

EQ - APPLYING EQ AT THE WORKPLACE

HOW TO USE EMOTIONS INTELLIGENTLY?

My introduction to the concept of Emotional Intelligence (EQ) dates to 1996, during the American Society of Training & Development (ASTD) International Conference in Orlando, USA. (Goleman D. , 1995) keynote address on the subject wasn't particularly captivating given that he is not exactly an orator. Nevertheless, he is an outstanding teacher with deep thinking and his research abilities on the subject were profound; his insights resonated deeply with me. Over the years, I had felt a decline in my ability to manage my emotions effectively, making me question my emotional competence.

In my journey as an entrepreneur, I found myself intrigued by EQ not only as a subject of interest but also as a personal necessity. They say the one who preaches it most needs it most, and that certainly applied to me. To me, in the business world, getting along with people is a very essential quality. Therefore, I sought to improve my own emotional competence, sparking a journey of exploration into the realm of EQ.

At the ASTD conference bookstore, amidst the eager crowd waiting to meet the EQ guru himself to get a personally signed autographed copy of the book, I stumbled upon a profound quote in the first few pages of his book, that I was browsing, while waiting patiently in the long queue, The quote titled "Aristotle's Challenge" struck a chord within me. It emphasized the complexity of managing emotions in the right manner and context—a challenge many of us face daily.

“Anyone can become angry, that is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at a right time, for the right purpose and in the right-way is not easy.”

Inspired, I eagerly obtained a copy of Dan Goleman's book, signalling the beginning of my quest to delve deeper into EQ. Since then, I've immersed myself in various authors' perspectives on EQ, including Dr. Reuven Bar-On (Bar-On, 2016), Prof. John DS Mayer and Prof. Peter Salovey (Mayer, 1990). Despite initially struggling to engage with the material, Goleman's second book, Working with Emotional Intelligence (Goleman D. , 2008) proved to be a revelation during a flight between Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur. Its exploration of the brain's regions and their role in emotional regulation provided invaluable insights.

So, what exactly is EQ? Coined in the early 1990s by Professors Peter Salovey and John Mayer of Yale and New Hampshire, respectively, EQ gained widespread recognition when Dan Goleman popularized it in 1995. Goleman challenged traditional notions of intelligence, emphasizing that success isn't solely determined by IQ but also by emotional competence. He argued that while IQ remains relatively fixed, EQ can be cultivated and refined throughout life.

Contrary to misconceptions, EQ isn't merely about being amiable or fostering good interpersonal relations. It entails skillful management of one's emotional life, a trait often associated with maturity. Having a high EQ doesn't guarantee mastery of emotional competencies relevant to the workplace; instead, it signifies a potential for growth and development in this regard.

In essence, EQ calls for a harmonious integration of rational and emotional intelligence, recognizing that both play crucial roles in shaping our lives and interactions. By honing our self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, social skills, and adaptability, we can leverage EQ to navigate professional challenges, foster healthy relationships, and thrive in today's dynamic work environments. We want cognition and emotion to be in harmony and balance. EQ calls us to harmonize the head and the heart. Emotion is critical to thought.

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Intelligence, in its essence, refers to the capacity for learning or the ability to acquire and apply skills. The first standardized measure of intelligence, known as the Intelligence Quotient

(IQ), was devised by Alfred Binet (Fancher, 2000) in 1904. Binet's intention was to identify children in need of special assistance in schools, as requested by the French government. The resulting IQ score, with an average of 100 set for French children, aimed to gauge intellectual development and predict educational success.

For many years, IQ was highly regarded, despite debates over various forms of intelligence. However, with the emergence of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2006), IQ was perceived as a fixed genetic trait. Yet, research suggested that IQ alone wasn't a comprehensive predictor of performance, leading to a shift in focus towards emotional intelligence (EQ) and, more recently, spiritual intelligence (SQ).

EQ, which revolves around understanding and managing emotions, gained prominence as researchers observed a decline in emotional competence despite an increase in average IQ scores over the years. SQ, while unconventional in business contexts, began to gain attention due to its potential impact on organizational profitability and employee satisfaction.

Unlike IQ, which primarily measures cognitive abilities, EQ and SQ encompass a broader range of personal qualities and competencies essential for success in today's workplaces. While IQ may secure a job, it's EQ and SQ that often determine excellence and long-term success.

History is full of stories of people with low IQ or limited intellectual ability who contributed tremendously towards humanity. History is also full of smart individuals who destroyed their own lives with their behaviours. It is also interesting to note that since 1918 average IQ has gone up by 24 points due to nutrition, health care etcetera but emotional intelligence has declined sharply- resulting in more troubled people, loneliness, depression, and angry people.

