



HR Toolkit Emotional Intelligence

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI), sometimes referred to as “EQ,” is the ability to understand and manage your emotions, as well as others’. It’s similar to empathy, but empathy is just a component of the whole. Think of it as “IQ for handling emotions.” In other words, EI determines how well you can navigate situations wrought with emotion—an invaluable tool in the workplace.

That’s why many businesses are flocking to high-EI individuals for their attractive leadership style. In fact, the majority of employers prize high EI over a high IQ, according to a CareerBuilder survey. Intellect only gets you so far in business, especially if you don’t have the EI soft skills to work most effectively with others.

This toolkit explores the various ways EI can improve organizations and help strengthen your leaders. Within, you will find an overview of EI terminology, reasons why EI can be critical in the workplace, ways to boost EI and much more.

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Having high EI is like having a map for navigating emotions. Individuals with high EI are very self-aware and recognize how emotions play into people's behavior. They can read situations and identify emotional cues that help them react appropriately. It's this subtle emotional intuition that sets employees with high EI apart from the rest. This section further explains EI and delves into the pillars that make it such an important component in the workplace.

4 Domains of Emotional Intelligence

Most experts agree that the competencies that comprise EI fall into a handful of distinct categories. The Harvard Business Review calls these categories "domains." These are not personality traits—merely pillars upon which EI is founded.

Within each domain are competencies or soft skills. These skills are sometimes inherent, but they are also learnable. Excellent leaders have strong skills across all domains, while others may only excel in a couple. As you review these domains, consider which skills could best serve your organization. Note, these competencies are not exhaustive and merely illustrate the types of skills that fall into a given domain.

1 Self-awareness

Self-awareness is defined as understanding your strengths and weaknesses, and how you affect other people. A self-aware person handles constructive criticism well and is usually able to view a situation from multiple perspectives.

Domain Competencies

- Team-player attitude
- Communicates clearly
- Deftly receives and delivers criticism
- Self-identifies personal improvement areas
- Good listener

2 Self-management

Self-management, in this context, refers to the ability to appropriately express emotions. This means exercising restraint when necessary, while not quelling their emotions entirely.

Domain Competencies

- Self-motivated
- Even-keeled, adaptable
- Goal-oriented
- Positive
- Self-restrained

3 Social Awareness

Social awareness is essentially empathy in this situation. It means having compassion and understanding of others, allowing for more meaningful interpersonal connections.

Domain Competencies

- Empathetic
- Organizational awareness
- Mediation-oriented
- Trusting and trustworthy
- Kind

4 Relationship Management

Relationship management is fairly straightforward: it's the domain that's focused on building and maintaining organizational relationships. It means focusing on building bridges, reducing conflict, and inspiring leadership.

Domain Competencies

- Coach and mentor capabilities
- Conflict management skills
- Works exceptionally well with others
- Influencer
- Development-oriented

The Value of EI

Anywhere you turn, you can find companies singing praise to EI. The soft skills comprising EI are so sought after that organizations are now training employees on them. For instance, the hotel and resort chain Crowne Plaza recently announced an EI training program for its employees to help them anticipate the emotional needs of their guests. Hotel representatives say they want to give guests a more authentic, human connection. This illustrates the effect EI can have on customer services.

Beyond customer service roles, EI skills can positively impact every level of an organization. Effective and appropriate communication is necessary when dealing with co-workers, too, not just customers. Strengthening employees' EI soft skills can save your company from potential conflicts before they emerge.

This section details the value EI can have on an organization from different perspectives and provides real-world examples of EI success.

Emotional Intelligence's Value from a Leadership Perspective

Having workers you can trust is critical for any successful company—not only in leadership positions, but at every level. Think about it: If all your high-EI employees are in management positions, interactions between everyone else would have a higher risk of conflict. That's why you need to instill EI in all your employees, regardless of their roll.

If all employees are trained on EI, you have the peace of mind that your workforce can communicate effectively and resolve issues without a skirmish. Think of the time you could save if managers didn't need to address interpersonal issues! Better yet, think of how happy customers would be if every person they spoke with had a high level of emotional awareness. Consider these aspects when brainstorming which employees need EI training the most.

