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## Why Emotional Intelligence Matters on the Job

Tampa, Fla. (June 3, 2003) — There are some very real and practical advantages for employees who have developed emotional intelligence, or EQ, in addition to their specific knowledge of how to perform work-related tasks. Individuals who understand their own emotions and behavior, and who use that knowledge to relate to others, are more likely to achieve higher levels of career success.

“When we look at today’s business world, especially over the last five years, we’ve seen a ‘sea change,’ which by definition means a marked change or transformation,” says Tampa clinical occupational psychologist Gary L. Wood, Psy.D. “It’s not the surface that has changed, it’s the undercurrents, and those have to do with emotion and social factors. The more we are able to understand ourselves and effectively manage ourselves and our relationships, the more resilient we become, and that makes us better able to navigate successfully in our business and personal lives.”

“Emotional intelligence is applying intuition and emotion to problem-solving,” says Wood. “Many of us have not learned how to use our emotional intelligence to solve business problems, and in fact emotions often get left out of the equation entirely in the business world. But for those who have a higher EQ—and it is something that can be learned—it can be the deciding factor between those who are successful and those who are not.”

### EQ Traits

While there are a number of definitions for emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman, Ph.D., in his best-selling book “Emotional Intelligence,” cites these five qualities:

- knowing one's emotions
- managing emotions
- motivating oneself
- recognizing emotions in others
- handling relationships

The benefits of applying emotional intelligence in the workplace may include higher tolerance for stress, better people management skills, and more effective performance as part of a team.

## **Emotional Intelligence Contributes to the Bottom Line**

The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, in a recent article by Cary Cherniss, Ph.D., offers facts that show how emotional intelligence can create measurable improvements in any work organization.

-After supervisors in a manufacturing plant received training in emotional competencies such as how to listen better and help employees resolve problems on their own, lost-time accidents were reduced by 50 percent, formal grievances were reduced from an average of 15 per year to 3 per year, and the plant exceeded productivity goals by \$250,000 (Pesuric & Byham, 1996). In another manufacturing plant where supervisors received similar training, production increased 17 percent. There was no such increase in production for a group of matched supervisors who were not trained (Porras & Anderson, 1981).

-One of the foundations of emotional competence -- accurate self-assessment -- was associated with superior performance among several hundred managers from 12 different organizations (Boyatzis, 1982).

-Another emotional competence, the ability to handle stress, was linked to success as a store manager in a retail chain. The most successful store managers were those best able to handle stress. Success was based on net profits, sales per square foot, sales per employee, and per dollar inventory investment (Lusch & Serpkeuci, 1990).

-Optimism is another emotional competence that leads to increased productivity. New salesmen at Met Life who scored high on a test of "learned optimism" sold 37 percent more life insurance in their first two years than pessimists (Seligman, 1990).

-A study of 130 executives found that how well people handled their own emotions determined how much people around them preferred to deal with them (Walter V. Clarke Associates, 1997).

-For sales reps at a computer company, those hired based on their emotional competence were 90% more likely to finish their training than those hired on other criteria (Hay/McBer Research and Innovation Group, 1997).

## **Techniques for Building Empathy**

**People who are most aware of their own feelings and emotions, and who are also attuned to the emotions of others function most effectively in the workplace. In the book “The EQ Edge: Emotional Intelligence and Your Success,” co-authors Steven J. Stein, Ph.D. and Howard E. Book, M.D. offer these exercises for building empathy with those around you.**

- 1. Ask someone you know well how they feel about a given topic—something as simple as a recent film, or an event in which both of you participated. Then let the conversation roll for five minutes. At that point, describe to the person your version of what they think and feel. You may be surprised to find a difference of opinion.**
- 2. Stop and listen more to others. If someone’s feelings and opinions are of value to you, check to see how accurately you’ve understood them.**
- 3. Keep a journal of your correct and incorrect impressions of other people’s feelings and thoughts. For each “miss,” record why you think you were off the mark.**
- 4. Before meeting someone important to you, prepare by thinking about your expectations of the person. Prepare, as well, for these expectations to be wrong. What would you like to accomplish as a result of the meeting? In which areas would you like to know more about this person?**
- 5. During the encounter, focus on the other person. Make eye contact and pay close attention to facial expressions and body language. Check your interpretations by asking questions like “Are you saying that...?”**
- 6. After your meeting, review the results. What did you learn about the person? How did they feel about things that are important to you? What things were important to them? How can what you learned be useful in your future relationship? What did you do that let the other person know how you feel about them?**

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## **About Wood & Associates**

**Wood & Associates is an employee assistance and behavioral health consulting firm that helps employers maintain productivity, safety and behavioral health in the workplace. Wood & Associates is a pioneer in the Employee Assistance Program**

**(EAP) industry and has served employers and employees in the greater Tampa Bay area and elsewhere since 1982. The firm's diverse group of clients includes a number of major employers who also contract for its mental health and substance abuse services.**

**Gary L. Wood, Psy.D., founder of the Wood & Associates consulting practice, is a pioneer in the field of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Since 1979, his practice has centered on providing solutions to employee and organizational problems. Wood is a licensed clinical psychologist, a member of The National Register of Health Service Providers in Psychology, and a graduate of Rutgers University, West Georgia College and Mercer University.**

**Patricia N. Alexander earned a Ph.D. in mental health counseling at the University of Florida. Trained in critical incident stress management through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, she is a Florida licensed mental health counselor and nationally certified counselor. Through her work experience she has addressed all types of critical incident situations, including explosions, multiple homicides, suicides, line-of-duty deaths, serious accidents and robberies. Alexander conducts training on stress management for law enforcement and businesses, and has developed peer support programs for law enforcement and industry.**