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Why Is Emotional Intelligence Important?

Regardless of the occupation, industry, or job level, people all over the world recognize that understanding their own and other people’s emotions, and using emotions to solve problems, is an incredibly useful skill across many different areas of life.

People with well-developed emotional intelligence (EI) can create and manage relationships more effectively. They can work well with others, regulate their emotions appropriately, understand how others are feeling, and influence and inspire people.

Of course, the types of emotional ability that are relevant and useful in one role may not necessarily be valuable in a different role. For example, a lawyer might benefit from being confident and in control of her emotions, while a psychologist would find empathy and the confidence to express emotions more valuable to his role.

Many researchers have found strong links between EI and important organizational behaviors, including leadership, job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, commitment, job attitudes, stress, well-being, teamwork and counterproductive work behaviors.

Emotional intelligence also influences the quality of interpersonal relationships. It can improve the experience of stress, pressure, and conflict, and enhance decision-making. Studies have also shown that it increases positive attitudes towards work and enhances altruistic feelings, while people with lower EI demonstrated poorer ability to cope with stressors at work.
Case Study:

**The Emotionally Intelligent Employee**

Criteria worked with a major governmental organization that used EI to assess its job candidates, to see whether there was any difference in certain areas between people who scored well on EI and people who scored less well.

We found that the high scoring group (people who got a score of “Above Average” on our measure of EI):

- Received 14% higher ratings for their interpersonal skills and communication
- Were rated as 13% more effective at responding appropriately to feedback
- Received 10% higher ratings for core job performance
- Were rated 17% more effective at handling increased responsibility.

While emotional intelligence is important in most roles, it really comes into its own in roles that involve teamwork, customer service, or managing other people. 
EI and Leadership

It’s unfortunate but true: brilliant minds don’t necessarily make brilliant leaders. Studies have demonstrated that leaders with high EI are better able to identify, understand, and empathize with their teams7.

PepsiCo reduced executive turnover by 87% and saved $5.4 million dollars by recruiting emotionally intelligent leaders8.

Johnson & Johnson found a strong relationship between high performing managers and EI. They also established that emotional competencies can be developed9.

A study of 130 executives found that how well people handled their own emotions determined how much people around them preferred to deal with them10.

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 $250,00011.

EI and Sales, Customer Service

Emotional intelligence makes its strongest contribution to job performance when the role requires developing and maintaining positive interpersonal relationships12. People working in sales and customer service roles need to establish trust and rapport with their prospects, create positive moods, distinguish genuine interest, and recover from stress and setbacks.

At L’Oreal, salespeople who were selected on the basis of emotional competencies outsold people recruited in the traditional way. These people sold $91,370 more than other salespeople, leading to a net revenue increase of $2.5m. They also had 63% less turnover during their first year13.

At Sanofi-Aventis14 frontline sales managers and sales representatives who were put through an EI learning and development program achieved a 12% increase in sales, which equated to an additional $2.2m per month15.

At Sheraton Studio City, more emotionally intelligent managers achieved higher customer satisfaction ratings, lower turnover, and 23% higher market share16.
What Is Emotional Intelligence Anyway?

In 1985, a graduate student named Wayne Leon Payne wrote a doctoral dissertation that he referred to as a ‘guidebook on how to relate to emotion in ways that are creative and fulfilling’. In it, he introduced the concept of emotional intelligence as a way of working with our emotions rather than against them: learning to relate creatively to fear, pain, and desire.

Five years later, Peter Salovey (President of Yale University, formerly Chair of Psychology) and John D. (Jack) Mayer (Professor of Psychology, University of New Hampshire) put forward a more coherent model of emotional intelligence, defining it as the ‘ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions.’

Their model garnered plenty of attention in academic circles, but it wasn’t until the 1995 publication of Daniel Goleman’s book, “Emotional Intelligence”, that the concept came to the notice of the general public. But it didn’t just come to the notice of the public: it electrified people as a different and revolutionary way to think about intelligence.

