



Fast Guide

Emotional Intelligence



Although it was popularised by Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence (EI) was developed by American psychologists, Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990.

Definition

EI is knowing how you and other people feel plus understanding how to improve it. EI is a combination of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. The intrapersonal is internal, or self-awareness. It's the ability to know and understand yourself, motivate yourself and manage how you behave. The interpersonal is external and is all about relationship management. It's the ability to sense, read, understand and manage your relationships with other people.

Benefits

People with high EI understand how to express their feelings accurately and sensitively and ensure that their emotions have a positive rather than a negative impact. Studies on both sides of the Atlantic variously report that employees with high EI achieved better financial performance, suffered less stress, depression and absenteeism, enjoyed better health and work/life balance, worked better in teams and are more likely to rise to the top of their organisations.

Emotion management

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with anger as an emotion, but as Aristotle said, the trick is to be "angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose and in the right way." The problem is uncontrolled anger that achieves nothing and probably makes you as well as other people feel bad. The

problem often starts with how you perceive the incident that triggers the anger. A key belief of EI is that you can choose how you feel about people and events. This comes from self-motivation – the ability to manage your emotions and channel them in a direction that enables you to achieve your goals.

Relationship management

There are four steps to effectively managing relationships.

1. Reciprocity

Give and take. Treat others how you want to be treated. Offer to help people at work as often as you ask favours of them.

2. Skills

Understand how other people feel through dynamic listening (non-verbal as well as verbal cues), building empathy (the ability to see the world from other people's perspective) and asking questions (don't assume - ask people directly how they feel, what they think of your work etc.)

3. Keep relating

Relationships build up over time. Bad as well as good relationships develop over time. To make sure they're good ones, try to get to know the full person (e.g. meet them out of work as well as in the office, find out about their families and interests) and build trust by learning from each interaction and using that learning to make the relationship better.

4. Engage

To build a positive relationship over time, engage the other person as much as possible in different ways. Use different media - face-to-face, telephone, email. As well as factual information, exchange thoughts, feelings and ideas.

Coaching

A fundamental element of EI is that it can be learned and improved. Taking this a step further, a key skill of leaders (as opposed to managers) is their ability and willingness to develop other people's EI as well as their own. Of course, there's a whole raft of coaching skills that can be learned but as far as EI is concerned the critical thing is to find the time to talk to your staff about things like feelings, relationships, self-awareness, emotional control etc, not just what work needs to be done by the end of the week. **S**

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