

GETTING TO THE HEART OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE PROFESSIONAL

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ABSTRACT

We are in the age of talent. Management of this talent exerts a powerful influence on the success of an organization. Human Resource practitioners are charged with selecting, developing, and training the workforce through talent management. One differentiator, “emotional intelligence (EI), has been shown to enhance a person’s cognitive intelligence and contribute up to 390% incremental profit to a company’s bottom line” (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002, p. 251).

Plato said, “All learning has an emotional base.” Not conversely, “Emotional intelligence is the ability to validly reason with emotions and to use emotions to enhance thought”, (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey, 1999). The capacity to perceive emotions, through human competencies like self-awareness, self-discipline, persistence and empathy (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002) is a differentiating factor in educational and employment success.

This paper will review the high-stakes arena of emotional intelligence and the relevance to Human Resource practitioners. The primary objective is to identify the attributes and history of emotional intelligence. Secondly, the benefits of emotional intelligence will be discussed as they pertain to implementation into many human resource practices. Thirdly, concepts that can be applied to enhance recruitment and retention of talent will be reviewed. Last, the relevance of emotional intelligence in organizations will be presented for use by organizations vying for the “best and the brightest” talent.

INTRODUCTION

Much of Human Resource Management concerns the pursuit of great talent, hiring and retaining great talent, says Tom Peters in *Re-imagined* (2003). His thoughts are; “Give great talent wide-open spaces in which to roam! Promote great talent! Pay great talent!” (p.81). Talent management has become a veritable human resource imperative as the national and international demographics of industrialized countries are aging and globalization has resulted in fierce competition for intellectual capital. Although many organizations say that their employees are key assets, few companies transform themselves into “talent magnets.” Emotional intelligence may be the best indicator of goal attainment and success that can be the key asset in candidates and employees.

Although emotional intelligence is a relatively new term, it is a very important concept in relationships. Emotional and intellectual or cognitive intelligence are different kinds of intelligence based in different areas of the brain. Although, they are complementary in nature, IQ originates from the neocortex and the emotional center of the brain is located in the subcortex. When interacting with

people, both their heart and their brain are engaged and the ability to read people through verbal and nonverbal communication is valuable. Possessing EI competencies, specifically in the Human Resource arena can assist in all facets of the field.

ATTRIBUTES AND IMPLICATIONS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Consider this scenario: Two employees with similar intellect and skill follow very different paths within the organization. One seems to advance far beyond the other. Is this based on soft skills versus technical proficiency? What accounts for this differential and success rate? Daniel Goleman (1998) believes that emotional intelligence is a better predictor of a person’s path in life than pure intelligence. Many people with higher IQs end up working for others who have lower IQ’s, but higher emotional intelligence.

More organizations are offering emotional intelligence training for employees. As talent is at a premium, the most exciting part is that these concepts can be learned. Many researchers believe that the primary facets of intellect are innate, but that the attributes of emotional intelligence are teachable by

example, experience, and oversight. Much research has been conducted on this subject and the following characteristics have been identified in Primal Leadership, (Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002, Appendix B):

Attributes	Implications for Employees
Self-Awareness	can be developed
Emotional	attuned to their inner signals
Self-Assessment	know their limitations
Self-Confidence	have a sense of presence
Self-Mgt	can boost productivity and accomplishment
Self-control	can manage their emotions and channel them
Transparency	live their values and beliefs
Adaptability	can multi-task and exhibit flexibility
Achievement	high personal standards to set attainable goals
Initiative	individuals control their own destiny
Optimism	helps people anticipate changes and opportunities
Social Awareness	involves empathic listening; comprehension
Empathy	ability to gauge emotional signals from others
Organizational Service	politically astute customer relationships are valued
Rls Mgt	includes teamwork & conflict resolution
Inspiration	create resonance through a shared vision
Influence	proficient in persuasion
Developing others	coaching and mentoring constructively
Change catalyst	recognize the need for change and barriers
Conflict mgt	ability to negotiate and redirect energy
Teamwork	ability to collaborate collegially and respectfully

The 133 item Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory was the first EI instrument ever developed to test these competencies. This skills inventory created by Reuven Bar-On, a clinical psychologist from Israel, also measures similar characteristics in 5 scales. These scales are: Intrapersonal, Interpersonal, Adaptability, Stress Management and General Mood, including happiness and optimism. Extensive empirical research has supported the theoretical scales and these inventories have been shown to be psychometrically sound. Emotional intelligence is a reflection of the way a person interacts or applies knowledge to an immediate situation and addresses the emotional, personal, social, and survival dimensions of intelligence. (Bar-On, 1997).

