

Organisations that Thrive:

5 Reasons You Must Boost Emotional Intelligence in Your Workplace

Have you ever managed people? It doesn't matter if it's a workforce of thousands, or the three people that comprise your organisation's Social committee. If the answer is yes, you probably know that the greatest problems plaguing organizations has little to do with actual work. The real cause of the crazies? People's *emotional reactions!*

Yup, whether your organization is big or small, when person A looks at person B "funny", when work pressure makes you want to literally bang your head against the desk, or when the personalities in your team could make a profitable reality TV show -- expect sparks to fly and productivity to take a backseat.

Which is why if you want to grow a business team with star performers, realise your own career potential or find the best workplace on the planet; don't just consider educational and employment history of yourself and your employees. Instead, focus on *Emotional Intelligence*.

The benefits of EQ in the workplace are well-documented. For one, it helps create more relaxed and engaged employees. Slaski & Cartwright, for example, while studying retail managers, found that EQ is significantly linked to lower stress levels, as well as better health and well-beingⁱ. EQ is also positively related to job satisfaction and better productivity, especially in the areas of innovation, creativity, teamwork effectiveness, customer service and organizational commitment.ⁱⁱ Furthermore, EQ is significantly linked to leadership success.ⁱⁱⁱ Which means simply this: if you want to attract and develop high performance individuals, retain great talent, and prevent them from developing job dissatisfaction and burnout, you must provide training and support for them to master emotional intelligence!

What is it emotional intelligence?

Most people know EQ as the ability to *identify, evaluate* and *control* one's own emotions. People with high EQ have better self-awareness than most others; they can easily tell if they're sad, angry or just so happy they could burst. They can identify exact points in time when their mood begins to shift, and therefore zero in on what triggers their emotions. They're also aware of how their feelings impact their thoughts and actions --- if they start performing poorly, they don't vent their frustrations on the innocent mail delivery guy. More importantly, they can manage their feelings; they can shake the doldrums when more urgent matters are at hand, or sober up when the situation calls for a more serious disposition.

What most people don't know is that EQ isn't limited to self-awareness and self-management. EQ is also concerned with three other skills critical in a working environment: self-motivation, social awareness, and social skills.

So where do you and your employees stand on the emotional intelligence scale and what are you going to do about it? Read the following five reasons why you and your employees must master EQ.

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1. Self-motivation

Is there fire in your belly? When your boss gives you a more challenging assignment, do you feel victimized or energized? Persons with high EQ are self-motivated. They set realistic yet demanding goals for themselves; they jump at opportunities to learn more, and are driven by optimism, commitment and the sincere belief that they are the captain of their own ship. For people with high EQ, there is no such thing as a dead-end job!

2. Long-term personal success

Emotional intelligence is not just about enjoying work now; it also definitely matters in the long run. Consider this: in 1996, Feist & Barron followed up 80 graduate students who took EQ, IQ and personality tests at Berkeley during the 1950s. Guess what? 40 years later, they found that high scores on EQ abilities are as much as 4 times (4 times!) more important than IQ in determining personal success^{iv}. Real food for thought, isn't it?

3. Empathy

More so, people with high EQ are sensitive to the feelings of others, and respond accordingly. For instance, they are good with empathy --- putting one's self in the shoes of other people. If your officemate is upset that you bungled up the numbers in your last report, EQ means that you will not react defensively to your co-worker's anger, but instead you will recognize your co-worker's right to be upset *and* your contribution to his or her state. You have a service orientation --- not just to the customers who bring in the cash but also to green teammates. Instead of reprimanding a newbie for being hesitant during a presentation, you will provide encouragement and training. And you will jump to fill your teammate's lack without having to steal the spotlight or appear the hero.

4. Dealing with Workplace Diversity

These EQ skills are so critical, especially today where almost all companies have a culturally, and sometimes intellectually, diverse workforce. Instead of diversity creating conflict, a company that values EQ will create opportunities from people's differences. Studies by Finn and Chattopadhyay^v as well as Barsade et. al. ^{vi}, for example, propose that the ability to read emotional signals across cultural divides is key to creating a successful culturally diverse team.

5. Social Influence

And it doesn't hurt to have an arsenal of people management skills. A 1993 study, for example, found that social influence is that EQ skill that separates "star performers" from the rest.^{vii} These star performers can appeal to emotion, argue with reason and logic, and de-escalate tensions through diplomacy --- whatever tactic will work.

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They will strive to work around team members' strengths and weaknesses, doing their bit to create a work atmosphere where each person knows that they have something valuable to contribute towards the goal. They can share credit, power and accountability with others.

How do you and your employees fare in each of these areas? By focusing on skills and attributes of emotional intelligence, you can have a team of star performers who effectively manage their relationships with others as well as their relationship with themselves. Productivity will improve, absenteeism and presenteeism will reduce, and your workplace culture will transform for the better. But like any skill, emotional intelligence must be developed and harnessed! What will you do to increase your team's emotional intelligence?

Coaching is a great format for improving emotional intelligence as it provides the tools to explore exactly how your emotions are driving your thoughts and behaviour, and using that information to change the way you respond in the future until it becomes a new, more natural way of responding. Contact us to discuss the possibility of using our coaching services to help you or your team -- book in for a free half hour consultation to discuss your needs by calling 02 9938 3905 or emailing contact@activ8change.com.au.

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ⁱ Slaski, M. & Cartwright, S. (2003). Emotional intelligence training and its implications for stress, health and performance. *Stress and Health*, 19(4), pp. 233-239.

ⁱⁱ Palmer, B.R., Gardner, L., & Stough, C. (2003). The relationship between emotional intelligence, personality and leadership. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 55, pp 140-145.

ⁱⁱⁱ Palmer, B.R., Gardner, L., & Stough, C. (2003). The relationship between emotional intelligence, personality and leadership. *Australian Journal of Psychology*, 55, pp 140-145.

^{iv} Feist, G. J., and Barron, F. (1996). Emotional intelligence and academic intelligence in career and life success. *Presentation Paper*, Annual Convention of the American Psychological Society, San Francisco, CA, June.

^v Finn, C. P, & Chattopadhyay, P. (2000). Managing emotions in diverse work teams: An affective events perspective. In L.N. Dosier & J.B. Keys (Eds.) *Academy of Management Best Paper Proceedings* (CD-ROM). Pleasantville, NY: Academy of Management.

^{vi} Barsade, S. G., Ward, A. J., Turner, J. D. F., & Sonnenfeld, J. A. (2000). To your heart's content: A model of affective diversity in top management teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45, pp. 802-836.

^{vii} Spencer, L. M. Jr., & Spencer, S. M. (1993). *Competence at work: Models for superior performance*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.