Emotional Intelligence's Value from an Employee Perspective

While EI is important for all employees to learn (especially in customer service roles), managers especially need it. Since they are the coaches and leaders for other employees, managers should exemplify EI. To employees, having a manager who can understand your needs and motivations is invaluable. Having a manager with high EI means employees feel comfortable discussing issues that might be affecting their performance but would otherwise be kept secret—like in the cases domestic arguments, financial hardships or other stressful situations outside the workplace. If employees feel like they can talk to a manager who will listen and understand their emotions, not only are they more likely to discuss potential performance issues, but they will also be more likely to stay with your organization (poor manager attitude is an oft-cited reason for employees quitting).

Success Statistics

EI seems to breed success—or at least those with high EI seem to find success more easily. That's not just a musing, that's a fact. Below are some examples showing how focusing on EI can put you ahead in more ways than one.

Emotional Intelligence Success by the Numbers

It seems intuitive that individuals with high EI (i.e., gregarious, motivated and engaging) are among the most successful in life. A study by EI leader TalentSmart backs this up. Below is a snapshot of their most notable findings:

- 90% of top performers have high EI.
- People with high EI make nearly \$30,000 *more* than low-EI individuals.
- 58% of a leader's job performance is explained by EI—meaning it's more significant to job growth (i.e., promotions) and performance than traditional intelligence.
- Insurance salespeople with low EI in areas like self-confidence and empathy sold nearly 50% less in premiums than their high-EI counterparts—\$54,000 versus \$114,000, on average.
- Salespeople at L'Oréal hired for their EI outsold their peers by over \$90,000 at the end of the first year.

What Poor EI Looks Like

While EI can be learned, some organizations and industries seem to pick it up more naturally. Letting poor habits continue will only further alienate customers and push good workers out the door. Below are some signs that your employees may need to improve their emotional intelligence.

10 Signs Your Employees Need Better Emotional Intelligence

These 10 signs aren't the only ways to detect low EI, but they can be helpful for determining who needs to improve their EI the most.

1. Arguing Constantly

Constant arguments are a sign that someone has difficulty understanding others' emotions and continues to press issues without realizing the consequences.

2. Not Considering How Others Feel

Some people don't—or don't understand that they should—care about how others are feeling. These are the types of individuals who don't realize that someone is upset with them until they are explicitly told.

3. Ignoring Others' Viewpoints

It's one thing to have an opposing viewpoint and another to ignore someone else's entirely. Not taking other's views seriously can lead to many negative situations, especially in collaborative environments.

4. Assuming Everyone Else Is "Oversensitive"

It's a common habit for low-EI individuals to pass the buck on to other people. It's no different in the case of emotions—some people assume their actions, regardless of how insensitive, are never the problem.

5. Having Trouble Maintaining Friendships

People tend to socialize and interact with those who feel similarly about things and who empathize with them. Low-EI individuals notoriously lack in empathy, making them difficult to be around sometimes. They also have trouble picking up on emotional cues, like inquiring about feelings or asking how things are going, which can push friends away over time.

6. Having Emotional Outbursts

Regulating emotions is a sign of a high-El individual. It can be inferred, then, that low-El individuals would be more prone to uncontrollable emotions. In fact, the inability to understand and control emotions makes them more likely to leech out in unexpected circumstances.

7. Always Blaming Others

Since low-El individuals have a hard time understanding how their emotions and actions affect others, their initial instinct can be to blame someone else for an issue. When confronted, they may take on a defensive posture and explain that their own actions were misinterpreted.

8. Being Unable to Handle Emotional Situations

A common thread for low-El individuals is their inability to comprehend emotions and the effects they have. This makes them uncomfortable in emotionally charged situations. When placed in those environments (e.g., a disciplinary meeting, a heated argument or a co-worker confrontation) low-El individuals don't know how to react and may simply remove themselves from the situation to avoid them.

9. Being Unable (or Choosing Not) to Empathize

Even in situations where a low-El individual understands another person's emotions (at least from a technical perspective), they may not care enough to do anything about it. In other words, it's very difficult to have them "walk in another person's shoes," which can take a toll on working relationships.

10. Hiding True Emotions

Some low-El individuals might know what they're feeling and simply keep it to themselves and lie about it, even when asked. Alternatively, they may have a strong feeling about something, but lack the El to articulate the emotion in an effective manner, and so they keep it bottled up.

