



Accelerating performance for leaders, teams and individuals.

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Emotional Intelligence: Hired for IQ, Fired for EQ

by MJ Harwood

Today's organizations are spider webs, not the top-down structures of old. What makes an employee or leader successful in this interconnected environment has also changed. In this "spider web-world", we are far more dependent on trust and on the quality of the interactions that are constantly rippling the web, needing the right message, the right culture, and the right decisions to cascade effectively throughout without having to be present for each move. To make sure that happens, emotional intelligence is required.

What is emotional intelligence? We know what IQ, our intelligence quotient, is, but rarely is there the same understanding of our EQ, our emotional quotient or emotional intelligence. Loosely summarized, emotional intelligence refers to our interpersonal skills: how well we engage and 'connect' with others. Our EQ comes from our limbic system, a critical portion of our physiological brain center involved in both motivation and interpretation, and it affects our success *far* more than our IQ.

How important is EQ? Research is showing that lack of interpersonal skills is at the core of up to 70 percent of careers that go off track. That's no surprise—we've all seen it happen. The person hired for their incredible expertise self-destructs by reacting inappropriately within the peer environment, by alienating or de-motivating employees or peers too frequently. We've seen managers that weren't trusted, managers without any *real* followers, who lose key talent or lead lackluster, underperforming, and emotionally unengaged teams. These outcomes result not from a low IQ or a lack of expertise, but from a low EQ: typically, the employee is either unaware of the degree to which their negative behavior impacts the environment, or they lack the EQ skills to perform otherwise, too often relying on their titles, seniority, or specialized knowledge to protect them.

Regardless of intent, however, *low* EQ simply won't work in today's dynamic business environment. This millennium-paced, globalized world dictates that we aggressively and intelligently deploy creative and compelling strategies. There is a critical need for concentrated teamwork and collaboration, for unrelenting innovation, for constant change, adaptation, and initiation, for embracing diversity of thought and people. And abilities in each of these areas come from our brain's right hemisphere, our EQ side, *not* from our left hemispheres, the IQ side.

Today, companies that want to thrive need both a high EQ *environment* and high EQ *leaders* who can inspire performance and retain eager, motivated, and talented employees that feel valued. Organizations won't be able to tolerate those that struggle in this area for very long: IQ and expertise alone are no longer enough to succeed. According to Margaret Wheatley, PhD, in her book *Leadership and the New Science*, "The era of the rugged individual has been replaced by the era of the team player."

Research is helping us understand the importance of EQ. Studies are now showing that star-level performance in employees and leaders is dramatically influenced by their EQ. According to research by Daniel Goleman, PhD, in *Working with Emotional Intelligence* and Travis Bradberry, PhD, in *The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book*, 67 percent of the reason an employee is a "superstar" is due to his or her EQ and interpersonal skills, while only 33 percent of their success is due to their IQ and expertise COMBINED. And what's more, these star performers have an

enormous ROI: the results of one study showed that high-performers in the computer programming field (the top 15 percent) are 320 percent more productive than the typical programmer, effectively equaling the output of three average performers.*

For "superior" leaders, those whose teams produce more and whose contributions to the bottom line are 20 to 30 percent greater than average, EQ plays an even larger role—up to 80 percent.

In addition, according to several studies within the high-tech industry, the LEADING reason an employee stays with a company—or leaves it—is due to the quality of their manager or leader and the respect they are given. To appreciate the implications of this, consider that in 2010 our economy was already beginning to realize the projections for a demand of 10 million more skilled workers than the labor force could provide. In the August 2004 issue of *Crucial Trends* this concern was discussed in depth, noting that "employers in technology industries will be the first to suffer from unfilled positions." Another sobering statistic is that the retirement migration of approx. 75 million baby boomers has begun, with only 45 million "gen x'rs" to fill their void. Simply put, competition for top performers will continue to be intense, and businesses that understand how to attract and how to keep their talent and superstars will have a big leg up on the competition.

Considering both the economic value-add of high-performers and the rising shortage of talent, having leaders and managers that lack the EQ skill needed to retain high-performers is simply no longer affordable. According to Robert Cooper, PhD, in his book *Executive EQ*, "Leaders spend 25% of their careers on decision-making and **75% on interpersonal work.**" This powerful statistic demonstrates why *interpersonal* skill levels—EQ—can have such a huge influence on results. Clearly, then, the necessity and urgency of developing the tools and skills needed to assess, hire, promote, and develop EQ talent in leaders and high-performers is undeniable.

So then, how's your EQ? Some EQ traits to consider: a high EQ individual is someone who can understand and embrace feedback and differing perspectives; can handle stress and conflict constructively; can participate and collaborate effectively; is perceived as trustworthy and credible; is confident and has a positive energy; can initiate and adapt well to change; can influence others; and can build strong bonds and healthy internal and external networks. Does this describe you? Your boss? The employees you count on to keep the organization's spider web alive and healthy? If not, "where" not?

There is some good news, though: EQ is teachable. Unlike IQ, it has no innate genetic limitations—it can be developed and enhanced, starting at any age, from 5 to 85. And with EQ skill development, even a relatively small change in the right area has the potential to make a very significant impact not only on the individual, but also on his or her peers or the entire organization.

Changing habitual behaviors is certainly not easy. It takes focus, courage and commitment. Still, given the upside of improving one's EQ, and the downside if left inadequate or unchanged, the decision to proceed becomes a basic IQ exercise—a standard cost/benefit analysis. Perhaps this is why most Fortune 500 organizations and CEOs are now requiring individual and team EQ skill building throughout their companies to complement their employees' "expertise" development.

However, the following quote from Edwin Louis-Cole provides a great "risk analysis" when deciding whether or not to enhance your EQ: "You don't drown by falling in the water, you drown by staying there."

*Gary Cherniss and Daniel Goleman, eds., *The Emotionally Intelligent Workplace* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001) 47-50.



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