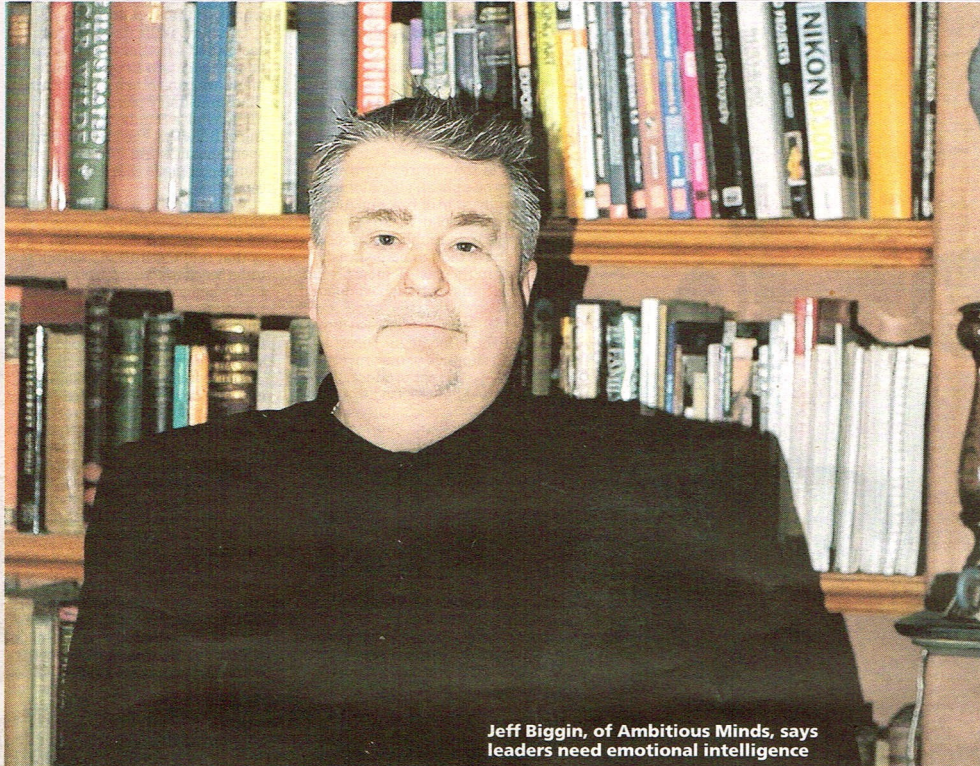


# Leadership skills are key in times of turbulence



Jeff Biggin, of Ambitious Minds, says leaders need emotional intelligence

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DURING the worldwide recession, commodity prices have fluctuated widely, but there is one asset which has seen a steady rise in its value – leadership.

As conditions became tougher and the management processes of simply cutting costs and hunkering down proved inadequate, senior managers have begun to change their approach.

Jeff Biggin, head of leadership development at Liverpool-based training and education firm Ambitious Minds, has worked with a number of companies to help them develop, communicate and implement their own responses to the turbulence.

“The workforce can be operating under great pressure and uncertainty, caused by job cuts, pay freezes and other problems,

and they are looking for someone to provide the answer,” said Mr Biggin, who is a specialist in leadership and organisational development.

“People want to know how to tackle situations of uncertainty. It’s best to be honest and ask ‘how do we solve it?’.

“If you rush into command mode, the majority will stand around waiting to see what you are going to tell them to do next. This creates a culture which will stunt the commitment and the creativity of the workforce.

“Instead it will be collaboration, and not command, which produces the most successful outcomes.

“When there are no clear answers, all you can do is get people to buy in to the fact that there are no clear answers – but tell them that what is required is that everyone brings their skills and commitment and become part of developing a plan for the best way forward.”

In a world of tame and wicked prob-

lems – where the former can be solved by a management process, but the latter are much more complex to solve – there is no doubt in which group responding to the global economic crisis falls.

Mr Biggin added: “Austerity is a wicked problem.

“To get over it you have to be creative, adaptive and work together.

“You are trying to get people to buy in and then develop strategies to move beyond it.

“Leadership operates mainly at the emotional, while management operates at a rational, calculated level.

“In austere times, if we are going to try to motivate people to come together and do the best they can, that means connecting at this emotional level.

“It doesn’t mean systems and processes aren’t appropriate.

“But people who are going to be leading this will require a more collaborative approach where people can motivate themselves, and commit and align to what needs to be done.”

However before rushing out and embracing the workforce, the would-be leader needs to look closer to home.

Mr Biggin said: “You have to be really certain of yourself, which is why leadership is about developing emotional intelligence – that self-awareness, that ability to recognise emotions are contagious.

“If you have no empathy and no understanding of how you impact on other people, you will never be able to build effective leadership relationships and get people to follow you.

“Once personal leadership has been developed, they can then move on to leading others, and then begin to lead the business in its widest sense, of stakeholders, strategy and vision.”

## What is emotional intelligence?

JEFF Biggin, of Ambitious Minds, talks about the importance of emotional intelligence (EI) – but what exactly is that?

EI is a relatively recent behavioural model, rising to prominence with Daniel Goleman’s 1995 book called Emotional Intelligence.

It is increasingly seen as relevant to organisational development and developing people.

EI is the ability to identify, assess and control the emotions of oneself

and recognise the emotions of others and how they impact on those around them.

There is a growing school of thought within the business world that possessing EI skills is essential for a manager who wants to get the best out of his or her team.

Some researchers suggest that emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened, while others claim it is an inborn characteristic leading to natural born leaders.