

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

A Key Factor in Career Success

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Intelligence has long been known to be a factor in school and career success. IQ tests have been used for years to place students in school classes and to identify suitable career paths. Recent research, however, is showing that intelligence by itself does not predict career success. Another factor has been found to be a key determinant of job and career success. This factor is commonly referred to as "emotional intelligence." The term was first introduced in the late 1990s by author Daniel Goleman, whose research points to a strong link between emotional intelligence and career success. One study followed 450 boys who were raised in the slum neighborhood of Somerville, Mass. At middle age, 7 percent of the men with low IQs were unemployed, but so were 7 percent of the men with high IQs. There was a link between childhood socioeconomic status and success in later life, but the biggest difference between those who were successful and those who were unsuccessful was that the successful people possessed more traits related to emotional intelligence, such as being able to handle frustration, to control emotions, and to get along with other people.

Emotional intelligence is defined as a set of traits — some might call it character or emotional maturity — that are all related to how wisely we use or handle our emotions. For example, you find out that a coworker makes more money than you do. What do you do? Do you get angry and storm into the boss' office to demand a raise? Do you say nothing and silently fume? Do you begin to work less or perhaps start looking for another job? Or, do you express your anger and frustration to someone who is removed from the situation, a spouse or good friend for example, and then strategize on

the best, smartest way to handle the situation? This last response is the most emotionally intelligent one.

Character traits often associated with emotional intelligence are:

- Self awareness — being able to recognize when you are angry, sad, scared, happy
- Self regulation — being able to manage the expression of your emotions
- Motivation — the desire and ability to take action in a certain direction
- Resilience — the ability to recover and bounce back after adverse events
- Empathy — the ability to understand other peoples' feelings and points of view
- Social skills — interpersonal skills such as listening, giving and receiving feedback, and influencing others

Another study, which compared successful executives and those who did not make it to the highest ranks found that the successful executives possessed more of the following characteristics:

- Self control — an even temperament and not moody or prone to angry outbursts
- Conscientiousness — taking responsibility for mistakes and failures rather than blaming others
- Trustworthiness — strong concern for the needs of colleagues and subordinates and not inclined to get ahead at the expense of other people
- Social skills — showing tact and consideration for everyone regardless of rank, and not abrasive, arrogant or intimidating
- Building bonds and leveraging diversity — building a strong network of mutually beneficial relationships and the ability to get along with people of all kinds.

Other characteristics sometimes associated with emotional intelli-

gence include: creativity, constructive discontent, compassion and intuition.

How can you improve emotional intelligence? Opinions differ on how to improve one's "EQ" — emotional intelligence quotient. Many of the above characteristics can be observed in very small children so we believe that tendencies associated with emotional intelligence are inborn. These innate tendencies can be modified in the growing-up years by positive reinforcement and punishment. Once a person reaches adulthood, improving these traits is possible but doing so usually requires focus and attention. The process of improving your EQ begins with reflecting on your behavior and responses. "Why did I say that?" "Was there a better way to react?" Feedback from a supportive friend or family member can also be helpful as long as you resist the temptation to become defensive. Keeping a diary or journal is a way to reflect in writing. Taking self-assessments such as the Myers Briggs Type Indicator or DiSC will help you identify your strengths and areas to improve. Professional counseling is also an option. Many employer-sponsored Employee Assistance Programs will cover the cost of a limited number of counseling sessions.

If your career is not advancing that way you would like or the way you think it should, consider taking steps to improve your emotional intelligence.

For information on tools to assess and improve emotional intelligence, contact Dr. Barbara Carnes.

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