as an emotionally intelligent leader is to ask yourself this question: ‘How can I reassure them?’"

LHS: “In thinking about EDGY, where do you envision yourself in five years?”

DW: “My vision is to be touring the world, but more so the USA, and inspiring people to be better than they currently are. Using my first book, EDGY Conversations, due out in 2012, I share how amazing Americans are and continue to be, such as Carl “Sugarfoot” Joseph.

He was born in Madison, Florida, a little east of the state capital. The fourth of 10 children, Carl was raised by a single mom. They were a poor family living in the country, without any real access to recreation or sports facilities.

And that’s probably why Carl worked so hard to become a star athlete. Growing up, he would play basketball, street football, fight with the older boys. And it taught him to be tough. He would get thrown violently to the ground and spring back up, pushing himself back up with his hands to launch himself back into the action.

In seventh grade, he made the basketball team. Standing under the rim, he would jump straight up and dunk the basketball. And that was just the beginning.

In high school, he played basketball, football, and track – setting records in almost every sport. At one track event, he high jumped 5’8”, then turned around and threw the shot-put 40 feet and the discus another 130 feet. And in one football game against much bigger opponents who double-teamed him, Carl exploded with 11 tackles, an interception, and a blocked punt.

The young superstar didn’t stop as he made the transition to college. Carl went on to play middle
backer at Bethune-Cookman College, where five of his teammates went on to play in the NFL, including Lee William, who was a Pro-Bowl defensive end for the San Diego Chargers. The Bethune-Cookman College football team were conference champions, and a lot of it had to do with the inspiration that came from Carl himself.

You see, Carl was born without a left leg.

Every sports competition was a lopsided effort – everyone else running, turning, and jumping on two feet, while Carl did it all hopping on one foot. No prosthesis. No crutch. Just heart! (Excerpted from EDGY Conversations).

Carl’s story is just one of those from the many amazing Americans I have discovered and share with others. Individuals like Carl demonstrate EDGY attitudes and go on to inspire others to be more, to achieve more, to live the American dream.”

... believe that you can change things. Put your head down and work harder, and you will find people will follow you.”

LHS: “Thanks for sharing that inspiring story of an amazing American. Are there any final words you would like to share to the business community here in Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and across the county?”

DW: “First, I would encourage people in business to hold onto the American dream. By having the guts to tough it out, like Colonel Sanders or Carl Joseph, you can overcome the obstacles and challenges that life throws at you.

Second, don’t just think about something (logic), but put a plan in place that is relatable to you as well as to those who work with you. This demonstrates a leader with high capacity for emotional intelligence.

Third, believe that you can change things. Put your head down and work harder, and you will find people will follow you.

Fourth, remember to assure and support others who are facing similar challenges. Think about how you would want to be supported. Then trust in those feelings through your behaviors.

Finally, embrace an EDGY attitude and you’ll be an inspiration to others.”

Leanne Hoagland-Smith, executive consultant, corporate coach, and author, helps innovative leaders at all levels and in all industries to dramatically improve their teams’ results. What this looks like, and why, differs for each firm; therefore Leanne offers a free strategy session to those who forward a request to leanne@processspecialist.com.