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FEBRUARY/MARCH 2003

Corporate EQ

Creating an emotionally-intelligent workplace



how to become more skilled at dealing with people. But so do all of those people who come in contact with the manager. Each person should be able to tell the manager how his behaviour impacts him or her. In addition, the environment or workplace culture must support these conversations. This, in combination, is an emotionally-intelligent workplace.

An emotionally-intelligent workplace is one where all employees are responsible for their own behaviour and how they relate to others. It is a workplace in which each person has the ability to identify, understand, manage and use his or her emotions. These employees are aware of their own emotions and their impact on others. They are sensitive to others' emotions and respond appropriately.

The new workplace requires emotional intelligence. It is no longer just a nice skill to have. The old hierarchies and models of management are giving way to project teams and workgroups. The old command and control technique has been replaced by a more collaborative type of leadership, which requires more and different interpersonal skills. Personal traits such as self-management, empathy and trustworthiness are more important than ever.

So how do you create an emotionally-intelligent workplace? There are three main ways to raise your corporate EQ (emotional quotient). I call them the three C's. The first is to raise *consciousness* about emotional intelligence; the

What do you do with a manager who is smart and technically adept, but who just can't seem to manage or even get along with his staff? It seems that his employees are continually absent and complain constantly. He seems oblivious to his impact on people and tends to de-motivate his staff and his team members. Everyone in the organization seems to know that he is causing all sorts of damage, yet no one seems to know what to do.

A trainer might say he needs to attend a workshop on interpersonal skills or how to manage employees better. A psychologist might suggest he needs counselling to develop sensitivity. A human resources professional might suggest that he needs coaching to reinforce more long-term positive behaviour.

What is common about all these answers is that they focus on the manager to the exclusion of everyone around him. The manager of course needs to learn



By Maureen Fitzgerald, B. Comm., LLB, LLM

second is to increase emotional *competence*; and the third is to create an emotionally-intelligent *culture*.

Strategy 1: Consciousness

The main reason why emotions are not welcome in organizations is simply because people continue to think that emotions are bad and inappropriate in the workplace.

Recent research indicates that both employees and managers do not like co-workers to show their emotions – positive or negative. Many employees feel that the only appropriate way to manage negative emotions is to hide or “mask” them. These employees feel that emotions should be expressed in moderation.

Senior executives are often loath to discuss emotions. Many executives will state quite openly that emotions should remain at home. The underlying assumptions are that emotions are bad and damaging to the work environment. A recent article in *Harvard Business Review* titled “How Do you Feel?” explained this phenomenon: “Until recently, the workplace was dominated by male employees – and most of them were just as eager as their employees were to avoid the ambiguous complications and unexplored terrain of personal feelings.”

The study of emotional intelligence challenges these assumptions. The type of consciousness that must be raised relates to what emotional intelligence is and how it can make a difference.

Emotional intelligence is not a fad or a trend, nor is it new. Stephen Stein, the president of MHS in Toronto (the provider of EQ assessment tools), writes, “It seems novel only because it was shuffled aside, sent into hibernation by the 20th century’s focus on scientific data and rationalism at any cost.” Only now are scientists beginning to understand what emotions are, how they impact functioning and how they can be measured. As stated in Steins recent book, *The EQ Edge*, “At long last, the so-called soft skills that

do so much to determine our success were rescued from the fringe and seriously considered mainstream for educators, business people and the media.”

As defined by Daniel Goleman, emotional intelligence *is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and our relationships. It describes abilities distinct from, but complementary to, academic intelligence, the purely cognitive capacities measured by IQ.*

Although the model of EI was developed in 1980 by Reuven Bar-On, an Israeli psychologist, it was Daniel Goleman that popularized EI in with his two books, *Emotional Intelligence* (1996) and *Working with EI* (1998). Since then many assessment tools and training programs have emerged.

Dr. Michael Rock, a leader in EQ assessment and training, teaches EQ courses at three Ontario universities and one college. His most recent consulting projects involve online learning and creating EQ leadership courses for corporations. He finds that most corporations face EQ issues during re-organizations or change. Organizations must be conscious of the impact that emotions have in managing that change.

