

Why Today's Leaders need to be Emotionally Intelligent

What is Emotional Intelligence? Why do you need it? And how can you get it?

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has a significant impact on performance and career success. Research by TalentSmart has shown that 90% of top performers have high EI, that it's responsible for 58% of job performance and that those with high EI earn around £17,000 more than their low EI counterparts.

What is Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence is the ability to understand and interpret your own and other's emotions and the use of this knowledge to shape both your thinking and your actions and interactions.

EI is born out of the theory that emotions drive behaviour, put simply "We become emotional because something is at stake for us" (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Sometimes it is clearer to identify the emotion, the "thing at stake", other times, emotions are subtle and harder to recognise and interpret. Whilst some individuals definitely show a natural pre-disposition for EI, it is a skill that *can* be learnt. The higher your level of EI, the better your relationships will be and the more rational and considered your decisions and actions.

Why is Emotional Intelligence critical to effective leadership?

Research has concluded that up to 90% of an individual's performance effectiveness is due to emotional savvy, rather than technological knowledge. In short, the more emotionally intelligent you are, the more effective you will be.

For leaders, EI is especially important. High EI makes you more effective and confident in dealing with confrontation and difficult conversations; it better

equips you to coach your people; it helps you to build trust-based relationships and retain talented employees; it increases your ability to influence and negotiate; it gives you the ability to respond, rather than react and heightens leadership credibility.

There are two dimensions to EI: *self-awareness* and management and *social awareness* and management.

Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the part of EI that allows us to understand and recognise our *own* emotions, to manage those emotions and to respond rationally and in a considered manner. It increases awareness of our tendencies and biases and allows us to make more objective decisions. Most of us can think of a situation when we leapt in with a reaction that was fuelled by how strongly we felt in that moment but perhaps, on reflection, did not lead to the most effective outcome. EI gives us greater control in these situations by raising our self-awareness. But it can be hard to measure and many of us think we have greater self-awareness than we actually do. A 2013 study by the CIPD found that 80% of the managers they surveyed thought that their staff were either satisfied (65%) or very satisfied (15%) with them as a manager. However, when the employees were

SUMMARY

Research has shown us that emotionally intelligent individuals are more effective. Raising our social and self-awareness gives us greater control over our decisions and actions and our relationships, interactions and, importantly, the outcomes of those interactions.

“There is zero correlation between IQ and emotional empathy... They’re controlled by different parts of the brain”

Daniel Goleman, Psychologist and author of best-selling book ‘Emotional Intelligence’

asked how satisfied they were with their manager, only 58% were either satisfied (34%) or very satisfied (24%). What this study reveals is that, rather ironically, when it comes to self-awareness we’re not quite as aware as we think we are.

Raising self-awareness

If you want to raise your self-awareness, there are various tools and methods available. 360° assessments allow for comparisons between the way you’re actually perceived by others and the way you perceive yourself. 360°s identify performance shortfalls, that might otherwise go undetected and (due to their anonymous nature) are valued as having greater validity and credibility which, in turn, heightens acceptance of the results. Personality profiling raises self-awareness by ‘revealing’ your individual preferences, or ‘type’ and furthermore, demonstrating how these preferences influence your decisions, actions and interactions. In contrast to 360°s and personality profiling, coaching *asks* rather than *tells*. Individuals are challenged and supported to ask questions of them self, to consider alternative solutions and to draw their own conclusions and make their own decisions.

Social awareness

Social awareness is, arguably, the more difficult of the two aspects of EI to learn because it requires you to understand *other* people’s emotions, to be able to empathise and put yourself in their place, to make predictions about how their emotions might influence their actions, to understand group and organisational dynamics and to use all of this knowledge to shape the way you interact with others to gain

the most effective outcome. Rather than being a form of manipulation, social awareness should be a natural response; considering what other people want and need and working towards meeting that need in line with your own needs and those of the group and/or organisation. EI doesn’t require you to *agree*, just empathise.

Raising social awareness

Personality profiling can aid with raising social awareness in that, once you understand ‘types’ you can begin to recognise them in others. Coaching too can have a significant effect by challenging you to look more closely at specific situations, reflecting on what emotions might be driving the behaviours and evaluating how you could adjust your responses to produce a more effective outcome. Beyond that, development of social awareness requires specific [EI training courses](#) in which you work on your ability to read both verbal and non-verbal cues, empathy, interpersonal relationships, group dynamics, impulse control, etc.

In conclusion, try this...

Make a quick list of all your leadership responsibilities. They might include; coaching, giving constructive feedback, forecasting, handling conflict resolution, running team meetings, budgeting, change management, etc. Now pinpoint those responsibilities where heightened social and/or self-awareness could really improve your effectiveness and the outcome. There should be very few (if any) responsibilities that you’ve not highlighted. Our emotions drive our thoughts and therefore our actions. EI has been proven to increase performance effectiveness and is essential to leadership. Remember, however emotionally intelligent you are, it’s a skill that should be continuously developed and improved upon.



Tracey Davison
Client Relationship Manager

Mindstrong Ltd

Tel: +44 (0) 1733 252207

enquiries@mindstrongltd.co.uk

www.mindstrongltd.co.uk

©2014 Mindstrong Ltd