Chances are we all have at least one moment in our lives that we wish we could take back. For Meg Whitman, one of these moments may have been when she allegedly yelled at an employee, who was attempting to prep her for an interview, and proceeded to shove the individual. As the then-CEO of eBay, Whitman was penalized through exacerbated media coverage and a six-figure settlement with the individual. However, because of her title, she maintained her position at eBay. The majority of us would not have been so fortunate.

Instead of losing one’s temper as Whitman did and letting emotions hijack the situation at hand, through self-management we can gauge our emotions as an indication of how we feel and choose to manage them instead of letting them manage us.

For example, Jonathan, a computer programmer, is known for a consistently patient and empathetic attitude. In the midst of confrontational or emotional meetings, he is able to actively listen to others and thoughtfully respond with understanding and wisdom. He doesn’t shy away from the point, but rather he sensitively addresses the issue in a direct manner. With the ability to distinguish emotion from logic, Jonathan embodies a self-managed leader who flourishes at managing others and communicating effectively with his team. If there is a crisis, it’s obvious that Jonathan is the first person you would want to call.

Self-management means that an individual demonstrates self-control and an ability to manage time, priorities and decision-making capacity, creating a more effective leadership style. There are several elements to successfully implementing self-management.

One of the most critical components of self-management is self-control. When mastered, a person manages their emotions in stressful situations in order to achieve short-term and long-term solutions. Embodying self-control means “going beyond knowing yourself to knowing how to conduct yourself,” and going “beyond a victim mentality to that of an owner’s mentality.”

Another dimension of self-management rests in one’s productivity. Being productive includes managing the tasks at hand and effectively prioritizing one’s workload to meet goals accordingly. It is important to maintain focus to complete initiatives while staying open to the
possibility of shifting priorities when needed. By productively managing one’s self, you will be able to “own your zone” of influence and responsibility within your organization.

**Authenticity** is the willingness to be transparent with others about one’s feelings, values and actions. Essentially, an authentic individual is one that shows a sense of integrity. Often times this entails admitting when one makes a mistake and having the personal will power to sustain a strong work ethic while living out both personal and organizational values. Know yourself as your strengths and weaknesses are key to maintaining authenticity.

Being **adaptable to change** is also an important component of self-management as change often carries emotional charge such as resistance, fear or insecurities regarding the particular shift. With the ability to remain in a problem-solving mode with a calm and rational approach, an individual will be able to think forward in the midst of challenges rather than getting stuck in the past or bogged down by mistakes.

Lastly, taking the **initiative** to do whatever it takes to optimize the future for the organization is an imperative dimension of self-management. By actively working through any fear and taking prudent risks for the benefit of the company, one will create opportunities and control the destiny of the organization. A strong initiator effectively binds and loosens the rules or structures for the sake of success, navigates the tension between stability and innovation, and discerns their own intuition to arrive at a solution that best serves the needs and opportunities for the organization.

To successfully lead an organization, you must be willing to initiate self-management in all aspects of managing others, understand your strengths and weaknesses and maintain responsibility for your actions. Whitman’s behavior when confronted by her co-worker was appalling and had dire consequences. Many people feel overwhelmed in certain situations, however, as leaders, it is imperative to maintain self-control and know that you are leading by example. If she had exhibited self-control, she would have avoided the negative media coverage and a hefty settlement. More importantly, leaders that master managing their own emotions are able to influence others and make better decisions.

By modeling integrity and self-management skills, as Jonathan has done, those surrounding you will follow your example in their own way. Don’t expect others to lead like you do. Instead, empower them to be their own authentic leader that embodies self-management in their day-to-day life. Be the person that manages emotions effectively when others might be driven toward adrenaline or panic to avoid making emotional decisions versus well thought out logical conclusions.

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