THE HISTORY

Harvard psychologist and educator Howard Gardner was one of the earliest theorists to propose a distinction between emotional and intellectual competencies in his 1983 model of “multiple intelligences”. Gardner (1983) argued against the one-dimensional view of intelligence based mostly on linguistic and logical mathematical intelligence and developed a conceptual framework including intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence- two more of the seven intelligences. Testing based purely on IQ attributes was too limited according to Gardner and attention should be given to other intelligences that would better portray the range of human potential as exemplified by artists, architects, entrepreneurs, etc. This theory has since been adopted by educators to liven the classroom by using different delivery techniques that capture the attention of students’ unique minds and address their various learning styles.

The actual term, emotional intelligence, was created by Salovey and Mayer in 1990. They described this concept as “a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action”. Daniel Goleman who was a science writer for the New York Times and a Harvard trained psychologist, was intrigued by this concept and was interested in the elements of success beyond traditional cognitive tests (Cherniss, 2000).

Hunter and Hunter's research on IQ suggests that tests for intelligence account for only 25% of the variance as a predictor of job performance. Other research believes that number is closer to 10%. There is also evidence that emotional and social skills help cognitive functions and they are interrelated.

In the Greek philosophy of influence, Aristotle defined the 3 main forms of rhetoric: ethos, pathos and logos. Stephen Covey in "The 8th Habit (2004, p.130) describes the following:

1. Ethos: your ethical nature; your personal credibility
2. Pathos: empathy; your feeling inside; your emotional quotient
3. Logos: logic; power & persuasion; your own thinking; your IQ

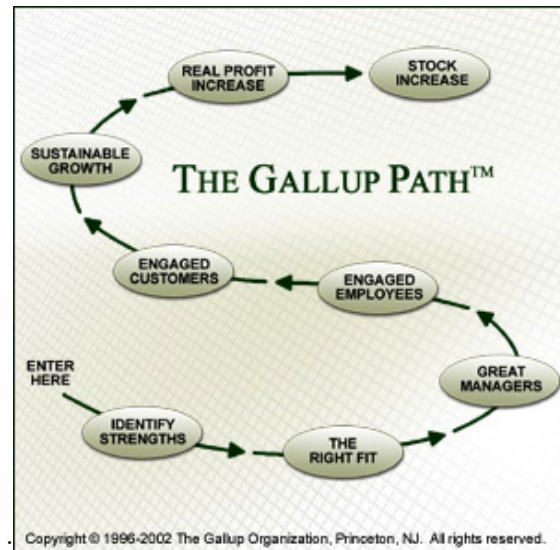
Although these are not philosophical elements, but rather rhetorical ones, it is important to note the tendency toward emotion. The first two appeals; ethos (credibility or character) and pathos (emotional) are methods of persuasion using emotion and intellect. This sequence is essential and both EQ and IQ play a vital role.

THE BENEFITS

Most organizations recognize that key employees are one of the last competitive differentiators in industrialized countries. For Human Resource Managers to capitalize on the strengths of their people, they must create emotional engagement in order to retain these "A" players.

A movement toward an emotion-driven economy is rooted in extensive research by the Gallup organization. Gallup engaged 10 million customers, 3 million employees, and 200,000 managers in a global study across industry and job type. This research was based on the emotional center of the brain – the amygdale - that is the key to the way human beings process information and control behavior.

The world's greatest companies are becoming aware that they are competing in an emotion-driven economy, based on this tiny part of the brain that influences emotional responses and relationships (Gopal, 2004). Gallup believes that the following pathway is imperative for companies to survive and flourish:



The first benefit, according to this research, is that emotional engagement and emotional intelligence are keys to engaged employees, engaged customers, and sustainable growth.

The second benefit of emotional intelligence is that it contributes to improved performance and productivity based on an employee's ability to perceive, identify and manage his/her emotions, which is increasingly more important in our age of change. People who are relationship-oriented benefit both internal and external customers. Studies conducted in the U.S. Navy revealed that the most effective leaders were warmer, more sociable, outgoing, and emotionally expressive; all of which are EI competencies (Cherniss, 2000).