In 1998, Goleman published an article in the Harvard Business Review called “What makes a leader?” that became their most read article in 40 years. In it, he proposes that EI is the sine qua non of leadership: without it, a person can have all of the conventional intelligence and training in the world, but she won’t make a great leader unless she is emotionally intelligent as well.

In his follow-up book, “Working with Emotional Intelligence”, he suggested that workplace competencies based on EI contribute more to performance and success than intellect or technical skill.

Meanwhile, Peter Salovey and Jack Mayer were hard at work on a scientific model of emotional intelligence, which would offer an objective, robust and valid way of conceptualizing EI. They defined emotional intelligence as an ability, like general intelligence, with four distinct branches:

- Perceiving emotions
- Using emotions/facilitating thought
- Understanding emotions
- Managing emotions
Perceiving Emotions
Being able to recognize what you and other people are feeling
✓ Can you pick up on subtle cues from others?
✓ Can you identify your own emotions?
✓ Can you discriminate between genuine and inauthentic emotions?

Using Emotions/Facilitating Thought
Being able to use emotions in thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making
✓ Can you generate emotions that will help you solve problems or be creative?
✓ Are you able to empathize with others?
✓ Can you use emotions to improve thinking?

Understanding Emotions
Having a strong understanding of complex emotions and how emotions can change over time
✓ Can you understand different, possibly contradictory blends of emotions?
✓ Do you understand “chains” of emotions, such as how someone can be disappointed and then transition to anger?
✓ Do you understand the causes and consequences of different emotions?

Managing Emotions
Intelligently integrating emotional information in yourself and others, to come up with strategies that will lead to positive outcomes
✓ Are you able to use emotions appropriately, for example putting an emotion “on hold” if it won’t be beneficial in a particular situation?
✓ Can you manage people’s emotions to inspire and motivate them?
✓ Can you make decisions that consider all of the facts, no matter how uncomfortable they are?
How Do We Measure EI?

“How do we assess this? Won’t people just claim they’re better than they really are? How can I get an accurate picture of a person’s EI?”

It’s precisely for this reason that we recommend measuring EI in an objective way, and we developed an assessment, Emotify, to do just that.

Emotify is an ability-based measure of emotional intelligence that assesses a candidate’s ability to accurately perceive and understand emotions. It features two engaging, interactive assessments which together take about 20 minutes to complete. The first assessment measures how well a person can accurately perceive emotions, while the second assessment measures a person’s ability to identify different emotional reactions based on certain situations.

**Emotify Fast Facts:**

- **2x** Low scorers on Emotify were twice as likely to be involved in conflict at work, or have a hard time coping with stressful events when compared to others.
- **88%** Higher scorers on Emotify closed 88% more sales than their peers.
- **84%** 84% of candidates who completed Emotify said they would recommend that employers use the assessment in recruitment.
Enhancing EI

A common question we hear is - can EI be learned? Some people seem to be inherently better at relating to others, or understanding other people’s emotions, or keeping their cool in difficult situations. While it’s true that some people are naturally more gifted in these areas, the great news for everyone else is that anyone can improve their emotional competencies.

Emotional intelligence knowledge or competencies can be improved through training, so they provide an excellent way to identify strengths and potential growth areas. Not only that, they also help organizations measure the effectiveness of individual and organizational development initiatives.

Many studies have reported participants not only improving their emotional competency as a result of targeted training and development initiatives, but also improving their performance in several key areas.

One study showed that participants were able to significantly increase emotion identification and emotion management abilities, and that these changes persisted after 6 months18.

At American Express, financial advisors undertook EI training and improved their sales performance by 18%. When managers went through the same training, their entire group’s performance increased by 10%19.

Supervisors in a manufacturing plant received training in emotional competencies such as listening skills and employee enablement. Lost time accidents were reduced by 50%, formal grievances were reduced from 15 to 3 per year, and the plant exceeded productivity goals by $250,00020.

In another plant, supervisors received similar training and production increased by 17%. Supervisors who didn’t complete training didn’t achieve any increase in production21.
How Can We Enhance EI?

While it is true that emotional competencies can be improved, some have argued that it’s not an easy task and there’s no quick fix. People need to be dedicated and committed to improving their ability, and must invest energy into change over time. Change will generally come about with continued practice, with new skills learned and reinforced over time.