Emotional intelligence entails being aware of and effectively managing one's emotions, as well as understanding and empathizing with others' emotions. The ability to regulate emotions, motivate oneself, recognize emotions in others, and handle relationships are all crucial aspects of EQ. Developing EQ involves recognizing emotions as they occur and learning to respond to them in a healthy manner. Emotional intelligence means we are aware of our emotions and can express them appropriately. So, the problem is not with emotionality but with the appropriate expressions of it.

Similarly, SQ emphasizes spiritual awareness and integration, encouraging individuals to bring their whole selves—including their spiritual beliefs and values—to their professional lives. Organizations that embrace spirituality often see improved employee engagement and performance.

Though spirituality has no place in business traditionally, the plethora of management books on the subject in recent times (Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Chicken Soup for the Soul) placed spirituality right in the middle of the organization. In an empirical study on spirituality, Mitroff and Elizabeth (Mitroff, 1999) writing in the Sloan Management Review concluded that more spiritual organizations were more profitable. They attributed this to the fact that employees in these organizations brought the complete 'selves' to work. Spirituality was being interconnected with one's own complete self, others, and the entire universe. SQ experts though differentiated religion from spirituality. Business executives, who find ways of touching the spiritual side of their people, letting go of their ego driven command and control work force paradigm will employ the best loyal, moral, emotionally intelligent people. SQ authors incessantly talked about all the Q's.

They talked about the need for IQ to get hired, EQ to get promoted and SQ to be truly happy with oneself. The body, mind and soul need to be in sync.

In the workplace, EQ and SQ complement IQ, with each contributing to overall effectiveness and well-being. While IQ may secure a job, EQ and SQ are increasingly recognized as essential for thriving in today's dynamic and interconnected world.

To cultivate EQ and SQ, individuals can focus on enhancing self-awareness, managing emotions effectively, motivating themselves, recognizing emotions in others, handling relationships skillfully, and applying emotional intelligence in the workplace. By developing these competencies, individuals can navigate challenges, build meaningful connections, and achieve greater success and fulfillment in both their personal and professional lives.

The word "emotion" finds its roots in the Latin word "motere," meaning "to move." According to the English dictionary, an emotion encompasses any agitation, feeling, passion, or excited mental state. Dan Goleman further describes it as a feeling accompanied by distinctive thoughts, psychological and biological stances, and a range of propensities to act. While some debate exists over whether certain emotions can be classified as primary, there are proposed basic families of emotions. For instance, anger may encompass fury, resentment, animosity, and annoyance. Emotions can be listed as follows:

- Anger
- Sadness
- Fear
- Enjoyment
- Love
- Surprise
- Disgust
- Shame

Attempts to categorize emotions entirely are deemed impossible. Paul (Ekman, 1992) of the University of California argues for core emotions that are universally recognized, such as anger, fear, sadness, and enjoyment, with specific facial expressions acknowledged across cultures. EQ researchers, following Ekman's lead, view emotions in terms of families, each with a basic emotional nucleus at its core. These families extend outward, giving rise to countless variations. Beyond emotions lie moods, which persist longer, and temperaments, which dictate readiness to evoke certain emotions or moods. At the furthest extent are outright disorders of emotions, like depression, each emotion priming the body for a different response.

Moving on to the business costs of emotional inefficiency, there's growing concern about the impact of emotional ineptitude in the workplace. While knowledge and technical skills are taken for granted in the business world, intellectual prowess alone isn't sufficient for success. Entry-level positions have become fiercely competitive, where IQ offers little competitive edge. Employers increasingly prioritize emotional competence, with surveys showing that literacy skills are the only threshold expertise listed, while others relate to emotional

competence. Common grievances among employers include employees' inability to accept feedback and lack of motivation.

This shift in focus reflects mounting evidence that emotional intelligence (EQ) often outweighs IQ in determining outstanding job performance. The emphasis isn't solely on finding the right person but the best person for the job. High IQ alone doesn't guarantee success; instead, qualities like collaboration, adaptability, and empathy play crucial roles. Divorce rates have soared over the years, attributed in part to EQ, underscoring the importance of interpersonal skills in various aspects of life, including professional success and personal relationships.

