

Case Study

Emotional Intelligence at FedEx

Global shipping company FedEx has a “people first” philosophy and believes that for the company to deliver world-class customer service its managers must also have an attitude of service in managing their associates.* FedEx has received numerous awards for being one of the world’s most respected and admired companies for over ten years* and is one of the world’s most successful businesses. Although the company is focused on speed and logistics, from the start it recognized that its employees were the key to the company’s success and that leadership would be essential to effective management. Fit with a service-oriented culture is taken so seriously that one of FedEx’s core managerial values is to be a servant leader.*

FedEx recognizes that leadership has grown more complex and wants to develop leadership capabilities in its managers to manage its changing workforce. The company wants leaders who make fast and accurate decisions, who are able to influence others and motivate them to give their full effort, and who can help build a culture where diverse employees drive for exceptional performance in a sustainable way that creates value for all of its stakeholders.* Jimmy Daniel, senior leadership facilitator at the FedEx Global Leadership Institute, said, “Some leaders have an innate ability to provide what’s needed to create a satisfying and rewarding work environment for employees, but many others need to develop this skill set.”* To measure leadership performance, FedEx administers an annual survey where all employees can provide feedback about their managers. The survey’s themes include fairness, respect, listening, and trust. A recognition that all these characteristics are related to relationships and emotions created an interest in emotional intelligence as a learnable skill set that would enhance managers’ ability to lead in the FedEx way.*

FedEx decided to increase its focus on emotional intelligence in its leadership development training to give all new managers a strong people-first foundation on which to build their managerial careers. To build teams in which employees give their full effort, FedEx believes that task-based management is insufficient and leaders need to manage their own emotions and behaviors to effectively serve as role models, mentors, and motivators at an emotional level.* A five-day course and six-month follow-up coaching process was developed to identify new managers' strengths and give them specific emotional intelligence competencies to improve on.

The emotional intelligence training and coaching program focused on showing managers how to manage themselves first and take charge of their own emotions and behaviors so that they can be effective influencers and role models. Most leaders showed large improvements in relationships, influence, and decision making because of their improved empathy, emotional literacy, and ability to navigate emotions.* FedEx has been extremely pleased with the success of the emotional intelligence development program, training over hundred facilitators to run the program and coach new leaders worldwide.*

Questions

1. Do you think that emotional intelligence would be important for a manager at FedEx to have? Explain your answer.
2. How does FedEx develop its new leaders' emotional intelligence?
3. What else do you think that FedEx can do to enhance its managers' emotional intelligence?