

Emotional Intelligence

By Deborah Mackin



In the workplace, success seems to hinge on our intelligence, logical capabilities, and job-related skills, rather than on anything we do with our emotions. Or does it?

New research in the 90s confirmed that there is an emotional brain: a place called the *limbic system* where our emotions originate. It is separated from the rational brain (the neocortex) but the two are connected and develop together. This means that our power to reason and our feelings are intended to be used together. Because of the brain's design, all information goes into our emotional center first and then to our thinking center. Emotions come before thought and behavior. What scientists discovered is that we need our emotions; our feelings fire up the motor in us that drives energy and creativity. If we block or ignore emotions in the workplace, we stifle motivation.

As a result of these findings, it's become important to understand what we're feeling, what others are feeling, how to manage our own feelings and how to manage relationships with others. This is the core of Emotional Intelligence: **a term used to describe the complex ability to regulate our impulses, empathize with others and be resilient in the face of difficulties. Therefore, emotional intelligence is a product of the amount of communication between the rational and emotional centers of the brain.** This article will examine the history, data and components of Emotional Intelligence.

The History of EQ

Charles Darwin was the first to recognize the value of emotions. He noted that the emotional system energizes behavior needed to stay alive. Emotions cannot be stopped, they happen instinctually and immediately in response to situations and people. In the 1920s E.I. Thorndike identified "social intelligence" as the ability to act

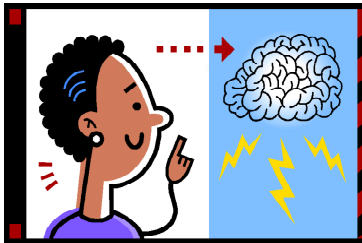
“We are being judged by a new yardstick. It's not how smart you are but how you are smart! The technical skills or the business expertise that so often propelled people to the top are not the abilities that make you effective in inspiring people, in guiding people, in coaching, developing and motivating people.”

—Daniel Goleman,
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wisely in human relations. In 1988, Reuven Bar-On coined the term emotional intelligence in his doctoral dissertation. In 1990, John Mayer and Peter Salovey did groundbreaking research on emotional intelligence, pointing to the importance of knowing yourself as well as understanding others. In 1995, Daniel Goleman introduced the importance of EQ in the workplace, noting that IQ is a less powerful predictor of outstanding leadership than EQ.

Data Findings



The highest estimate of how much difference IQ (intellectual quotient) accounts for in how well people perform in their careers is no higher than 10% and perhaps as low as 4% (Sternberg, 1997). IQ is considered a threshold competence, a minimum capability that all must have. Once you're in a group of similar IQs, IQ will no longer distinguish you in the group.

EQ (emotional intelligence) data suggests that older groups score significantly higher than younger groups in most EQ scales. Respondents in their late 40s obtained the highest mean scores.

On the North American sample, females appear to have stronger interpersonal skills than males, but males have higher intrapersonal capacity, are better at managing emotions, and are more adaptable. Women are more aware of emotions, demonstrate more empathy towards others, and are more socially responsible. Men have better self-regard, are more self-reliant, cope better with stress, and are more optimistic than women in the studies conducted. No significant differences in emotional intelligence were found between various ethnic groups in North America.

Higher-level employees are more likely to have inflated views of their emotional intelligence and less congruence with the perceptions of others than lower-level employees. Data shows that when there is no easy right or wrong answer to a problem or decision, people usually decide one direction or another based on emotions.

There is a moderate yet significant relationship between EQ and physical health and significant differences in psychological health and a moderate, yet statistically significant relationship between EQ and performance at school. However, EQ is not something we have been taught to improve since childhood. So, it makes sense that most people have an average EQ score.

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STEP 1: Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the first skill set in building Emotional Intelligence. High self-awareness is “tuning in” to the sensations you feel and being able to name which emotion is happening at any given time. People experience an average of 27 emotions every waking hour! Rather than ignoring a feeling, the goal is to move toward it, into it, and eventually through it. Leaning into your discomfort is the only way to change.

