

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

© Jonathan Priest

Emotional intelligence or EI (also referred to as EQ), is something we all would like to think we have. It's also a quality employers are looking for while raw intelligence without the human touch (IQ) is now less valued, even in those jobs that really need brains. There is now a burgeoning EI industry, with trainers and career development specialists all offering ways to increase our EI appeal, so what's it all about?

Star quality

Psychologist Daniel Goleman, who brought the concept of Emotional Intelligence into the public eye with his 1995 book of that name stated that for jobs of all kinds, EI is twice as important as IQ plus technical skills as a predictor of job success. Moreover, EI is more than 85% of what sets star performers apart from the average. I just tested my own on the web and scored 75%, so it's reassuring to know that am a generally simpatico. But will this revelation change my life, probably not. EI is a quality that only others can observe and act upon. An article in Time Magazine summed up the importance of IE thus:

IQ gets you hired, but Emotional Intelligence gets you promoted

A number of psychologists believe the claims for EI to be somewhat overblown (Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso 1999) and that traditional personality research may be more predictive of effectiveness in the workplace. Certainly, the reason for the popular excitement surrounding EI relates to the very strong claims made for it and the idea that a single psychological entity could be such a powerful predictor of success.

Nothing new

Even Goleman and the others who have developed the thinking about emotional intelligence will admit that there's nothing particularly new about it. There has been a gradual recognition since the 1940s that limiting research only to the cognitive aspects of intelligence, such as memory and problem-solving, is to ignore a large proportion of the traits that go to make us effective human beings. More specifically, research in the '60s suggested that leaders who are able to establish mutual trust, respect, and a certain warmth and rapport with members of their group will be more effective (Fleishman & Harris, 1962). Nevertheless, a number of long term tracking studies have confirmed the value of EI in predicting how well people did at work or in the rest of their lives. So the question is, what is emotional intelligence really all about and is it of any value in terms of choosing or developing individuals and teams?

What is EI?

Goleman defines emotional intelligence as the, "*capacity for recognising our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships*". It has five main components:

Self Awareness

- ◆ Emotional awareness: Recognizing our own emotions and their effects
- ◆ Accurate self-assessment: Knowing our strengths and weaknesses
- ◆ Self confidence: Sureness about our self-worth and capabilities

Self Regulation

- ◆ Self control: Managing disruptive impulses
- ◆ Trustworthiness: Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity
- ◆ Conscientiousness: Taking responsibility for your own performance
- ◆ Adaptability: Flexibility in handling changes
- ◆ Innovation: Being open to new ideas

Motivation

- ◆ Achievement drive: Striving to improve or to meet a standard of excellence
- ◆ Commitment: Aligning with the goals of the group or organization
- ◆ Initiative: Readiness to act on opportunities
- ◆ Optimism: Persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks

Empathy

- ◆ Service orientation: Anticipating, recognizing and meeting customer's needs
- ◆ Developing others: Sensing what others need to develop, and bolstering their abilities
- ◆ Leveraging diversity: Cultivating opportunities through diverse people
- ◆ Political awareness: Reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships
- ◆ Understanding others: Having insight regarding the inner needs, drives and potentials of others

Social Skills

- ◆ Influence: Wielding effective tactics for persuasion
- ◆ Communication: Sending clear messages
- ◆ Leadership: Inspiring, guiding groups and people
- ◆ Conflict management: Negotiating and resolving disagreements
- ◆ Building bonds: Nurturing instrumental relationships
- ◆ Collaboration and cooperation: Working with others toward shared goals
- ◆ Team capabilities: Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals

Unlike IQ, EI is not an inherited trait, it is behaviour that is learned and our EI increases as we increase our ability to marshal our own emotions, in short as we mature. Neither are there any sex differences in EI. The personal qualities that are attributed to high emotional intelligence include:

- ◆ Knowing your feelings and using them to make life decisions you can live with.

- ◆ Being able to manage your emotional life without being hijacked by it - not being paralyzed by depression or worry, or swept away by anger.
- ◆ Persisting in the face of setbacks and channeling your impulses in order to pursue your goals.
- ◆ Empathy - reading other people's emotions without their having to tell you what they are feeling.
- ◆ Handling feelings in relationships with skill and harmony - being able to articulate the unspoken pulse of a group, for example.

