

Emotional Intelligence

What is emotional intelligence?

The term Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a relatively new one. It has been popularised by Daniel Goleman, originally a science journalist now a consultant / academic at Rutgers University Graduate School in New Jersey.

Goleman defines EI as:

- knowing what you are feeling and being able to handle feelings without having them swamp you;
- being able to motivate yourself to get jobs done, be creative and perform at your peak; and
- sensing what others are feeling, and handling relationships effectively

It is, in other words, that critical group of non-cognitive skills, capabilities and competencies, which help someone control and manage their emotional response to events and pressures.

Why is it important?

The importance of this to a manager is that research by Goleman and others suggest that EI is what really makes the difference between an effective manager and the rest. This is not to say that intelligence (IQ) and technical skills are not important, but they are essentially *threshold* capabilities. They are, in a sense, entry level requirements for executive positions. Once in that position, it is EI which then makes the difference.

In a detailed study involving analysis of competency models in 188 companies and a further extensive study of what constituted 'star performers' in these organisations Goleman and his team drew the following conclusions.

- intellect was a driver of outstanding performance; especially stony

analytical and creative skills

- cognitive skills such as big-picture thinking and long term vision were particularly important, but – *and this was the most crucial finding*;
- EI proved to be twice as important as technical skills and IQ as ingredients of excellent performance for jobs at all levels
- Several other studies find broadly the same pattern, including a study by Higgs & Dulewicz at Henley Management Centre. At first sceptical of the EI claims they undertook an objective exercise tracking data on 100 management and business leaders over a seven year period. They were surprised at the consistency of the results and concluded that 'emotional intelligence was more highly related to success than IQ alone.'

The situation seems to become more marked the more senior the person considered. Goleman believes, from his study of star performers, that in senior leadership positions nearly 90% of the difference in profile between a star and average performer was attributed to emotional intelligence factors rather than cognitive abilities.

The changing world of work

It is the new world of work which has accentuated the need for and rise of emotional intelligence. Greater competition increased speed, and quality of information, working across sites, regions and sometimes different countries has meant that people have to cope with unprecedented levels of change.

People's expectations of what they want from their organisations and leaders have altered. Staff now need to feel their manager is 'worthy' of their 'followership' rather than simply 'following' because of their role. Leaders and managers, in turn, have to be more flexible, more creative, more adept and more responsive if they want to survive let alone grow.

Emotional intelligence framework

What constitutes EI? There are five key components which can be clustered into two areas of competence.

In the first, *Personal Competence*, there are three complementary component:

- self awareness
- self regulation
- motivation

The second, *Social Competence*, includes:

- empathy
- social skills

A framework devised by Goleman sets out these competencies in greater detail. Brief definitions and how you would recognise the hallmarks of those possessing each component are given below to help inform the framework.

Self Awareness: the ability to recognise and understand your moods, emotions and drives, as well as their effects on others. Indicators of high EI are self confidence, realistic self assessment and a self deprecating sense of humour.

Self Regulation: the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods, the propensity to suspend judgement and to think before acting. Indicators are trustworthiness and integrity, comfort with ambiguity and openness to change.

Motivation: a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status, a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. Indicators are a strong drive to achieve, optimism – even in the face of failure and organisational commitment.

Social Skill: Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, an ability to find common group and build rapport. Hallmarks are effectiveness in leading change, persuasiveness / influencing ability, experience in

building and leading teams, and building rapport easily.

Empathy: the ability to understand the emotional make-up of other people, skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. Indicators are expertise in building and retaining talent, sensitivity across diverse groups and cultures, service to customers and clients and strong relationships with a range of people.

Developing emotional intelligence

Research indicates that people can, if they take the right approach, develop their emotional intelligence. EI does, in general, increase with age. There is an old fashioned word for this phenomenon – maturity. Yet, even with maturity some people still need help to enhance their EI.

Scientifically, EI is born largely in the neurotransmitters of the brain's limbic system, which governs feelings, impulses and drives. The limbic system learns best through motivation, extended practice and feedback. If you want to work on your EI you need to be committed to break old habits and, through practice, establish new ones.

The checklist below offers some suggestions if you want to work generally in this area.

How To Become More Emotionally Intelligent

- Be aware of your body. Posture and gesture reflect your feelings, e.g. if your hands are clenched, what are you angry about? Practise reading body signals.
- Turn down the sound on the television. Notice which situations or people make you uncomfortable. Work out why.
- Anticipate situations you don't like. Think what you want to achieve and keep focused on it.

- If you feel you're going to lose it, count to 10. Then ask: do I want to shout or do I have an alternative?
- Ask for feedback. Knowing how you come across identifies strengths and weaknesses.
- Set achievable targets, such as: I'm going to phone that new company and request a meeting to discuss opportunities.
- Twice a day listen to someone without interruption. Then repeat what they say: 'So you think – 'It helps you understand others' feelings.

In the work situation there are specific additional points to think about. Again, practice and feedback are the key components to improvement.

Emotional Intelligence At Work

- Give feedback not criticism. Challenge behaviour, not people.
- If criticised, acknowledge appropriate responsibility, then see it as an opportunity to solve a problem.
- Identify and cultivate key people who would be useful when difficulties occur. They will respond more willingly, when you need them.
- Be available to talk to people; this is more important the higher up you go
- Set achievable targets, e.g. I'll make two points at the meeting
- If someone is shouting, don't shout back. Keep eye contact and say what you want to say calmly
- Acknowledge new ideas even if they're hopeless. Instant dismissal crushes creativity.
- Take the role of the other person – colleague, boss, employee, customer. What do they want to achieve?
- In times of uncertainty keep everyone informed. Lack of knowledge creates distrust and low morale.
- Listen. It's the best source of information. Check you're hearing what's being said accurately.

Summary

Intelligence and technical ability are important ingredients in effective leadership. But the total picture is not complete without EI. And EI is the key 'difference' quality from 'normal' to 'star' performer. The components which combine to form EI, once thought to be 'nice to have' have, for successful organisations, been transferred into the 'need to have' category.

Need more help?

Effective delegation is just one aspect of successful project management. Book onto a 1-day programme *Using Emotional Intelligence in Management*. You will gain access to a range of techniques to improve your interpersonal and intrapersonal skills to successfully handle challenging situations and people.

Using Emotional Intelligence in Management

For further information and to make a booking, please visit:

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