

Emotional Intelligence at Work: EQ and IQ in the workplace

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Most psychologists agree that there is little relationship between a person's intelligence and the success achieved in his or her career. Robert Sternberg (1985), for instance, has long maintained that the abilities measured by intelligence tests are reasonably good predictors of school success, but poor predictors of job success. Many people define their work in technical terms, ignoring the important emotional skills that are so essential in determining how fast they rise in the company or business. Howard Gardner (1993), in proposing his eight types of intelligence, claimed that "interpersonal intelligence" and "intrapersonal intelligence" were ignored by traditional measures of intelligence. The relationship between IQ (intelligence quotient or measured intelligence) and EQ (emotional quotient or emotional intelligence) will be discussed in this paper, especially as they affect our work lives.

The term, "emotional intelligence", was first used by American psychologist, Professor Peter Salovey of Yale University in 1990. Salovey and John Mayer (1990) defined emotional intelligence as the ability to measure and control one's own and others' feelings, and to use feelings to influence our thoughts and actions. They developed a comprehensive theory of emotional intelligence, based on four building blocks:

1. The ability to perceive, appraise, and express emotion accurately;
2. The ability to retrieve or produce feelings which help understand yourself or someone else;
3. The ability to comprehend emotions and knowledge about them; and
4. The ability to control your emotions in order to enhance emotional and intellectual development.

Salovey and Mayer (1990) maintained that each of these four building blocks can be improved in an individual of any age. Daniel Goleman extended their research by drawing implications of emotional

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intelligence for people's family and work lives in his best-selling book, "Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ" (1995). In his follow-up book, "Working with Emotional Intelligence" (1998), Goleman cited research indicating that American children's IQ had increased since intelligence tests were first used widely in 1918, but their emotional intelligence had decreased from the early 1970s to the late 1980s. He discussed studies to show that many highly intelligent people had their careers blocked because their emotional intelligence was underdeveloped. Furthermore, many companies were less productive than they might have been if they had been more concerned with promoting their workers' emotional intelligence. For example, he cites the case of the world's most successful executive search company, Egon Zehnder, whose partners around the world receive the same annual percentage bonus, which encourages them to cooperate to find the best person for the client's needs. By sharing their knowledge, the client is happy that the best available candidate has been chosen and the employees of Egon Zehnder are happy because they have shared their knowledge and been rewarded for their cooperative search for the right person.

What Employers Want in New Employees

When employers in a wide range of businesses are asked what they are looking for in new employees, they regularly mention five key competencies:

1. Listening and speaking skills;
2. Adaptability and creative responses to problems;
3. Personal management skills, such as the ability to take the initiative;
4. Interpersonal effectiveness, such as the ability to persuade others; and
5. Ability to contribute to corporate goals.

Of course, employers want intelligent and technically qualified employees in specialist positions, but these skills are not sufficient to ensure that the employee contributes effectively to achieving the corporate goals. Goleman (1998) cited the example of two software engineers who were employed by the same company at the same time: both had the same degree in software engineering from a well-respected university. The two employees interpreted their role in the company differently. One employee immersed himself in reading all the technical manuals of the computers used by the

company, believing he was a computer specialist, whereas the other employee believed his role was to be as useful as he could be in whatever field he was asked to contribute by his superiors. When a new piece of software had to be installed on the company's computers, the second employee heard about the task and offered to help, because he had been trained to install and use that software. The other employee was so immersed in his work that he did not even hear about the problem. The second employee made himself into a valuable member of staff and was rewarded with a promotion within a year of being employed by the company. The first employee came to be regarded as a "back room" person, who was not willing to step outside of his narrowly defined role and make himself useful in solving problems as they arose.

There is an important distinction between *technical competence* and *emotional competence*.

Technical competence means the ability to do the job as it is laid out in the technical job specifications. Emotional competence, on the other hand, means possessing the personal and emotional skills to do the job in a friendly and efficient manner. Personal competence involves self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation, while social competence requires empathy and social skills. We all know employees who are technically competent, but do not carry out their work willingly and happily. They are always complaining that they have too much work to do, instead of prioritising their tasks and completing each task cooperatively. There is an old saying in business: give a task to a busy person, because he or she has the track record of successfully completing their work on time and cheerfully.