Measuring EI

It is important to have a reliable measure of EI and a number of tests are used, some of which are self assessments and others that are similar to conventional psychometric tests. These include Bar-On's EQ-I (the longest established), the Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale and the Emotional Competence Inventory. In one study the EQ-I was predictive of success for U.S. Air Force recruiters. By using the test to select recruiters, the Air Force saved nearly 3 million dollars annually. Also, there were no significant differences based on ethnic or racial group.

Recruitment & EI training

From the recruiter's point of view, EI has become somewhat of a holy grail and more and more companies are now telling their HR departments and head hunters that they want people with a high EI scores. A US study of what corporations are seeking in the MBAs they hire revealed that they are looking for people mainly with communication skills, interpersonal skills and initiative.

The perception that EI is a very good thing while raw intelligence is not so desirable has sired a plethora of companies that claim to be able to increase one's EI or more specifically, emotional competency levels. However, buyers should beware. Many career development and training organisations that have tagged on EI on to their list of offerings but lack the necessary skills and methodologies.

Even Goleman attests that *"...most efforts to encourage emotional intelligence have been poor, wasting vast amounts of time, energy and money."* Some leadership training courses were even measured to have a slight negative effect on job performance. Emotional intelligence is particularly exploitable because few will complain that a course designed to increase one's EI has failed to do so. Anyone interested in this area of training should at least go to organisations like the Hay Group and others that are affiliated with Goleman's own Emotional Intelligence Services (EIS).

Job analysis

What becomes clear is that EI is a very complex set of psychological attributes, some of which are more relevant to certain roles than others. An essential first step in improving an individual's EI is to analyse the attributes he or she needs to do their own job superbly. Coopers and Lybrand set about creating competency models for their partners. They started by asking partners to nominate those among them who were outstanding performers, and these individuals were studied in depth using structured interviews. This systematic

approach allows training to be designed to improve specific EI competencies. For example, a programme for an airline highlighted the need for self-management and people handling skills for stewards. These competencies were added to the basic or meta-abilities such as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills.

Best practices

A well designed training programme has lots of checks and balances with monitoring built in and EI is clearly not something you can do in a day. Listed below are Goleman's best practices for the development of EI taken from his book *Working with Emotional Intelligence*. I provide these simply to give an insight into the complexity of a properly designed programme for developing an individual's competencies.

- ◆ Assess the job
- ◆ Assess the individual
- ◆ Deliver assessments with care
- ◆ Gauge readiness
- ◆ Motivate
- ◆ Make change self directed
- ◆ Focus on clear manageable goals
- ◆ Prevent relapse
- ◆ Give performance feedback
- ◆ Encourage practice
- ◆ Arrange support
- ◆ Provide models
- ◆ Encourage and reinforce
- ◆ Evaluate

First do no harm

So while EI has the appeal of a big simple idea, a nice red button you can press to get instant empathy and star performance, in reality it requires an understanding of the complex interaction of a variety of emotional competencies and how these relate to a specific job. And of course, when you are dealing with human emotions there is a significant danger that, in the wrong hands, any intervention will do more harm than good.

References

Emotional intelligence by Daniel Goleman (1995) New York: Bantam.

Working with emotional intelligence, by Daniel Goleman (1998) New York: Bantam/Doubleday/Dell

Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman, Annie McKee, Richard E. Boyatzis

The Handbook of Emotional Intelligence : Theory, Development, Assessment, and Application at Home, School and in the Workplace by Reuven Bar-On (Editor), James D. A. Parker (Editor), Daniel Goleman (Foreword)

Promoting Emotional Intelligence in Organizations by Cary Cherniss, Mitchell Adler.

Jonathan Priest

Creative Communication
www.creative-writer.com
solutions@creative-writer.com
+44 (0)20 8767 0811
+44 (0)7973 406417

Do you have a message to articulate, a business to develop, people to train? Do your marketing communications reflect your true value? If not, it may be time to get creative with your communication.

This article is published with the kind permission of Simply Communicate Ltd