Summary

While not exhaustive, these 10 indicators can be helpful in determining who needs to improve their El the most. Waiting for employees to come to you is not always the best approach—by the time management hears about issues with low-El individuals, the problems have likely been going on for a long time prior. Keep in mind that a few low-El individuals causing issues can be enough to make other employees consider finding new places to work. It's better to evaluate and improve El now before it's too late.

10 Signs You Need Better Emotional Intelligence

These 10 signs aren't the only ways to detect low emotional intelligence, but they can be helpful for determining who needs to improve it the most.

- 1.** Arguing Constantly
- 2.** Not Considering How Others Feel
- 3.** Ignoring Others' Viewpoints
- 4.** Assuming Everyone Else Is "Oversensitive"
- 5.** Having Trouble Maintaining Friendships
- 6.** Having Emotional Outbursts
- 7.** Always Blaming Others
- 8.** Being Unable to Handle Emotional Situations
- 9.** Being Unable (or Choosing Not) to Empathize
- 10.** Hiding True Emotions



EI Real-world Scenarios

EI might still seem like an abstract concept at this point, so this section shows examples of what EI can look like in the real world. All these situations are hypothetical and not intended to resemble any specific person or organization. However, these scenarios still demonstrate how impactful EI can be, regardless of setting.

Each scenario includes an industry and two situations—one with high EI, the other with low EI. While the situations with low EI aren't necessarily negative, it's apparent where the subjects could've improved.

Restaurant

Low Emotional Intelligence

Terry is a waiter who is getting cut from his shift after his last table leaves. Frazzled and with his mind on the weekend, Terry breezes over to the table after they've finished their meals. He asks if everything was good and suggests he brings the bill. The patrons exchange glances and, after a pause, agree that they will take the bill. If Terry had higher EI, he may have picked up on the patrons' hesitation and suggested they review a dessert menu instead.

High Emotional Intelligence

Terry is waiting for his last table to leave so he can finally get off his shift. When walking past for a check-in, he notices how boisterous they are and can tell they're having a good time. When the patrons finish their meal, Terry takes the liberty of returning with a tray of example deserts from the menu. He asks if he can tempt them and points out how they seem to be celebrating something. The patrons grin when they see the deserts and exclaim that of course they will take some—it's in fact one of their birthdays. Thanks to Terry's EI, he read the situation correctly and managed to satisfy his patrons, while landing another sale at the same time.

Over-the-phone Customer Service

Low Emotional Intelligence

Jessica is an over-the-phone customer service representative for an information technology (IT) company. She is used to customers yelling at her and ignoring her instructions. When a woman calls about a standard computer issue, Jessica robotically goes through her call script and asks the woman to turn the machine off and on again, then moves on to other steps. The woman becomes noticeably frustrated as the call continues and eventually hangs up after repeating the steps Jessica told her. Jessica doesn't really mind, since it means one less customer she'll have to deal with.

High Emotional Intelligence

Jessica receives a call from a woman who is having a standard computer issue. She begins reciting her call script but can hear the woman on the other end sighing loudly. Instead of continuing, Jessica asks what steps she's already tried and other pointed questions. Jessica

listens and apologizes for the frustration the woman must be feeling. Jessica explains that she will stay on the line until they figure out the problem. After hearing this, the woman seems relieved and calms down. Jessica's EI helped her keep the customer calm and on the phone, thus increasing the chance she will continue business with the company.

Office Setting

Low Emotional Intelligence

Samantha is a manager at a small packaging plant. She oversees a handful of employees, with whom she meets individually to discuss their ongoing performance. Samantha is talking to an employee who is trying to explain why they have been missing their packing goals. The employee starts mentioning their workflows and Samantha has had enough. She cuts off the employee and says that they better figure out how to make it work with their workflows or to find another place to work.

High Emotional Intelligence

Samantha is meeting with an employee who's been having performance issues for over a month. She kindly asks for the employee's perspective on the situation. The employee starts explaining that the company's workflows don't make sense to them, and it's been a struggle to learn. Instead of vilifying the employee, Samantha asks them to expand on what's confusing and explain why. After an engaging conversation, Samantha realizes that there are ways to improve the workflows that will help everyone. Her willingness to consider other viewpoints ends up helping reshape the workflows and allows the employee to meet their packing goal next month.

Boosting EI in Workers

While EI may appear inherent in some leaders, the truth is that it can be learned. In fact, you may be surprised to learn that many effective leaders honed their skills over many years. Strengthening EI takes time, but it can be extremely worthwhile from both a social and business perspective. This section details different ways to help boost EI in your workforce.