How to Increase Your EQ

Weisinger (1998) proposed six strategies for increasing your emotional intelligence:

1. Develop a high level of self-awareness;
2. Manage your emotions;
3. Motivate yourself;
4. Develop effective communication skills;
5. Develop interpersonal skills; and
6. Help others help themselves.

1. Develop a high level of self-awareness

In achieving a high level of self-awareness a person needs to examine how he makes appraisals. One of the famous Chinese teacher and philosopher Confucius' pieces of advice was to be more critical of oneself and less critical of others. People respond more positively to those who affirm them as human beings and praise them for their efforts. Bosses who criticise their employees all the time become disliked, especially if they are sarcastic in their criticism. Another strategy is to tune into your senses, and be aware of the physical and social environment around you. At meetings it pays to observe what is happening around the table and not to jump to conclusions prematurely. By getting in touch with your feelings you are able to react to situations openly and not let your feelings interfere with your work. After a bad day at work, some people explode at their spouse or children soon after they arriving home. A much better solution is to let go of these negative feelings before you arrive home, or think about a solution to the problem to be implemented tomorrow. Some experts advise married couples never to discuss difficult issues in the first nine minutes after arriving home from work. Also, when a child comes home upset by a friend's behaviour, understanding parents do not scold them when they throw their school bag down against the door. Rather, they respond with the question, "Did you have a bad day at school?" This gives the child the opportunity to get the problem out into the open and to move on. Another strategy for developing high self-awareness is to learn what your intentions are. For example, if you criticise your secretary for failing to tell you about an important appointment, you may damage your professional relationship with her. Your intention of maintaining a good relationship with her may not be achieved. It is much better to propose a solution to future situations like this, by having her place the appointment in your diary or organiser. Finally, you need to pay attention to your actions. Failing to see the consequences of your actions on others who work around you will lead to a breakdown in your working relationships, an increase in tension and a decrease in efficiency. Looking ahead to anticipate problems created by your actions will lead you to reflect on the best way of solving a problem and avoiding a communication breakdown.

2. Managing Your Emotions

We all need to make the components of our emotional system work together. These three components are our *thoughts*, our *physiological reactions*, and our *behaviour* in a particular situation. When you find yourself in a difficult social situation, you should avoid making impulsive decisions before you have had a chance to reflect on alternative solutions to the problem. You also need to deal with the physiological reactions to the situation, which may cause you to develop a headache if it is not solved. So you need to take charge of your thoughts and think through the possible solutions. In this way you anticipate problems and overcome them before the situation gets out of control. A purposeful, active approach to solving difficult social problems is to be preferred over the strategy of ignoring the problem and hoping it will solve itself or go away.

3. Motivate Yourself

Employers are constantly searching for employees who can take the initiative and motivate themselves. They want self-starters, rather than workers who wait to be told what to do at every turn. Self-motivated people are task-oriented. They get on with a task and work persistently at it, despite temporary setbacks.

A good way to get started is to engage in *self-talk*. Tell yourself that you can do this task. Set yourself the goal of finishing the task by a certain time. Break the task down into steps and do them, one at a time, in order to complete the whole task. Reward yourself as you complete each step successfully. If something goes wrong, ask yourself why and do it again carefully to ensure that this time you get it right. Then, when you have finished the whole task to your satisfaction, submit it to your boss, and wait for any feedback. Treat feedback as an opportunity to learn and to improve. He may suggest improvements. Do them willingly and you will be appreciated as someone who meets deadlines and adds value to the organisation.

4. Develop Effective Communication Skills

Communication is at the heart of any relationship. Most married couples realise that the health of their relationship depends on effective communication. If either party does not communicate his or

her wishes, needs, hopes, and desires, then problems can arise. Friendships are also based on open and honest communication.

There are at least five skills that determine effective communication:

- (i) Self-disclosure: clearly telling the other person what you think, feel, and want;
- (ii) Assertiveness: stating your opinions and respecting those of others;
- (iii) Active listening: hearing what the other person is *really* saying;
- (iv) Giving and receiving criticism: constructively sharing your ideas about another person's contribution; and
- (v) Team communication: communicating persuasively in a group situation.

