



Emotional Intelligence

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What is Emotional Intelligence? Why is it so vital in this climate to ensure success?

The concepts of Emotional Intelligence are not new, with research going back to the early part of the 20th century.

The term “Emotional Intelligence” was introduced by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. But it was Daniel Goleman, a Harvard-trained psychologist and writer who really brought EQ into the mainstream. He wrote about EQ in The New York Times and his 1995 book Emotional Intelligence. But it was his 1998 article in Harvard Business Review that sparked great interest in the business community.

The key premise of Emotional Intelligence is that EQ skills relate to how effectively people work with others, specifically around:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Management

1) Self-Awareness

Self-Awareness means having a clear understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives and capabilities. On the surface there’s really nothing new about this concept - it’s been touted for thousands of years. But it’s a critical skill and it’s overlooked by many people. It’s so important because people with a high degree of self awareness recognize how their feelings and values affect them, and this relates to how they interact with others. They tend to be very thoughtful in the sense that they take time to think about the things that are important to them, and how their work and lives relate to these things. This self reflection helps them to be aware of both their limitations and strengths, and they’re candid about this.

2) Self-Management

Goleman says that Self-Management frees us from being prisoners to our emotions. Without understanding what we’re feeling, we can’t control our feelings and this leaves us at the mercy of our emotions. This is okay when it comes to positive emotions like enthusiasm or success, but it’s a problem if we’re controlled by negative emotions like frustration or anxiety. People with this mastery are usually optimistic, upbeat and enthusiastic. This is particularly important in the workplace because emotions are literally contagious.

3) Social Awareness

The third component of Goleman’s EQ model, Social Awareness, is mostly about empathy. It’s the ability to read another person’s facial expressions, voice and non-verbal signals in order to understand that person’s emotions. This is especially important for leaders because by staying attuned to how people are feeling, they can say and do what is most appropriate. For example, they can try to calm people’s fears, lessen anger, or in a more positive example have a good time at the office party.

4) Relationship Management

Relationship Management is where these three skills all come together. This is the most visible aspect of a person, and in particular leaders. This is where you see skills like conflict management, team building, and influencing others. Leaders with good skills in the first three areas of EQ will usually be effective at managing relationships because they’re attuned to their own emotions and this means that they’ll approach relationships from a position of authenticity. It’s not just being friendly, but it’s what Goleman calls “friendliness with a

purpose”: motivating people in the direction you desire. These people are very good at developing networks, not necessarily because they’re highly sociable, but rather because they understand that nothing gets done alone and they’re skilled at being able to work with others. These EQ skills are unique from a person’s technical skills and cognitive abilities. According to Goleman’s research: 90% of the difference between star performers and average performers was attributable to EQ competencies. This and other research show that EQ skills are directly linked to critical business measures and individual success, more so than traditional measures such as IQ. It’s not that IQ and traditional factors are not important. Clearly they are. But IQ and various job-specific skills are essentially entry requirements, particularly in leadership and managerial positions.

One question that often comes up is whether people are born with high EQ, or whether it can be learned. We all know people who seem to be naturally gifted in how well they work with others. They intuitively understand how to put people at ease and, if they’re leaders, how to motivate their people and keep them actively engaged in their work. The truth is that some people will be more naturally gifted than others, but the good news is that EQ skills can be learned. There’s been some clear research on this, and good evidence that people can learn how to interact more effectively at work. But in order for this to happen people have to be personally motivated, and they need to practice what they learn back on the job and get reinforcement for their new skills. Most of us can think of people who seem to have a natural ability to work well with others. So while EQ may be an important talent, is it something that can be developed or is it something a person is born with? Research is available that clearly shows EQ can be learned. Dr. Fabio Sala of The Hay Group found that workshop interventions are effective at improving EQ. A study at Case Western University found that EQ training not only improves performance, but such gains are retained over many years. So the good news for business is that while there may be a genetic pre-disposition towards Emotional Intelligence, these skills can be developed and they tend to be retained for the long-term. There is certainly a need for practice and reinforcement to build these skills. And finally, EQ skills won’t be improved without a sincere desire to do so.

Can Emotional Intelligence Be Learned?

While EQ is relevant in almost any work situation where people work collaboratively, the use of EQ to improve leadership and managerial performance is of great interest to the HR community. And the current challenging economy has everyone trying to achieve more productivity with fewer resources. It’s this desire for high performance that led Sales Training International Ltd to look more closely at EQ.

We constantly help organizations achieve higher performance through training and interpersonal skills development. Our experience with companies of all size shows that effective leaders can improve the performance of their organizations. Certainly different situations necessitate different leadership techniques. And in practice a leader with good EQ skills is able to assess a situation and determine an appropriate response. Without EQ, a person with high IQ, great experience and good ideas will not become a great leader. And the higher a leader advances, the more important Emotional Intelligence becomes. But the potential for EQ problems also rises with more senior executives. Research conducted by Fabio Sala showed that higher level executives consistently rated themselves higher on EQ competencies than did their lower-level colleagues. They have an inflated view of their EQ. Sala suggested that the rating difference may be related to a lack of objective information about their own skills, saying that senior executives typically have fewer opportunities for feedback because of their position and that people are often less inclined to give constructive feedback to people in positions senior to themselves.

EQ and Leadership

One criticism of Emotional Intelligence that we often hear is that it sounds good in theory but it's difficult to put into practice. And some of the proponents of EQ don't seem to do a very good job of examining what it looks like in the day-to-day workplace, or how it can be practiced and enhanced.

One of the real issues here is that Emotional Intelligence tends to be somewhat generic in its focus. It assumes that all people can display these skills in more or less the same ways. Goleman and his colleagues are clear that not all effective leaders possess all EQ skills, and that much of the value of EQ is situational - certain situations will call for some EQ skills more than others.

What's often overlooked, though, is that there's another dimension of behavior that influences how people act and also how they interpret the behavior of others.

EQ and Versatility

In today's economy, organizations are looking for ways to improve their productivity. Emotional Intelligence has emerged as a resource to improve the performance of individuals and their organizations. And as research continues to document, EQ is making a difference. There are objective, measurable benefits associated with EQ including increased sales, better recruiting and retention and more effective leadership. Further, there is evidence that EQ skills can be developed through training programs. Versatility training teaches specific skills that increase Emotional Intelligence. Developing this expertise makes individuals and their organizations more productive and effective.

And Finally...

1. An insurance company found the average policy sold by one group of agents is £54K, while another group sold policies with an average of £114K.
2. The U.S. Air Force increased its ability to successfully predict recruiter success by three-fold and reduced recruiting expense by \$3 million.
3. A study of more than 500 executive search candidates identified emotional competence as significantly better predictor of placement success than intelligence or prior experience. Findings were consistent in all countries and cultures.

Emotional Intelligence was the variable in each of these examples. In recent years, interest in Emotional Intelligence (EQ) has grown as research has shown its impact on a variety of business measures. These include recruiting and job selection, sales results and leadership performance.

J&J was among first companies to test the linkage between Emotional Intelligence and business performance. More than 1,400 employees took part in a comparison of high performers and average performers. They found a "strong relationship" between superior performing leaders and emotional competence. Further they found that Emotional Intelligence, like technical skill, can be developed through a systematic and consistent approach to building social and emotional competency.