Boosting Sales Using Emotional Intelligence: 5 Step Process

Sales is an emotions game, whether salespeople know it or not. Attitude and emotional control are key to landing sales and cultivating professional relationships. Outbursts, befuddlement, raising voices and other uncontrolled emotions can kill deals with customers and cause divisions among co-workers. Here are five steps to landing a sale using EI, according to TalentSmart. Be sure to review the soft skills in the following section before attempting these steps.

1. Build the Relationship

Do some research about the customer before your sales conversation and try and predict their attitude. What pain points might they have? How will those pain points affect the customer's emotions? What kind of emotional state might they be in when you meet? Planning for these situations will help you pivot if emotions begin running high.

2. Find the Need

Be open to the customer's needs. Don't rely solely on prepared notes if the conversation naturally drifts elsewhere. Read the room and be prepared to adjust your pitch to account for the customer's emotions. For instance, you may want to sell them on something, but you can tell they are getting upset when you push it, so you should have a backup plan.

3. Meet the Need

Sales is about confidence, self-awareness and a good attitude. If you can't rein in your emotions, you may talk faster, mix up your words, get confused or even get angry. Any of these emotional outbursts can cost you a sale and a professional relationship.

4. Jump the Hurdles

When pushbacks come, be prepared to counter them. You know better than anyone what pushes your buttons. Be prepared for those emotional reactions from the customer and be ready to react appropriately. Try putting yourself in the customer's shoes before the meeting to predict what kind of objections they may have.

5. Ask for the Sale

Any sale would be impossible without bringing up the actual sale aspect. While it can be awkward, mastering self-confidence and professional communication can help you cut to the chase when it counts.

Boosting Emotional Intelligence Through Soft Skills

Strengthening EI takes time, but it can be extremely beneficial for employees and organizations on the whole. It's easy to say, "do things this way," but that's not effective. A better approach would be identifying small steps that eventually lead to higher EI. That's where soft skills can help.

Additionally, soft skills play an important role with younger workers. Experts point out that critical skills like communication, problem-solving and collaboration are often missing from a young employee's arsenal. If your organization relies on younger workers, especially teens working seasonally, you should be focused on developing their soft skills. Approaching that training through the lens of EI can make it even more effective.

Below are some soft skills that can help improve EI. By focusing on these skills, employees can gain real-world value and better EI at the same time.

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is how well you understand your actions and emotions, and their influence on other people. Boost this skill by thinking thoughtfully about your actions. Why did you make that decision? How might that make your co-worker feel? Thinking about this will help you become more self-aware.

Self-Confidence

Confidence is important in many aspects of life—being confident in yourself and your decisions, even more so. Boost this skill by considering what you're good at and evaluating why that is. Thinking about your proficiencies can help you hone them and help reduce your insecurities. If there's a specific situation that makes you feel self-conscious (e.g., delivering difficult feedback), practice it in private until you get more comfortable. If the situation requires interacting with other people, try acting it out with friends or in a mirror.

Public Speaking

Speaking in front of large (or even relatively small) groups of people sparks anxiety in many people. Discomfort in these situations can lead to fumbling over words and confusion from the audience. Clear communication is not only important for business settings—it can help you articulate emotions to other people in appropriate ways. Boost this skill by practicing speeches in advance (ideally to a small group of friends, for feedback) or stepping out of your comfort zone and seeking more public speaking opportunities. Like all soft skills, only practice will make you proficient.

Self-Management

Self-management means handling your personal responsibilities effectively, like accomplishing tasks on time and keeping your schedule. It also means taking care of yourself, like eating

healthy and exercising. Boost this skill by examining your lifestyle choices and looking for ways to improve. Are you letting your deadlines fall through? Are your tasks organized? Do people trust your judgment?

Social-Awareness

Just like how self-awareness is understanding how your emotions and actions affect others, social-awareness is understanding how the actions of others affect you and the people around you. Think of it as “reading the room.” Boost this skill by considering the effect other people’s emotions have on you. When a co-worker is angry, do you get angry? How do you think a peer would feel if you purposefully didn’t include them in a project?

Recognizing Hard Work

Another important aspect to strengthening EI is recognition. When employees do something well, especially newer employees, recognizing them for their success is critical. This is true in everyday workplace situations, like excellent customer service, but it’s also true when it comes to EI.