Others, however, have achieved positive outcomes from training delivered over several weeks. Regardless of the approach, developing emotional intelligence must always begin with self-awareness, usually by using a diagnostic tool to gain a better understanding of each person’s current ability. From this, you can begin to identify potential development areas and understand the kinds of training and interventions that you need.

Developing and applying emotionally intelligent skills in everyday life does take time, practice, and patience. Emotions are intertwined into people’s daily functioning and can provide valuable information to help people make decisions and adapt their behavior. Having the awareness and skills to identify these kinds of emotions, and to use this information to help day-to-day functioning, is the hallmark of an emotionally intelligent person.
Delivering Emotional Intelligence Training:
Outlines from the EI Consortium

The EI Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations stresses that EI training can be challenging and difficult for people, since they’re being asked to change the way they behave and interact with others. People may feel threatened, or skeptical about whether the training will actually work or not.

The Consortium have produced some guidelines for delivering a comprehensive EI training program, based on a broad range of studies into the effectiveness of social and emotional training in the workplace.

1. **PREPARATION**
   - Assess org needs
   - Assess individuals
   - Provide feedback carefully
   - Maximize learner choice
   - Link learning EQ to personal values
   - Encourage participation
   - Gauge readiness

2. **TRAINING**
   - Foster positive relationships
   - Maximize self-directed change
   - Enhance insight
   - Break goals into manageable steps learning relations between learners and trainers
   - Provide feedback on practice
   - Provide opportunities to practice
   - Experiential methods practice learning relations between learners and trainers
   - Set clear goals
   - Prepare learners for setbacks

3. **TRANSFER**
   - Provide an organizational culture that supports learning
   - Encourage use of skills on-the-job
   - Remove situational constraints

4. **EVALUATION**
   - Conduct ongoing review
Preparing for Change

Social and emotional learning can be challenging for adults who have established ways of dealing with emotions. The consortium suggests these steps to help increase motivation at the start of the change process.

Assess the organization’s needs: At this point, people may be skeptical of the impact emotional intelligence can have on the bottom line. You can prepare the way by showing relevant case studies and other examples of success. Your needs analysis must also include a careful assessment of the work situation, informed by an understanding of the nature of emotional competence.

Assess personal strengths and limits: Use a diagnostic tool to accurately measure emotional intelligence. You can also supplement this with any other relevant data, such as 360 degree performance reviews and engagement surveys, to help pinpoint specific areas for development.

Provide feedback carefully: People are more likely to be open to feedback when they believe that the feedback is constructive and accurate\(^2\). It’s important to deliver feedback with a focus on development rather than appraisal.

Maximize learner choice: People are generally more motivated to change when they freely choose to do so. It’s better to give people the freedom to choose whether they want to participate in training or not.

Encourage participation: The words and actions of leaders are particularly important here. In a large financial services company, a training program in emotional competence was popular in part because several regional vice presidents encouraged their management groups to participate and then attended the program with them.

Link learning goals to personal values: People will be more motivated to learn and change if they believe that doing so will help them achieve goals they value.

Adjust expectations: Focus on enhancing learners’ self-efficacy, and helping them to understand that greater emotional competence will bring about valuable outcomes, and that they will be able to improve.

Gauge readiness: People go through several stages of readiness before they’re ready to make a commitment to behavior change programs. You should assess each person’s readiness before training, or toward the beginning of the program.
Training

Motivation will continue to be important throughout the training program, and one of the most important factors that influences motivation is the relationship between the trainer and the learner.

**Foster a positive relationship between the trainer and the learner:** Several studies have shown that trainers who are empathetic, warm, and genuine (with high emotional intelligence!) develop more positive relationships with participants in behavioral change programs, and are more likely to be successful.

**Maximize self-directed change:** People are more likely to develop emotional competence when they decide which competencies they want to work on and set their own goals.

**Set clear goals:** Specific and challenging goals support social and emotional learning because they maximize self-efficacy, mastery, and motivation.