Employees are also now considered free agents who are more informed and free to manage their own careers. Emotional intelligence makes these people more marketable. The third benefit to Human Resource professionals is that EI capabilities and professional development training programs that enhance EI in employees can be a retention tool. Reducing the parade of talented employees out of an organization can be huge economic advantage. HR departments that are truly employee-centered and value servicing their employees will also be communication centers to help people develop and to provide feedback. Human nature indicates that employees perform better when they feel good about themselves and when the organizations with which they are affiliated are vested in their personal and professional development. It follows logically that a culture formed with intellectual and emotional

proficiency should be a rewarding, gratifying place to work.

Other benefits include:

- A more harmonious culture and work relationships
- A linkage to laughter and humor in the workplace
- Greater productivity
- Enhanced listening skills
- Better adaptation to diverse cultures and languages(Guss, 2005)

In contrast, ignoring emotional intelligence or the intelligent voice of the heart, can have a detrimental impact on the body, according to Doc Childre and Bruce Cryer, (1999. p.23). Frustration and anxiety can lead to stress and these emotional states can impact the rhythm of the heart and diminish brain function, causing reasonably smart people to do relatively “dumb” things.

In a series of studies that spanned 20 years, Leitner & Robichaud, (1997), focused on the cases of “burnout” in thousands of employees. The six primary ways that organizations *de*-motivated their employees were as follows:

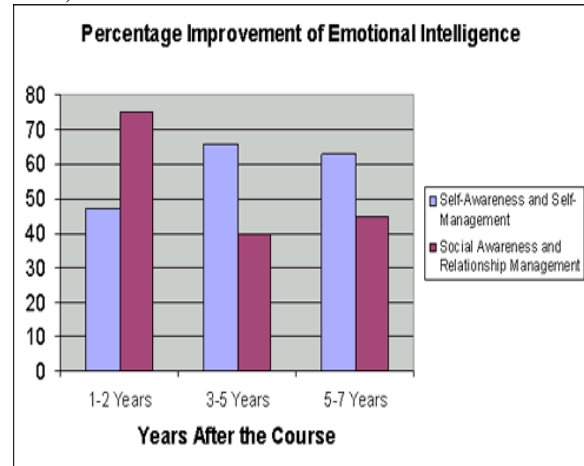
1. work overload
2. lack of autonomy
3. skimpy rewards
4. loss of connection
5. unfairness
6. value conflicts

The old philosophy of coercion and control is ineffective today. No longer is simple authority an effective management tool. No longer can managers expect high returns from their workers simply because they demand those returns in exchange for a paycheck. This chronic, uninspired workplace will cease to exist in the long run. The advantages for a company that acknowledges a person’s IQ and EQ and creates a supportive culture for their employees are clear.

LEARNED CONCEPTS

The best news about emotional intelligence is that it is learnable, and it is an important factor in long-term effectiveness. As we age, EI skills often improve. Although the impact of genetics on behavior is recognized, there is evidence that EI competencies can be both measured and improved. In a study conducted at Case Western Reserve University, students participated in competency-building activities to assess emotional and cognitive intelligence. Although this was just one study, the

following chart shows significant progress also sustained over time (Boyatzis, Cowan, & Kolb, 1995).



Human Resource Managers can help develop employees through the use of 360 degree instruments that measure emotional intelligence. Most people have difficulty being totally objective and tend to rate themselves higher on positive behavioral attributes, so this can be a good self-test and comparison with colleagues and management. In addition, HR can help people recognize that EI can be learned and increased throughout life stages. Training can focus on the identification of tendencies or shortcomings so employees can focus on improving areas of their personal/professional lives, such as acknowledging certain habits, reluctance to change, or other tendencies that could interfere with proper judgment or decision-making behaviors.

Goleman purports that emotional intelligence is twice as important to people’s success as raw intellect or technical knowledge. He believes when employees are promoted on the basis of technical ability and then fail in their new positions, it is because they were promoted for the wrong reasons (Fisher, 1998). Promotion now needs to incorporate emotional competencies as they become crucial for success in the progression up the career ladder.

THE RELEVANCE TO HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Human capital is today’s bread and butter. According to Goleman, (1998), “the premium on emotional intelligence will only rise as organizations become increasingly dependent on the talent and creativity of the workers. Even now, 77% of American knowledge workers say they decide what

to do on the job, rather than being told by someone else” (p.314). The proliferation of telecommuting, virtual teams, contingency workers, etc. will continue adding to the free agent mentality. Employees are working more autonomously, less for companies and more for themselves. EI competencies such as trustworthiness, self-awareness and self-control will emerge as essential characteristics in 21st century employees. Emotional intelligence such as humor in the workplace can lighten an otherwise dark or pressurized situation.

