

# You're smart... but are you really **Emotionally Intelligent?**



## articles

This article relates to our Emotional Intelligence (EI) training programme. It introduces some key elements of emotional intelligence to help you enhance your performance by being more confident, and in control of your emotional responses to situations in the workplace.

## Emotional Intelligence at work

- Benefits for you and your organisation

### What is Emotional Intelligence?

The term Emotional Intelligence (EI) is increasingly well known and often cited as the key to effective workplace relationships. It was first popularised in 1995 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
- 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.

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## Why is it important?

Research by Goleman and others suggests that EI is what really makes the difference between an effective manager, and the rest – which is why it's so hugely beneficial to both organisations and individuals. This is not to say that intelligence (IQ) and technical skills are not important, but they are essentially threshold capabilities. That is, they are, in a sense, entry-level requirements for executive positions. Once in that position, it is EI which then makes the difference to how well an individual performs.

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 strong 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 an ingredient of excellent performance for jobs at all levels

This has been supported by many other studies, including one by the initially sceptical Higgs & Dulewicz at Henley Management Centre. In a study of 100 management and business leaders over a 7-year period, they found that 'emotional intelligence was more highly related to success than IQ alone.'

Studies have also found that EI is important in many different roles, from fundraising to project management to service delivery. **Any job that requires someone to work well with other people, to perform effectively in high-pressure situations and to deal calmly with emotive issues, needs that person to be emotionally intelligent.** As well as understanding the mechanics of their job, they also need to understand both themselves and those they work with.

This need to work well with others and deal with pressure becomes 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 can be 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 quantity of information, working across sites, regions – and sometimes different countries – has meant that people have to cope with unprecedented levels of change, and increased levels of pressure at work.

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. And they need to be able to maintain their own motivation and momentum in difficult and challenging situations.

## Emotional intelligence framework

### What constitutes EI?

There are five key components to emotional intelligence which can be clustered into two areas of competence.

In the first, **Personal Competence**, there are three complementary elements: self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation.

The second, **Social Competence**, includes: empathy and social skills.

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

Dimension	Definition and metrics for success	Practical EI Implication
<b>Self-awareness</b>	<p>‘The ability to recognise and understand your emotions, and needs - and understanding their effects on others.’</p> <p><b>Indicators of high EI here are self-confidence, realistic self-assessment and a sense of humour. You are also more likely to set and achieve goals.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being clear on your values and beliefs and what they mean</li> <li>• staying calm when provoked</li> <li>• sensing why you feel uncomfortable, angry, upset, etc.</li> <li>• understanding what motivates you about work</li> </ul>
<b>Self-regulation</b>	<p>‘The ability to control ‘disruptive impulses and moods – and suspending judgement to think before acting.’</p> <p><b>Indicators are trustworthiness and integrity, comfort with ambiguity and openness to change. Mindfulness is also a useful tactic and metric.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staying calm when there’s a crisis</li> <li>• not lashing back when attacked or criticised</li> <li>• not having mood swings with others or alone</li> <li>• being able to weigh up the +/- and change your mind</li> </ul>

<p><b>Motivation</b></p>	<p>‘A passion to pursue goals with energy and consistency - and to work for reasons that go beyond money or status.’  <b>Indicators are a strong drive to achieve and sustained optimism – even in the face of failure and lack of organisational commitment.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sticking to your values even under pressure to compromise</li> <li>• connecting emotionally to your cause</li> <li>• not losing heart when things don’t go as planned</li> <li>• being able to support others when they feel anxious</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social skill</b></p>	<p>‘Skills and proficiency in starting, managing and building on relationships with individuals and groups. The relationships need to be appropriate to the role.’  <b>Indicators are effectiveness in leading change, persuasiveness/influencing ability, experience in building and leading teams, and building rapport easily.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ability to build rapport with a range of people</li> <li>• recognising and managing group dynamics</li> <li>• maintaining appropriate friendships/relationships</li> <li>• presenting ideas effectively in an appropriate style</li> </ul>
<p><b>Empathy</b></p>	<p>‘Recognising the emotional makeup of others – and skills in engaging with them appropriately and sensitively.’  <b>Indicators here are expertise in building and retaining relationships, sensitivity across diverse groups and cultures and understanding the challenges others face.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• being ‘fair’ and balanced in your assessment of others</li> <li>• understanding how others might feel in a given situation</li> <li>• expressing appropriate emotions to others</li> <li>• being able to think ahead and anticipate challenges</li> </ul>

## Developing emotional intelligence

If they take the right approach, research indicates that people can develop their emotional intelligence. And generally EI increases 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 breaking old habits and establishing new ones through practice.

The checklist below offers some suggestions if you want to work 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 about 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.** For example, 'I'm going to phone that new company and request a meeting to discuss partnership 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 more senior you become in an organisation. 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.

## Values in EI

It has been argued that emotional intelligence, is manipulative and underhanded. Examples are cited of people developing their EI and then using it to influence the behaviour of others in a way that's unhelpful – or serves a personal purpose – rather than to achieve organisational goals.

To avoid this happening, it's essential you're clear on your values both as an individual and as an organisation. These values should be at the heart of the decisions you make in your role, including how you work with – and therefore influence – others. By being clear on your values, such Machiavellian tendencies can be held in check. Having a guiding sense of values and goals is essential to self-awareness, and reinforces the need for EI to be used for personal development and in the support of others.

## Summary

Intelligence (IQ) and technical ability are important ingredients in effective management. But the total picture is not complete without EI. EI is the key 'difference' quality that turns a 'normal' performer into a 'star' performer. The components which combine to form EI, are essential for successful organisations.

## What's Next?

If you've found this article helpful and you would like more information or to talk through how we might help your organisation, please call +44 (0)20 7978 1516 and speak to one of our experienced management consultants.

Alternatively, why not attend our [Emotional Intelligence for Managers](#) training programme? Learn to feel confident and in control of challenging situations, reduce stress and maintain motivation and momentum under pressure.