

## Emotional Intelligence as a Leadership Indicator

*By Penny Schultz*

As an HR Consultant, I often deal with untangling the outcomes of emotional interactions whether it is conflicts between employees or between employers and employees. Extracting real issues from emotional reactions and perceptions can be at times complex and usually involves some common sense, insightfulness, compassion, practice and maturity. Daniel Goleman coined it “EI” in his business-minded 1995 publication, "Emotional Intelligence". And ever since Mr. Goleman introduced EI the concept has continued to develop within business leadership awareness and is now generally accepted as a good indicator of how a person will perform in the work environment.

EI is more than a tool for measuring leadership potential--it identifies the many people skills that make individuals successful in relationships. It provides another means of predicting and understanding the ability to lead, outside of other traditional performance measures. Some recent researchers estimate that emotional intelligence accounts for more than 60 percent of performance ability and matters twice as much as technical proficiency or intelligence in leadership positions.

Emotional intelligence boils down to a person’s ability to control their emotions and anticipate and react to others' emotional responses. Specifically, EI emphasizes the need to: 1) manage your own emotions, 2) handle others' emotions and anger, 3) understand others' feelings through non-verbal cues (empathy), and 4) delay personal gratification.

Leadership encompasses a multifaceted set of EI based skills allowing leaders to influence and establish rapport with others. Most leaders are not born with these skills; instead, they learn them through hard work, education and the study of people and situations.

As with all areas of leadership development, EI places a lot of emphasis on practicing and obtaining feedback. Receiving feedback through 360 performance evaluations or by directly asking colleagues, management and subordinates are valuable methods in gaining key information. For younger information professionals, using a mentor is an excellent opportunity to receive feedback outside the work evaluation setting.

Whether it is used as a vehicle for self-assessment and improvement, developing internal leaders / managers, resolving conflicts, team building or in determining the best candidates, emotional intelligence is an effective and relevant tool. Daniel Goldman’s books are high on my “most recommended read” list.

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