All emotions serve as impulses to action, forming a vital part of the human experience. Humans possess a diverse range of emotions, each capable of prompting specific responses. Feelings hold equal importance to thoughts in shaping our behavior and decisions. Interestingly, the evolutionary development of the thinking brain can be traced back to the emotional brain. The emotional mind operates at a much swifter pace than the rational mind, with feelings often taking precedence over thoughts. In many instances, feelings arise before conscious thoughts emerge. Despite the commonly discussed concept of choice, the reality is that we lack control over the emotions we experience. Our most intense feelings often manifest as involuntary reactions, occurring spontaneously and without deliberate intention. While we may not be able to alter the specific emotions triggered by certain thoughts, we do possess some agency in selecting the thoughts we focus on. Just as indulging in sexual fantasies can elicit sexual feelings, engaging in religious contemplation can evoke spiritual emotions. It's important to note that our rational minds do not dictate which feelings we should experience; rather, feelings typically arise as a result of various internal and external factors, presenting themselves as accomplished facts. However, our rational minds play a critical role in guiding our responses to these feelings. Although there are exceptions, such as certain mindfulness practices, we generally do not have conscious control over when we experience emotions like anger or sadness. A few exceptions aside, we do not decide when to be mad or sad.

Learning the skills of emotional intelligence (EQ) is essential for personal and professional growth, yet formal education on emotions is limited. However, there are practical steps individuals can take to enhance their EQ:

1. **Self-awareness:** Developing emotional intelligence begins with self-awareness. It involves maintaining a constant awareness of one's own feelings and emotions. For instance, when experiencing fear, recalling past positive experiences can help alleviate anxiety. Recognizing and acknowledging our emotions allows us to navigate life's challenges more effectively.
2. **Managing emotions:** Effective emotion management entails regulating our emotions in a healthy manner. For example, if faced with unjust treatment from a boss, instead of reacting impulsively, one can calmly address the situation by expressing their feelings and exploring potential solutions. It's crucial to avoid suppressing emotions while striving for a balanced and constructive approach to handling them. "Anger is never without a reason but seldom a good one." Anger is one of the things people are worst at. It is not about catharsis or ventilation. Giving vent to anger does little to dispel it. In the bold scheme of things, we wanted to free reason and emotion from one another but now we want to harmonise both. In the rat race of today, we do not have the time to look at options. We don't have the meta-mood and fear and anxiety takes over. I had the opportunity of working once with the crew of Singapore Airlines. The goal of the workshop was to enable them to express their emotions appropriately. Some of the crew were outstanding, they saw their jobs as emotional management. Some of them remarked that whenever they wanted to use the word sh#* or bullsh#*, they try to be aware of the consequences of using the word. They ended up using the word sugar or bull sugar. So, the goal is not to suppress the emotion but to balance it positively.
3. **Motivating oneself:** Emotional self-control is vital for motivation and resilience. Delaying gratification and overcoming impulsiveness are key aspects of this skill. Successful individuals in fields such as sales demonstrate the ability to persist in the face of rejection, driven by hope and optimism.
4. **Recognizing emotions in others:** Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is a fundamental aspect of emotional intelligence. Being open to our own emotions enables us to better empathize with others, fostering stronger interpersonal connections. Empathy is learned through experience and observation, starting from childhood. Like all other emotional skills, empathy is an innate quality shaped by experience. I have always observed both my sons. The younger one plays

with his toys and leaves them on the floor. It is his usual practice not to pack them. My wife gets mad at that sight and usually screams at the younger one. My younger son manages to bring the tears to his eyes at which moment my elder son empathizes and scrambles to his younger brother's support and says 'mom, I will pack them up, mom, would that be, okay?'" My wife always recognises that behavior with a hug. The ability to empathize is learned; children learn through imitation and acquire a repertoire of sensitive responses. If on the other hand the feelings expressed are not recognized and reinforced by the adults around them, they cease to express their feelings and are also unable to recognize them in others.

5. **Handling relationships:** Effectively managing emotions in others involves working collaboratively and understanding non-verbal cues. Research suggests that individuals with higher levels of non-verbal sensitivity tend to be more successful, regardless of their IQ. Building strong interpersonal skills is essential for navigating workplace dynamics and fostering positive relationships.
6. **Applying emotional intelligence at the workplace:** Implementing EQ in organizational settings involves recognizing and developing both personal and social competencies. Dan Goleman outlines these competencies to consider when integrating EQ into organizational culture.

While individuals may vary in their proficiency across these domains, EQ is a skill that can be cultivated over time. The brain's plasticity allows for continuous learning and improvement in emotional intelligence. By making a conscious effort to develop these skills and habits, individuals can enhance their emotional intelligence and navigate life's challenges more effectively.

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