

APPLYING EQ AT THE WORKPLACE

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HOW TO BRING INTELLIGENCE TO EMOTIONS



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EQ

Applying EQ at the workplace

HOW TO USE EMOTION INTELLIGENCE

I first heard the term EQ in the year 1996 at the American Society of Training & Development (ASTD) International Conference, Orlando, United States of America. Dr Dan Goleman delivered a keynote address on the subject. Not a dynamic speech, he wasn't much of an orator but much of what he said made sense to me. In many ways, I thought I had become *emotionally incompetent* over the years. I was unable to regulate my emotions as I had been able to do earlier.

Then, what makes me qualified to speak on this subject? Have you heard the phrase – *the person who preaches it best needs it most?* My interest in EQ primarily stemmed from my desire to improve my emotional competence.

I walked into the large ASTD bookstore at the exhibition hall and waited patiently in the queue to get an autographed copy of the book from Dan Goleman. Everyone seemed to be very patient while waiting for his or her turn to meet the EQ guru. It looked like everyone wanted to demonstrate his or her emotional competence. To me, it seemed like an impulsive action after listening to some new information. I couldn't help thinking if it was another management fad.

As I waited for my time, I browsed through a copy of the book. I was startled and bewildered with the quotation on the first page. The quote-titled Aristotle's Challenge was a very powerful one.

"Anyone can become angry - that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way - this is not easy." I bought two copies of the book immediately. I expected Dan Goleman to display his excitement but he managed his emotions very well with a polite – "thank you and all the best".

My fascination with the subject and my own awareness for the need to manage my emotions competently triggered my desire to learn more about EQ. Since then, I have read several other authors on the subject. Dr Reuven Bar-On, Professor John D Mayer, Professor Peter Salovey and numerous others.

Though I admit I slept off within a couple of minutes when I read the first book by Dan Goleman and it took me several weeks to finish reading it, I read his second book *Applying Emotional Intelligence at the workplace* on the flight between Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur. The book can be tiring particularly when we review the useful material on the brain architecture – the amygdala, neocortex and the prefrontal lobes. I thought the book might be a tranquiliser but it was a great eye opener.

WHAT IS EQ

In a nutshell EQ was a term coined in the early 1990s by Yale's Professor Peter Salovey and New Hampshire's Professor John Mayer. Harvard Professor and New York columnist Dan Goleman popularised EQ in 1995 when he attempted to redefine what it meant to be smart.

His thesis: When it comes to predicting people's success, brainpower as measured by IQ tests may actually matter less than the qualities of mind, once thought of as character. People are being judged by a new yardstick: not just by how smart people are, or by their training and expertise, but by how well they handle themselves.

Are people smart if they can mentally multiply $25 \times 25 = 625$? If they are able to multiply it but are unable to express their feelings to someone, can they still be considered smart? What if they can relate to others but are unable to multiply? Are they dumb? What is the position of IQ in the New World of EQ and SQ?

The argument is that we have two brains, based on the research by psychologists and neuroscientists. We also have two minds and two different kinds of intelligence: rational and emotional. Our success in life is due to both; it is not just IQ but emotional intelligence that matters. We want cognition and emotion to be in harmony and balance. EQ calls for us to harmonize the head and the heart. Emotion is critical to thought.

WHAT IS EQ IS NOT ?

Certainly EQ does not mean merely being nice, letting it all hang out or just plain human relations. It is about managing the emotional life. IQ does not change very much after the teens but EQ is largely learned and continues to be shaped as we go through life and learn from our experiences. The old fashioned word related to emotional intelligence is maturity. Having a high EQ does not guarantee a person will have learned the emotional competencies that matter for work, it only means they have great potential to learn them.

IQ - EQ - SQ

Intelligence can be defined as a general attitude for learning or an ability to acquire and use skills. Alfred Binet devised the first measure of intelligence in 1904. Binet's measure assessed a broad range of skills and performances but resulted in a single score called the intelligence quotient (IQ). The development of IQ was a result of a French government request asking Binet to find a way to identify children who needed special help in school. The IQ was set up so that an average French child would have an IQ of 100. IQ score is a statistically derived number which indicates relative and comparative abilities to achieve educational qualifications. It indicates a level of intellectual development.

Though IQ tests measure only a few of the human mental abilities, these few abilities are targeted for measurement because they are well known to correlate to many other human abilities. How high a person scores on these measured abilities will indicate how high the person would be expected to score on unmeasured abilities.

For many years, people were concerned very much with IQ, though the debate ranged over different intelligences. Though Howard Gardner came up with his theory of multiple intelligences, IQ was considered a genetic given. It was something that we could do very little; it cannot be changed by life's experiences. It was supposed to be a valuable predictor and assessment of our abilities. If a person had an IQ of 100, they were expected to succeed in 80% of all jobs, have normal or above normal children and are quite capable. A student with an IQ of 50 would require special teaching assistance.