**Break goals into manageable steps:** While goals can be challenging, they should be manageable and attainable as well. Starting small and achieving small goals can help people set and achieve more difficult ones next time.

**Maximize opportunities to practice:** In social and emotional learning, participants often need to practice more than with other types of learning, since they’re trying to replace old and ineffective neural connections. People need to practice on the job and over a long period for transfer to happen.

**Provide frequent feedback on practice:** Learners will need focused and sustained feedback as they practice new behaviors, to help reinforce the behavior and help them understand the impact of their behavior.

**Rely on experiential methods:** In order to reprogram neural circuits connecting the amygdala and neocortex, people need to actively engage in the desired pattern of thought, feeling, and action.

**Build in support:** Social and emotional training programs are usually more effective when they encourage the formation of groups where people give each other support throughout the change effort.

**Use models:** Seeing the behavior in action is invaluable in social and emotional learning.

**Enhance insight:** The most effective training combines experiential methods and the development of insight.

**Prevent relapse:** Without being prepared for setbacks, people can easily become discouraged and give up before the new behaviors have taken hold. In relapse prevention training, people are helped to reframe slips as opportunities to learn, so they’ll be less likely to slip up again in the future.
Transfer and Maintenance

This can be particularly challenging for social and emotional learning. When people return to their normal environments, they will usually face cues and reinforcers that support their old neural pathways.

Encourage use of skills on the job: Remind people to use their new skills and reinforce them when they do. This is particularly important for supervisors, who should also model the behavior themselves.

Provide an organizational culture that supports learning: Transferring and maintaining skills is affected by the extent to which the organization values learning and development.

Evaluating Change

Conduct ongoing evaluation research: This means more than just asking for feedback after a training program: it’s all about measuring the impact of training programs and enhancing them if necessary. You can use whatever data is most relevant, such as customer satisfaction ratings, performance data, 360 reviews, rates of absence and any other relevant information.
Developing the Four Abilities of EI

Caruso and Salovey also explored how people could further develop their skills in each of the four branches of their EI model. They suggested that people could improve their EI by increasing emotional knowledge and the awareness of their own and other people’s emotions. In particular, they recommended focusing on the four specific branches of their EI model.

1. Developing the Ability to Perceive Emotions

Correctly identifying emotions is the cornerstone of using, understanding, and managing emotions effectively. The more accurate a person’s emotional perception of others and situations, the more appropriate their responses and decisions are likely to be.

Areas to focus on in training may include:

- Perceiving their own emotions
- Perceiving others’ emotions correctly: facial expressions, body language, tone of voice, as well as perceiving emotions in artistic expression

2. Developing the Ability to Use Emotions

Our thinking patterns are influenced by our emotions. In fact, thinking doesn’t occur without emotion. Sometimes emotions can be useful and enhance thinking, and at other times they may interfere. Developing this area will help a person to understand when a change of emotion would be useful, so they can become better at matching their mood and emotions to the situation.

Areas to focus on in training might include:

- Understanding, and being able to generate different emotions, e.g. happiness, sadness, anger, and fear
- Consider how different emotions impact the person’s answer to certain sets of questions, e.g. How would you answer “Will you have a good weekend?” when feeling happy, sad, angry etc
- Becoming more aware of how thoughts influence emotions and vice versa.
Developing the Ability to Understand Emotions

This area is all about knowing emotions: understanding emotional language, the differences between emotions, and how they can change and evolve.

Areas to focus on in training might include:

✓ Increasing emotional vocabulary: understanding different descriptors of emotions and the subtle differences between them
✓ Understanding patterns of progression of emotion, and how emotions can blend and combine to form other emotions
✓ Predicting the consequences of emotions not being handled appropriately.

Developing the Ability to Manage Emotions

Learning to manage feelings and emotions begins with becoming more aware of current habits and typical reactions for coping with strong emotions.

Areas to focus on in training might include:

✓ Becoming more aware of feelings and emotions
✓ Learning to act on feelings in a considered way
✓ Remaining open to feelings, even if they’re painful or uncomfortable
✓ Moving between positive and negative moods when required
✓ Using emotion management techniques such as writing about emotions or exercising.
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