The skill sets associated with **Self-Awareness** include:

Emotional Awareness: Recognizing one’s emotions and their effects

- Know which emotions you feel and why
- Realize the links between feelings and what you do, say, and think
- Recognize how feelings affect performance
- Have a guiding awareness of personal values and goals

Accurate Self-Assessment: Knowing one’s strengths and limits

- Aware of personal strengths and weaknesses
- Reflective and able to learn from experience
- Open to candid feedback, new perspectives and self-development
- Able to show a sense of humor and perspective about oneself

Self-Confidence:

- Able to have a “presence” and be self-assured
- Able to voice views that are different and/or unpopular
- Able to be decisive and make decisions despite uncertainties

For many of us, when we feel emotional reactions to situations, we don’t always recognize what’s behind the reaction. It’s important to stop and ask “why do I feel so tense?” and to identify the feeling behind it. For example, when you get a lot of emails, or a project team member doesn’t complete an assignment on time, or you have to make a presentation to an important group of people – what are the emotions that these situations elicit in you. Sometimes it is helpful to maintain a journal over a period of a month to record your emotional state at various points during the day or when you are in difficult circumstances. The journal will help you become more attuned to your body and cues it gives you about your emotional state.

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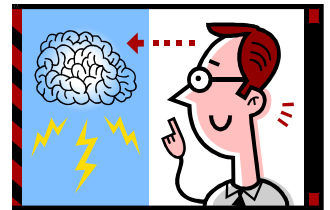
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STEP 2: Self-Management

Self-management is your ability to use the awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and direct behavior positively. This second step is to regulate feelings and manage them so they do more good, both to yourself and others, than harm. Our passions can be contagious and energize others, but our ranting and raving can damage work relations beyond repair. When we get mad, we often sound more upset than we really are because we're allowing raw emotions to surface unchecked. Checking those emotions is what self-regulation is all about. It's giving the rational side of the brain time to catch up and temper our feelings when needed.

The goal is to learn how to act intentionally, rather than reactively. When we strive to be intentional, we mean what we say rather than spouting off without thinking and later regretting the impulsive act. When emotions run strong, it is best to slow down and think before moving forward.



Here are the components of **Self-Management**:

Self-Control: Managing disruptive emotions and impulses

- Manage impulsive feelings and distressing emotions well
- Stay composed, positive and unflappable even in difficult moments
- Think clearly and stay focused under pressure

Trustworthiness: Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity

- Act ethically and above reproach even when faced with conflicting emotions
- Build trust through reliability and authenticity
- Admit mistakes and confront actions in others

Conscientiousness: Taking responsibility for personal performance

- Meet commitments and keep promises
- Hold oneself accountable for meeting objectives

Adaptability: Flexibility in handling change

- Smoothly handle multiple demands, shifting priorities and rapid change
- Flexible in how the person sees events

More than two-thirds of people tested have great difficulty admitting their shortcomings. I saw this personally last week when a highly skilled professional could not stop playing the “victim” when discussing her inability to get along with others in

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her group. None of it was her fault; all of it was because others were out to get her. Self-managing skills help us to move beyond this victim perspective and “reframe” stressful situations into ones that are challenging and doable. Knowing and managing our own “emotional triggers” is critical to this step.

One important thing to remember in the self-managing step is the effect of *self-talk*. The manner in which we talk to ourselves during emotional issues is very revealing. What we tell ourselves goes immediately into our subconscious where it increases or decreases our anger and other emotions. Repeated negative self-talk leads to exaggerated and irrational thinking. Some people benefit from using positive affirmations to counter the negative self-talk in their heads.



STEP 3: Social Awareness

Once we have become honest and intentional with our emotions, it is time to look outward. After all, nobody in life will listen to us unless they feel we have listened to them. Emotional intelligence is both tuning into your own feelings and tuning into the feelings of those around us. Empathy is being able to see from another’s perspective. Empathy begins with listening. Individuals who lack empathy are more focused on their needs and issues and pay little attention to anyone else’s. No connection is made.

“When we meet someone, we determine whether we like them and trust them within 3–5 seconds.”

Research has proven that when we meet someone, we determine whether we like them and trust them within 3–5 seconds. It’s that fast for our emotional brain to form a first impression. The rational brain has no time to get involved and deliver intellectual proof until later.