Our educational systems were designed in such a way that only people with high IQ could get through easily. However, if you asked people who did poorly in school tests, they will disagree with the validity of IQ. Research has clearly indicated that IQ tests alone do not necessarily predict performance. History is full of stories of people with low IQ or limited intellectual ability who contributed tremendously towards humanity. History is also full of smart individuals who screwed up their lives.

It is also interesting to note that since 1918 average IQ has gone up by 24 points due to nutrition, health care etc. but emotional intelligence has declined sharply – resulting in more troubled people, loneliness, depression and angry people.

As the rage continued with the need for EQ, another concept emerged within the management literature with the introduction of SQ – spirituality quotient. Though spirituality has no place in business traditionally, the plethora of management books on the subject in recent times (Seven Habits for Highly Effective People, Chicken Soup for the Soul) placed spirituality right in the middle of the organization. In an empirical study on spirituality, Mitroff and Elizabeth writing in the Sloan Management Review concluded that spiritual organizations were more profitable. They attributed this to the fact that employees in these organizations brought the complete selves to work. Spirituality was being interconnected with one's own complete self, others and the entire universe. SQ experts differentiated religion from spirituality. Business executives, who find ways of touching the spiritual side of their people, letting go off their ego driven command and control work force paradigm will employ the best loyal, moral, emotionally intelligent people. SQ authors incessantly talked about the need for all the Qs.

They talked about the need for IQ to get hired, EQ to get promoted and SQ to be truly happy with one self. The body, mind and soul need to be in sync.

EQ is not the opposite of IQ or SQ. Some are blessed with all, some have none. The goal is to complement each other to ensure one's ability to handle stress, which affects the ability to work and concentrate. Researchers agree that IQ accounts for about 20% and the rest depends on everything. Dan Goleman argues that EQ accounts for a major portion of our success in life.

Emotional intelligence means we are aware of our emotions and are able to express it appropriately. So the problem is not with emotionality but with the appropriate expressions of it.

EMOTIONS

The very root of the word emotion is *motere*, to *move*.

The English dictionary defines emotion as " any agitation, feeling, passion or any excited mental state. Dan Goleman refers it to as a feeling and its distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological stances, and a range of propensities to act. There is debate over whether we can classify some emotions as primary. Some propose basic families. The main candidates include key members. For example anger may include areas such as fury, resentment, animosity and annoyance.

- ◆ Anger
- ◆ Sadness
- ◆ Fear
- ◆ Enjoyment
- ◆ Love
- ◆ Surprise
- ◆ Disgust
- ◆ Shame

It still is impossible to categorize emotions. Where would we include jealousy? Paul Ekman, University of California argues for core emotions that are universally recognised. Specific facial expressions of anger, fear, sadness and enjoyment are recognised in all cultures.

EQ researchers follow Ekman in thinking of emotions in terms of families. Each of these families have a basic emotional nucleus at the core. Its relatives rippling out from there in countless mutations. In the outer ripples are moods. They last longer than emotions. Beyond moods are temperaments. It is a readiness to evoke a given emotion or mood that makes people cheerful or timid. Still beyond temperaments are outright disorders of emotions such as depression.

Each emotion prepares the body for a different response.

BUSINESS COSTS OF EMOTIONAL EFFICIENCY

Our concern is about the business costs of emotional ineptitude at work. The world of work takes for granted knowledge and skills requirements. It assumes intellectual ability and technical know-how. The entry levels are so competitive today that IQ hardly offers you any competitive edge. The limits of IQ to influence success are real. The threshold competence is expertise at the baseline. You need it to get the job done but how you do the job is what determines performance. So, IQ, experience and expertise matters but when it comes to excellence, it is another matter.

People can't perform due to emotional incompetence. A survey of employer preferences for new recruits listed only one threshold expertise – the literacy skills. All the other six were related to emotional competence. Most common grouses of employers were inability to take feedback and the lack of motivation by the employees.

These are the reasons for employers to focus on personal qualities such as initiative and empathy, adaptability and able to relate to others. Dan Goleman and other researchers show us enough evidence today that IQ takes second place to EQ when determining outstanding job performance. The emphasis is not on the right person but the best person. The world's best engineer technically may not be the greatest success on the job. Top performers are not the ones whose IQs were high but one whose emails were answered – collaborators, networkers and popular with colleagues.

A common scenario in the western world is the ability of two people to live together. Just look at the divorce rates in the United States of America.

- ✦ 1890 – 10%
- ✦ 1950 – 30 %
- ✦ 1990 – 67%

HALLMARKS OF THE EMOTIONAL MIND

All emotions are impulses to act. Human beings are capable of a repertoire of emotions. Feelings are as important as thought. The thinking brain grew from the emotional brain. The emotional mind is far quicker than the rational mind.

Feelings are first and thoughts are second. Though we talk often about the power of choice, it is a fact that we cannot choose the emotions, which we have. Our most intense feelings are involuntary reactions; we cannot decide when they will erupt. Though we cannot easily change what specific emotions a certain kind of thought would trigger, we often can and often do choose what to think about.

