

Take Your Team to the Oscars!

James Terrell and Marcia Hughes

The Help, *Moneyball*, and *The Descendants* – these Oscar nominated movies demonstrate ways of understanding team and individual emotional and social intelligence. The Oscar nominated movies and some other great ones we highlight demonstrate interesting tips for team and individual awareness. This is a great way to build team engagement and knowledge on how to improve skills. It always helps to have a model so our discussion is organized around the Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey® (TESI®), which includes the seven key skills we've found teams need for building their ESI.

We list two movies for each of the 7 skill areas and discuss the first one. We hope you'll comment on our blog site and contribute to this fun learning opportunity for all of us! We thank the many people involved in making these movies for the great entertainment and the remarkable ways in which your work teaches us. We enjoyed the movies we are reviewing here and recommend them to you.

Team Identity: *The Help* and *Of Gods and Men*

Team identity measures the level of pride each member feels for the team as a whole, and how much connection and belongingness members feel to the team.

The Help: The team is composed of African-American maids in Jackson, Mississippi at the dawn of the civil rights movement. A plucky new college graduate who grew up there is horrified with the way her grown-up school chums relate to their maids. So she asks one to tell her story and eventually they all get involved, and what's been going around for so long starts to come around at last. The maids had always given each other emotional support; this project brought them together in an act of tremendous courage to have more of a sense of pride, possibility and certainly belongingness to their team.

Motivation: *Margin Call*, *Albert Nobbs*

Motivation is a competency that measures the team's internal resources for generating and sustaining the energy necessary to get the job done well and on time.

Margin Call: In this case the team is made up of professionals in a financial company who have just realized they are holding tens of millions of dollars worth of worthless stock. They decide to sell it to their clients the next day in order to save the company. This is capitalism at its worst, and the few conscientious team members cannot change the self protection trend. At the end of the day the conscientious ones are unable to shift their corporate compliance habits, the result is disaster for the company's investors. This is a movie your team could see in order to strike up considerable discussion about



appropriate motivation and to ask when do we stick with the pack and when do we break free? It can be a great start to discussions about ethics and how to find win/win answers.

Emotional Awareness: *I Am, Iron Lady*

Emotional awareness measures how well team members pay attention to one another and demonstrate acceptance and value for one another.

I Am: Tom Shadyac, the highly successful movie director for Jim Carrey films such as Ace Ventura pet detective has everything and lives like it until he has a bike wreck and his life is in peril. He discovers that he's gotten it all wrong as has everyone around him it seems, so he takes a film crew and begins asking knowledgeable people such as Desmond Tutu the Nobel laureate, Noam Chomsky the political theorist and Coleman Barks the poet and Rumi translator: "What's wrong with our world?" and "What can we do about it?" Their answers are a consistent formula for living sustainably in relationship with each other and the environment. Some of the key concepts in the film are: cooperation is in our DNA; the truth of who we are is we are because we belong, technology and the human narrative are beginning to come together; we are geared at a primordial level to feel what each other feels.

This is more a film about an individual leader than a team, but the ideas are ones the team can see and extrapolate concepts and values they want to notice and promote in one another. Iron Lady is listed as the opposite of emotional awareness. Margaret Thatcher is portrayed as paying primary attention to herself and unflinchingly adhering to the beliefs she developed as a child rather than learning and responding to new ideas and populations.

Communication: *We Bought a Zoo, Beginners*

Communication provides information on how well team members listen, encourage participation, share information and discuss sensitive matters.

We Bought A Zoo: This movie tells the story of a major attempt to start over after the death of a spouse and mother. The hurting family leaves their old house, old neighborhood, old school, old job and buys a house in the country that is home to over 40 species of animals and an unusual assortment of people who take care of the animals. The team becomes the father, the zookeepers and the two children, all learning how to work together to get this challenging small business into start up mode and to turn a profit. The father is the team leader. He is now the employer of the zookeepers, the food and shelter sponsor for the animals, and the source of love and guidance for 2 children. Most of the movie he's afraid he's just about to let everybody down but he keeps taking his own advice to his lovelorn son: "20 seconds of insane courage will deliver something totally magical." Fortunately it works and the results are as heartwarming as humorous.



Team members can pick up lots to talk about in terms of which zookeeper or other team member they most identify with and how the different personalities help promote or challenge team success.

Stress Tolerance: *HappyThankYouMorePlease, Moneyball*

Stress tolerance measures how well the team understands the types of stress factors and manages the intensity impacting its members and the team as a whole.

HappyThankYouMorePlease: This delightful film will reduce your stress just by watching it. When 9 or 10-year-old Rasheen gets left on a subway by mistake a group of 20 somethings come together like an ad hoc team on his behalf. He didn't know his parents or how old he was and was not interested in any more help from social services, but he turned out to be a great teacher of love just as life was providing some great opportunities for practice for his young adult care takers. For example, a geeky guy wants to develop a relationship with a woman who can't grow hair because of a medical condition. She doesn't feel worthy of his adoration but tells her friend who found the boy "Let's be people who deserve to be loved." Part of the lesson is for everyone to learn to feel loved.

This is a great film to show a team with generational differences. It's a heartwarming way to appreciate the generation entering the workforce.

Conflict Resolution: *The Descendants and Of Gods and Men*

Conflict resolution measures how willing the team is to engage in conflict openly and constructively without needing to get even.

Of Gods and Men: In March 1996, an Islamic terrorist group kidnapped seven French Trappist monks from their remote monastery in Tibhirine, Algeria. They were held for two months and then killed. At the heart of this atrocity is a tale of heroic faith, steadfastness and love, captured in the sublime film "Of Gods and Men." It is perhaps the best movie on Christian commitment ever made. This is a powerful movie and one of the best released in 2011 about real team work. The monks made a very difficult choice in the face of certain danger to stay together, practice their faith and be with their Muslim community.

These men were not shy with each other, they got angry, they blamed, they acted like victims, they wept, they hid, and they each eventually realized that they were expressing these emotions in response, not to the people and the world around them, but rather in response to their perceptions and judgments of that world. This recognition is what enabled them to fully surrender their lives to the service they provided the local community, and receive the spiritual grace that sustained them through the ending of their time on earth.



Positive Mood: *Hugo, Midnight in Paris*

Positive mood measures the positive attitude of the team in general as well as when it's under pressure.

Hugo: This is an extraordinarily charming film about children and adults and how courage looks and feels and is practiced from both points of view. There are two small teams, one of children, one of adults. Ultimately the two teams come together as one, but major challenges are faced first. It's also a beautifully made movie.

Ask you team what elements of the movie help them have a sense of “can do” that they can bring back to their team.

Don't forget – take your team to the movies. Have fun and learn!