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Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Adding emotional intelligence to your toolkit of success skills might be the most important thing you can do for your career.

Emotional intelligence, or EQ, matters more than intellect alone, and it has practical value in the workplace.

“Emotional intelligence is the skill of understanding and managing your emotions and also understanding the emotions of those around you,” says executive coach, consultant and speaker Irene Becker, who works with clients worldwide. “High emotional intelligence is reflected in self awareness, self management, motivation, empathy and social/communication skills.”

In “Working with Emotional Intelligence,” author Daniel Goleman, Ph.D., CEO of Emotional Intelligence Services, calls EQ “a different way of being smart.”

Essential for leaders

“Organizations are absolutely beginning to require their leaders to demonstrate these skills in order to be hired and promoted,” says Travis Bradberry, Ph.D., President, TalentSmart, Inc.,



which provides emotional intelligence coaching, training and assessment services.

“This practice is far from reaching its peak, however, and many organizations shoot themselves in the foot by hiring and promoting people without looking at the whole picture. As a result, most are late to the game in working to develop EQ skills once leaders are on board.”

Sorting out complex issues

People who perceive emotions accurately (both in themselves and others) better understand difficult situations, says Bradberry. “This includes where people are coming from, why they’re doing what they’re doing, and how their own behavior is holding them back. Emotion is a primary driver of human behavior. When you’re blind to it, the world is a difficult

and confusing place.”

Build and practice EQ

“Leaders today need to listen, learn and communicate across diverse groups, internal and external constituencies,” says Becker. She cites four barriers to building EQ skills:

1. Not understanding the importance of building high emotional intelligence.
2. Lack of desire or interest in building high emotional intelligence.
3. Lack of self awareness about one’s need to build higher emotional intelligence.
4. A bias or fear because of the term *emotional intelligence*, and what they think is required to build this skill.

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- Travis Bradberry, Ph.D.



Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

“There can be no knowledge without emotion. We may be aware of a truth, yet until we have felt its force, it is not ours. To the cognition of the brain must be added the experience of the soul.”

— Arnold Bennett, British novelist (1867-1931)



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“There has to be an inner desire to learn and improve,” Becker explains. “You can’t make a fire with wet wood. When some people hear the term *emotional intelligence*, it scares them. They think it might be like going through psychotherapy, and it’s not.

Emotional intelligence training is not psychotherapy. Its focus is on powerful and practical skills that anyone can use to improve their personal or professional lives.”

Learn and practice

EQ training can be done effectively in a group

setting or with individual coaching. Exercises may begin with a self-assessment, and then cover four key emotional skills:

- self awareness
- self management
- social awareness
- relationship management

As individuals explore their own EQ capabilities, they can then work on specific ways to apply EQ skills in the workplace.

After learning EQ skills, practice them, says Bradberry. “When you begin developing new emotional intelligence skills, you need to practice new behaviors long enough to make them habitual. The brain loves efficiency and it will only provide the neuronal plasticity needed to support new behavior when you repeat that behavior over and over again.”

“Any situation in which you have human contact is a practice zone for EQ,” adds Becker.

Engage and empathize

“The need to use every communication to build trust, transparency of communication and engagement cannot be underestimated,” Becker says. “Emotional intelligence requires a balance of firmness and caring, authenticity and empathy. Those skills must be learned and honed.”

Responding to Workplace Conflicts with EQ

Workplace conflicts—covert and overt—demand high emotional intelligence skills, says executive coach Irene Becker.

“Approximately 40 percent of employee turnover is due to disagreements between an employee and his or her boss. When emotional intelligence and communication skills are lacking, turmoil builds. That translates into a disengaged workforce or job dissatisfaction that leads to high turnover.”

“One of the most common problems is a communication style that undermines retention, creates disengagement and foments conflict,” Becker notes. “A leader who has not developed EQ skills is less able to gauge the needs, wants and expectations of those they lead. This individual may be focused on the task at hand, and communicate in a style of manner that may be very appropriate for them, but does not engage the other party at all. If a leader is speaking to closed ears, whatever they say is irrelevant.”

Becker cites the example of one of her coaching clients, a 45-year-old manager who had poor communication skills and a low level of emotional intelligence. “It became such a problem that her entire staff walked out,” Becker recounts. “She knew she wasn’t a communicator, and she finally realized that she needed to improve or she would jeopardize her whole department’s success. With some coaching, she developed a better awareness of her own and others’ emotions. She is now an excellent communicator and a more successful leader.”

Resources:

- Irene Becker <http://justcoachit.com>
- Emotional Intelligence at Work Self-Test <http://justcoachit.com/blog/2011/08/01/eq-ei-self-test/>
- <http://justcoachit.com/blog/2011/08/10/smart-and-fast-are-not-enough-the-need-for-better-eg/>
- “Emotional Intelligence” by Daniel Goleman (1995), Bantam Dell, New York, NY
- “Working with Emotional Intelligence” by Daniel Goleman (1998), Bantam, New York, NY
- “Emotional Intelligence 2.0” by Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves (2009), TalentSmart, San Diego, CA
- TalentSmart www.talentsmart.com