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As a young professional looking to climb the ranks quickly, it's paramount that I be in touch with the pulse of what's happening around me. That means understanding the entire ecosystem that I'm a part of and being able to adapt to thrive inside it.

The downside, however, of making yourself visible to others is that you are very much in the spotlight.

People are going to watch you closely when you're ambitious. The question they are asking themselves is, "Would I follow this person into battle?"

To ensure the answer to that question is "yes" you need to show them a calm, capable and yet courageous demeanour. You must be in control of your emotions and be able to discern when to display them.

With that in mind, let's explore different expressions of emotions in the workplace and assess some of their pros and cons.

1 HAPPINESS

Some days I make a point of showing up to work happy. I smile when I come in. I say "good morning" loudly.

I only have a small team at the moment, but I can guarantee that on days like these the likelihood that my staff will ask for time off will double, or my boss will come in and remind me about that really tedious report we need to submit next week.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Every boss has things he or she doesn't like to do. For example, as an Australian, I'm conditioned to take my annual leave in chunks.

But in Malaysia, employees seem to prefer taking long weekends as often as possible, so I tend to *ho and hum* when someone asks me for next Monday off.

By showing up to work in a great mood, I give my colleagues the chance to broach these kinds of topics with me in a more comfortable space; and even though I still cringe on the inside, I make it a point to smile and say "sure".

Nobody's in a great mood all the time, so being happy to the point of being idealistic may give people a pause to consider how genuine you really are.

Being yourself is important – authenticity is of vital importance as a leader.

2 ANGER

Expressing anger will have a powerful effect on the people around you, especially if they look up to you. The

SHOWING EMOTIONS AT WORK

HOW ARE YOU TODAY?

THOUGHT OF THE WEEK

entire world around you will fluctuate as a result, and so it's key to show anger only when that level of honesty will achieve something.

Note that there is an important difference between getting angry and losing your temper. Anger and the expression of it can be healthy, but it's a potent tool.

If you are angry because something didn't get done, for example, the person who didn't do it will become upset.

The question is whether showing this person your reaction will help them to understand the gravity of the situation and spur them to greater heights, or simply make them scared of you.

Losing your temper, on the other hand, shows a lack of control and you will lose the respect of people around you immediately.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Expressing anger at work is complicated. If you care to Google it, you will find some very interesting studies which have shown that men and women are perceived differently when they express anger in the workplace.

For men it confers an advantage. It shows passion. For women, it seems to create the impression that they can't control their feelings.

Fair? No. Double-standard? Absolutely. A reality we need to deal with? Unfortunately, yes.

Expressing anger is the emotional equivalent of dropping a large rock in a pond. You can only drop the rock, but the waves created by that action is entirely out of your control.

3 DISAPPOINTMENT

"I'm not angry, I'm just disappointed" is the line we all dread to hear. As much as anger can upset a person, they will usually write it off as a knee-jerk reaction. Disappointment, on the other hand, really sticks with you.

When someone respects his or her boss, an expression of disappointment is going to have a huge impact.

I've seen people stay up all night redrafting proposals and dropping everything to take a second shot at a piece of work in order to make amends.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

The relationship between managers and staff members is deep. Everything from promotions to pay rise to opportunities for growth stem from bosses' feedback about their employees. That means when expectations aren't met, staff will take it very seriously.

As a manager, if you are going to let someone see that you're disappointed in them, you'd better be more than sure that you've set them up for success. Very often managers set their workers up to failure by providing inadequate support or clarity on what's required.

Turning around after that and saying you're disappointed is a sure-fire recipe for disaster. Don't be surprised if you see resumes spitting out of the office printer if you're this kind of boss.

4 PASSION

Passion is infectious. When you work for someone who's passionate about what they do, you often feel connected to something bigger than yourself.

Passion gives you a sense of purpose in your work that no amount of goal-setting and mid-year performance reviews will ever achieve.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

Showing passion for what you do helps you cross that line between management and leadership. When you really believe in what you're doing, you have a certain inner buzz, energy and enthusiasm, which others will find infectious.

When you can communicate your pas-



sion to others, they will follow where you lead. As with all things, it's important not to be a constant bubbling pot of emotions, otherwise people will get passion fatigue.

But when used in the right place at the right time, showing your passion will inspire the people around you to follow you straight into Mordor if that's what you'd ask of them.

IN CONCLUSION

It's really worth reading up in your own time on the benefits and drawbacks of showing emotions at work. There are all kinds of ups and downsides to it that merit thought and consideration.

The most important skill you can cultivate as a young leader is awareness of your emotions. That's the first step in learning how and when to display them to the best effect.

And don't be discouraged if you're having a bad day and snap a little. Nobody's perfect.

■ Christopher Moore is an Australian finance professional working in Kuala Lumpur. If you feel that his work-life examples resonate with your own solutions, engage with Christopher by emailing editor@leaderonomics.com