Educators, Human Resource practitioners, and parents should take an active interest in preparing students for the contemporary workforce. This will include;

- Recognizing and understanding the value of emotional intelligence
- Cultivating and teaching emotional competencies
- Revamping curriculum and training to encompass EI
- Creating cultures and classrooms that nurture EI characteristics to increase joy in the environment

Too often, unexpressed or marginalized feelings have been ignored to the detriment of a culture and at great cost to organizations. Problems swept under the rug never disappear; they simply manifest themselves in poor morale, diminished creativity, reduced motivation, or unproductive behavior. People, by definition, are relational beings who have a need to express themselves. Human Resource departments must be the frontrunners who lead the charge for their employees by providing a forum for the expression of feelings. The best and most effective teams have an esprit de corps where individuals feel trusted and respected. Helping people manage their emotions and develop EI competencies creates a greater place to work.

An emotionally intelligent organization such as Egon Zehnder International, a global executive search firm, has the following 4 dimensions:

1. IQ – problem solving, logical reasoning, analytic ability
2. EQ - building working relationships; team player; empathic listener
3. EQ – getting things done; drive; energy; independent; imaginative

4. EQ – personal fit; honesty; sense of humor; friend; outside interests
Goleman, 1998)

We can all create environments, focusing on human nature, to prove that people do matter and they deserve to be treated with respect. Human Resource professionals have an obligation to develop people-centered cultures and if you don't someone else will!

FUTURE RESEARCH

Some organizations, like Western Union, in Calgary, Canada are already using established emotional intelligence tests like BarOn's Emotional Quotient Inventory, (EQ-i), to test potential candidates, and to measure job applicant skills (Martinez, 1997). This type of testing seems to be on the rise, due to the stiff competition for qualified employees.

Maybe recruiters and managers have been screening some of the wrong attributes in the past. Selecting the right people is an acquired skill, and EI tests may shed a new light, leading to better hiring decisions and improved retention rates. In his book, *Good to Great* (2001), Jim Collins discusses the need to get the right people on the bus to build superior teams and then determine what needs to be accomplished.

Future research will be conducted to determine the competencies of Human Resource Managers and practitioners to see if they are truly competent in these areas. Superior teams must begin in Human Resources, since they have a part in every hiring decision. Measuring these qualities in a company's decision makers will surely prove enlightening. From that point, staffers could attend training to learn additional skills if they were found to be lacking. Also, it would be interesting to compare and contrast EI skills in HR Managers versus managers in other functional departments.

My next research project will be concentrated in these areas, because a gap exists in the measurement and application of EI competencies, particularly in Human Resources, whose primary function is to attract, develop and retain the best talent possible.

CONCLUSION

**The greatest danger for most of us
is not that our aim is too high and we miss it,
but that it is too low and we reach it.**

Michelangelo

People matter now more than ever. The human element can no longer be ignored. Human Resource departments can't afford to set the bar too low anymore, especially with the impending skills shortage. Departments need to become proficient talent scouts with well-defined strategic plans for attracting, developing and retaining top employees. In order for Human Resources to gain a seat at the table and be involved in strategic decision-making, they must become the master architects in the war for talent (Peters, 2003).

Emotional intelligence, however, may still be a tough sell within some organizations. There is no simple solution to guarantee bottom line results, but people must be treated as key assets. Most people have an innate desire for a sense of significance and to feel that their work contributions matter. Consider the opening vignette about two individuals with similar intellect but very real differences in success rates. If emotional intelligence is linked to productivity and improved relationships; why as a Human Resource Manager, wouldn't you screen and hire utilizing testing that includes EI skills, then train and develop employees based on these competencies?

Companies need a competitive edge and most agree that the edge will be achieved through the organization's human capital. Every business is vying for the limited talent that will help transform them into global players and profitable entities. Talent management may be the last frontier for true differentiation and will only grow as a corporate imperative. Marcus Buckingham captured this concept in his book, *The One Thing You Need To Know*, "Discover what is unique about each person and capitalize on it" (2005, p. 83). EQ and IQ together help uncover people's unique talents that can be parlayed into productivity. In the war for talent, organizations can't afford to lose any battles, particularly by overlooking proven success factors emotionally and intellectually. Tom Peters (2003) said, "people are obsessed with attracting talent. Pursue the best" (p.255)!

The equation is simple; IQ (brain) + EQ (heart) = the best organizational success.

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