While it is not easy to put these five principles into practice all the time, effective communication means that you will keep them in mind and use them whenever possible. Otherwise, you will play games in your relationships, games that may be misinterpreted, leading to misunderstanding and lower efficiency. While Thai culture expects that you will maintain good relationships with your fellow workers at all times, your awareness of these principles of effective communication will assist both good communication and efficiency at work. You can be assertive without being aggressive. It simply means that you express your needs diplomatically, so that the group task will be completed on time. Active listening requires that you listen to what the other person is saying with an open mind and not judging him or her prematurely. An atmosphere of mutual respect leads to productive work relationships, based on full and open communication.

5. Developing Interpersonal Skills

Interpersonal skills are vital if teamwork is to occur in the workplace. Workers who cannot cooperate to achieve common goals will be appraised negatively by their employers. Increasingly, our work involves other people as tasks become more demanding. Even in the United States, the most competitive society in the world, experts such as David and Richard Johnson (1975) agree that cooperation in the workplace is more frequent than is competition. Once someone has competed to be employed, then that person must cooperate in the workplace in order to be accepted and become a valued employee.

In work relationships, successful employees create *win-win situations*, where they meet each others' needs. They achieve their own goals at the same time as they help co-workers achieve their goals.

They build long-term, trusting relationships, so that they have confidence in each other when the task demands cooperative skills. They share their thoughts, feelings and ideas, confident that they can achieve the common goal.

6. Helping Others Help Themselves

It is vital to help others help themselves by keeping your emotional perspective. Some employees love to complain about little things in the workplace. Their complaining attitude becomes contagious if you sympathise too readily. Instead of reflecting their feelings, change the subject to a more positive one. If you do this often enough, they will get the message that it is no use complaining to you. You may even be responsible for a change of heart on their part, by the realisation that complaining constantly is counterproductive and achieves nothing if it becomes a habit of mind.

Knowing how to calm a person is a valuable skill. When a person is angry, you need to practise active listening. Do not become angry yourself, but respond sympathetically with a comment like, "It sounds like you are really angry about this". The simple act of expressing their anger may be sufficient to reduce this emotion and allow them to return to a calmer frame of mind. But if they remain agitated, you need to let them express their feelings by asking them what has caused their anger. You may give them a creative time-out, by saying that you need to go to the bathroom. This gives them the opportunity to take a deep breath and see things in perspective by the time you return. Then you can ask them, "What do you think we can do to solve the problem?" A constructive approach to problem solution will demonstrate that you acknowledge the problem and want to give them ownership of the solution.

Being a supportive listener is an important skill of emotional intelligence. A sympathetic friend is someone who can be trusted to listen actively to people's problems without judging them. Just being there to listen supportively is performing a valuable role, because your friend may be able to articulate his or her problem and, in doing so, realise that there is a solution that can be effected. The

US counselling psychologist, Carl Rogers (1983), believed that effective counsellors practised *unconditional positive regard* for their clients by being a sympathetic listener and not suggesting premature solutions or judging the client. The person with the problem must see the solution in order to be committed to implementing it. All the listener can achieve is to help the person clarify thoughts, feelings and ideas. This is a valuable role, because it empowers the person to see the problem more clearly and to resolve to do something about it.

Finally, you can help people to help themselves by helping them with goal planning and the achievement of their goals. When I was a university student, I had a friend who was a perfectionist. She was very thorough in her reading for essays and collected a wide array of notes about the essay topic. She could not, however, bring herself to plan the essay and then to write it. She would procrastinate until the last minute and then would be left with too little time to write it. If I had been more skilled at that time, I might have been able to assist her to set small goals and work progressively towards achieving each of them in turn, leading to the successful completion of the essay by the due date.

Conclusion

Using one's emotional intelligence in the workplace takes time and effort. By practising the skills outlined in this article, you will develop into a valuable employee who is well liked by your co-workers. If everyone works together cooperatively, then the workplace is usually more task-oriented and efficient. Your technical skills are necessary, but not sufficient, for your success at work. By developing your IQ and your EQ, you will become a valuable employee and a trusted friend to your co-workers. In this way, you will contribute to a team that is not only efficient, but also effective in the achievement of its goals.

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