Here are the components of **Social Awareness**:

Empathy: Sensing others’ feelings and perspective and taking an active interest in their concerns

- Attentive to emotional cues and listen well
- Show sensitivity and understand others’ perspectives
- Help out based on understanding other people’s needs and feelings

Service Orientation: Anticipating, recognizing and meeting needs

- Respond to people’s needs and try to match response to need
- Seek ways to increase others’ satisfaction and loyalty

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- Offer appropriate assistance
- Grasp the other person's perspective

Political Awareness: Reading a group's emotional current and power relationships

- Accurately read key power relationships
- Detect crucial social networks
- Understand the forces that shape views and actions
- Accurately read situations and organizational realities

There are four levels of communication: superficial, fact, thought and feelings. With some people, we never get past the first two levels. To increase your EQ, you want to reach the last level and share your feelings and hear others' feelings.



STEP 4: Relationship Management

Mastering the abilities of self-awareness, self management, and social awareness pave the way for more effective relationships. This fourth component, relationship management, is about interacting with people and being adept at managing emotions in others. Here are the components:

Influence: Using effective tactics of persuasion

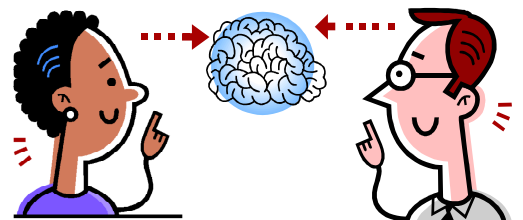
- Skilled at persuasion
- Fine-tune presentations to appeal to the listener
- Use complex strategies like indirect influence to build consensus and support
- Orchestrate dramatic events to effectively make a point

Communication: Sending clear and convincing messages

- Effective in give-and-take, registering emotional cues in attuning message
- Deal with difficult issues straightforwardly
- Listen well, seek mutual understanding, and welcome sharing information fully
- Foster open communication and stay receptive to bad news

Conflict Management: Negotiating and resolving disagreements

- Handle difficult people and tense situations with diplomacy and tact
- Spot potential conflicts, bring disagreement into the open, and help de-escalate them
- Encourage debate and open discussion
- Orchestrate win-win solutions



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Collaboration and Cooperation: Working well with others toward shared goals

- Balance a focus on tasks with attention to relationships
- Share plans, information and resources freely
- Promote a friendly, cooperative climate
- Spot and nurture opportunities for collaboration

The Effect of EQ on a Team

Team emotional intelligence is made up of four skills: emotional awareness, emotional management, internal relationship management and external relationship management. Team emotion management requires a group of people who are able to work together to spot when emotions (rather than facts) are influencing their progress. Team members who manage relationships with the rest of the group, both during and outside meetings, will minimize the challenges that come up when emotions are strong. A team with effective emotional management skills has at least one or two members who are able to pull the group out of the doldrums and get everyone back on track. The team's performance is enhanced when team members take responsibility for being aware of their own emotions. A team that can proactively welcome the advice and concerns of another group that has the power to make a go/no go decision is using external relationships management skills to its benefit. Teams that score low in the assessment of EQ under-perform when compared to their counterparts with high EQ. When a group is uncomfortable with something, it is important for a member to ask, "Why is this so hard for us to discuss?"

Based on a decade of research with more than 500,000 people, experts are clear that emotional intelligence plays a key role in the success of individuals in the workplace. Interestingly, CEOs and top executives were found to have next to the lowest EQ scores (the lowest were the unemployed). Middle management and those working in customer service had the highest EQ scores. EQ is not, however, just about scores and results. It's about our ability to understand what we're feeling and manage those feelings so they don't negatively affect employees. It's also about understanding what is going on in others — the antennae we have for how others are reacting — and using that knowledge to manage situations effectively. Emotional intelligence is not about being nice all the time; it's about being honest. It's not about being touchy-feely but about being aware of your feelings and those of others. Emotional intelligence is not about being emotional; it's about being smart with your emotions.

“Emotional Intelligence is not about being emotional; it's about being smart with your emotions.”

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