In the last few years research on EQ has doubled. What the academics have discovered is that EQ can be measured and learned and, more importantly, has a direct relationship to success and performance. Emotions are natural responses and provide valuable information. Denying emotions or expressing them inappropriately can cause personal and organizational problems.

Strategy 2: Increase your EQ competence

Emotional intelligence is essentially the ability to identify, understand, manage and use emotions. It is an awareness of our own emotions and their impact on others, as well as sensitivity to others emotions and responding appropriately.

What is your corporate EQ?

The following will help you begin to assess the EQ of your organization:

Individuals

- I understand my emotions and “triggers”
- I know my unique skills and abilities
- I know my needs, interests and motivators
- I have a vision, a mission and goals
- I am continuously learning
- I have health, energy and purpose
- I am self-aware, reflective, curious and confident
- I work well with others
- I can handle stress and deal with conflict

Leaders

- I trust and respect others
- I enable others to be the best they can be
- I encourage personal and professional development
- I consider the opinions of employees
- I care about and trust others
- I provide opportunities for employees to learn and grow
- I act in a way that is true to who I am (authentic)
- I listen and am open-minded

Organizations

- We value the uniqueness of each employee
- We empower each individual to be the best they can be
- We create environments of integrity and trust
- Employees have a say in their lives at work
- Employees have the resources and support they need to be their best
- Our systems promote continual growth and risk-taking
- Compensation practices are relevant and appropriate



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Emotional competence is not crying openly in the workplace. It is not talking about your personal life to the detriment of your job. It is not permitting managers to lash out at employees. It is not "letting it all hang out." EI is simply the intelligent use of emotions. This means using your emotional capacity in combination with your intellectual, spiritual, physiological and other capacities.

Chuck Wolfe, an EQ expert based in Connecticut, believes that emotions provide a critical piece to the understanding of human behaviour. He provides the following example of a common corporate problem. When large organizations re-structure or re-organize many employees are forced to report to new managers, often times across a distance. There is always emotional fallout. His approach is to ask four questions: How are those employees likely feeling? How do I want them to feel? What might cause them to feel that way? What do we need to do to fill that gap?

To be emotionally competent means that you will be able to:

- Handle difficult emotional situations that often lead to disagreements and resentment;
- Handle your own emotions better so that you can choose when and how to act or respond;
- Feel and respect your own emotions and identify some of your emotional triggers; and
- Touch people deeply, resulting in more trusting and committed relationships.

When considering emotional competencies it is important to know that they are not just skills. They are deeply held behaviours that have developed over time. Many are rooted in personal beliefs and assumptions. Therefore, learning these competencies can sometimes take time and practice.

Strategy 3: Culture

The final strategy is to create an emotionally-intelligent culture. This

means creating a work environment where employees are encouraged to use their emotions in a constructive way.

Anne Dranitsaris, a senior consultant at Sage Human Resources in Pickering, Ont., believes that emotional intelligence must be embedded in organizational systems to be effective. In her experience, those at the top of the organization often determine the emotional culture of the workplace. It is therefore important for those at the top to understand that the emotional climate that might be good for them may not be ideal for other employees.

An emotionally-intelligent culture is one that accepts that employees are emotional and emotions are a necessary and good thing. This culture allows people to become more human, which translates into a more committed and purposeful workplace. By allowing employees to be more human you can free them to be the best they can be – as employees, family members, participants in the community and the world.

Maureen Fitzgerald is a lawyer and conflict management consultant. She has practised law and consulted for over 12 years and now devotes her time to helping organizations prevent workplace problems from becoming legal issues. She can be reached at mfitzgerald@primus.ca.

To learn more

The best place to start looking. It is a non-profit organization that gathers information on EQ – www.eiconsortium.com

Charles Wolfe's Web site – www.cjwolfe.com

Sage Human Resources Web site – www.sage-resources.com

David Caruso's Web site – www.emotioanliq.com

Michael Rock's work is reflected here – www.affinityplace.com

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