Just as sexual fantasy lead to sexual feelings, religious thoughts can lead to spiritual feelings. The rational mind does not decide what feelings we should have. Instead our feelings typically come to us as fait accompli. The rational mind controls the course of the reactions. A few exceptions aside, we do not decide when to be mad or sad.

WORKING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

How can we learn the skills of EQ? There are very few classes on emotions. The first step is to be aware of our feelings and emotions. Then, we need to learn how to deal with them in a healthy way. We need to be able to regulate our emotions.

SOME STEPS TOWARDS APPLYING EQ

1. SELF AWARENESS

Developing Emotional Intelligence is like having a running commentary as to what is going on inside you. Whenever you go to a dentist, you have a fear; you have butterflies in your stomach. You start to hate the dentist. The only way to reduce the anxiety is by reminding yourself of the positive experiences you have had in the past with dentists. Instead of letting fear take over, we take steps to help ourselves. Fear mobilizes us to protect ourselves from danger. We have to recognise the feeling as it happens. People with greater control of their feelings are better navigators of their lives.

2. MANAGING EMOTIONS

Just imagine the boss gave you a hard time for no reason. Maybe the boss had a difficult meeting with a customer. Neither did you or your boss have the skills to handle the pressure nor did you. You went home and displaced the anger on your spouse.

Just imagine if you can say " I am treated unfairly and I don't like it. What can I do about it?"

You can then examine the options available to you. We do none of it and that is the cause for the emotional displacement. In the rat race of today, we do not have the time to look at options. We don't have the metamood and fear and anxiety takes over.

I have the unfortunate experience of many a time arguing with my spouse only to ask later ' what the hell are we fighting about?' The funny thing about me is that I only argue with my spouse not with customers, colleagues or friends. Remember the term displacement.

" Anger is never without a reason but seldom a good one." Have you ever imagined waiting in a queue or following a car lane that is not moving for hours? In the light of overwhelming anger, we need to soothe ourselves. Anger is one of the things people are worst at. It is not about catharsis or ventilation. Giving vent to anger does little to dispel it. We don't want to suppress it but neither do we want to act on it. In the old scheme of things, we wanted to free reason and emotion from one another but now we want to harmonize both.

I had the opportunity of working recently with the crew of Singapore Airlines. The goal was to enable them to express their emotion appropriately. Whenever they wanted to use the word shit or bullshit, we try to get them to be aware of the consequences of using the word. They ended up using the word sugar or bull sugar. So the goal is not to suppress the emotion but to balance it.

3. MOTIVATING ONESELF

This requires emotional self-control. The need to delay gratification and stop impulsiveness results in outstanding performance. The Insurance sales people motivate themselves. 75% quit in 3 years as they are unable to take the rejection. Only 10% succeed in the first year. The successful ones are rewarded handsomely but they are those with an emotionally intelligent attitude. Hope and optimism makes the difference.

4. RECOGNIZING EMOTIONS IN OTHERS

Empathy, another fundamental people skill that builds emotional competence. The more open we are to our feelings; we will be skilled in reading others feelings. People who are emphatic are able to work with people more effectively. Children's emotion is met by empathy. Psychotics are unable to empathise. Kids manage someone else's emotions. Interpersonal power needs benchmarking. Empathy builds self-awareness. The roots of threat can be traced to infancy.

Like all other emotional skills- empathy is an innate quality shaped by experience. I have always observed both my sons. The younger one plays with his toys and leaves them on the floor. It is his usual practice not to pack them. My wife gets mad at that sight and usually screams at the younger one. My younger son manages to bring the tears on to his eyes, at which moment my elder son scrambles to his younger brother's support and says 'mom, I will pack them up, mom, would that be okay?' My wife always recognizes that behaviour with a hug.

The ability to empathise is learned; children learn through imitation and acquire a repertoire of sensitive responses. If on the other hand, the feelings expressed are not recognised and reinforced by the adults around them; they cease to express their feelings and are also unable to recognize them in others.

5. HANDLING RELATIONSHIPS

The ability to manage emotions in others is all about working with other people. Harvard psychologist Robert Rosenthal developed the PONS test (profile of non-verbal sensitivity) to measure people's ability to read cues. Research indicated that people were more successful with higher PONS even if the IQ was average.

6. APPLYING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AT THE WORKPLACE.

Dan Goleman presents two sets of competencies – personal and social. Kate Canon of the EQ network presents the eight factors to consider before implementing EQ in your organisations.

We may all differ in our abilities in each of the domains listed above. Some of us may manage our anxieties very well but will be unable to handle the emotions of a colleague. Researchers remark that the underlying basis for our level of ability is neutral. They are also quick to add that the brain is remarkably plastic, learning all the time.” Lapses in emotional skills can be remedied: largely each of these areas represents a body of habits and response that, with the right effort can be improved upon”.

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