

# Unleashing Potential Through Emotional Intelligence

## Isn't "Emotional Intelligence" a Fancy Term for "Maturity"?

References to "emotional intelligence" have become more common in the workplace. The term, popularized by Daniel Goleman and others, refers to an individual's ability to be aware of and appropriately responsive to emotions within himself/ herself as well as in relationship to those around him/ her. Yes, before emotional intelligence was fully researched and captured as a concept, the word "maturity" would have been invoked. Despite that overly simple comparison, you'll want to really dig into emotional intelligence (EI) concepts. They will empower you to assess which competencies are already strengths and which ones could be developed further to make a crucial difference in how you are perceived and your ability to succeed within your organization.

## How Not To Make Yourself Memorable!

At a Fortune 50 company, a department was being relocated within the same building. The timeline and details had been communicated (both verbally and in writing). One particular manager walked in the morning of the physical move to realize that she had not begun to pack anything in her office. She stood at her assistant's workspace and loudly bemoaned the fact that she had not been given the correct information. She berated her assistant and also identified additional people responsible for this problem. She assumed no personal responsibility. Her lack of self-management and self-control was evident and memorable and permanently damaged some key working relationships as well as senior management's perception of her. Just to be clear, EI is not about simply masking your emotions. That can be a misconception. It is about being aware of what we are feeling and managing our actions (which may include intentionally choosing to show or not show our reaction "in the moment").

## The Power of Emotional Intelligence

While we may *want* to believe that our technical and functional competence will "carry the day", the fact is that our ability to forge relationships with those around us will significantly impact how successful we are on the job. An executive may value and cultivate some relationships while discounting others. It's a judgment call because those weaker relationships may be the ones the executive's manager points to as an indicator of how well he or she is acclimating to the organization. Particularly depending on the organization's culture, this perception (real or not) will very likely factor into senior management's discussions regarding the individual's "potential" for future opportunities.



## Real-World Development

The capacity to be self-aware and self-reflective, along with an ability to be astutely receptive to feedback (after gauging which data are valid and worthy of consideration) are the basic building blocks for developing emotional intelligence.

To identify an EI development goal (for you personally or for a direct report), you'll want to first consider feedback that has been previously provided as well as assess whether you can solicit current feedback for this specific purpose.

Feedback mechanisms can range from:

- Formalized 360 feedback survey (your own organization's customized 360 instrument or a specific EI survey). This process should be blinded and should be for development purposes (not for performance assessment) to ensure frank feedback.
- A coach who could conduct individual interviews with your boss, your direct reports, peers, and other key stakeholders. (Interviews might be adjunctive to the 360 survey.)
- Review and analysis of performance evaluations given to you in recent years.
- Review of anecdotal evidence that highlights strengths and opportunities for development.

Identify no more than one or two aspects of EI that you want to work on. Don't shy away from a competency because you don't believe you can change it. For example, you may believe you won't easily be able to change your pessimistic tendencies or you aren't going to be able to exude true "presence". Don't worry – simply identify the area(s) of greatest opportunity.

Clarify what the impact will be for you and your workplace as you strengthen this competency. (This compelling vision of your desired future experience will spur you on when you're tempted to default into your old, familiar behavior.)

Seek out individuals who can help you to grow. This could be a mentor within your organization or it could be a coach. (While coaches are frequently external resources, some larger companies may have internal coaches as an option for you). Hopefully, your own manager would be happy and able to support you with this development.

Enroll other people you trust to support you and "keep you honest" as you work on your development. Your ability to continue to be receptive to their feedback will be important.

Explore resources and tools that may provide additional insights for you. Temperament surveys can be useful. Investigate if there is a book that addresses your area of focus. Tied to the pessimism example above, you may want to read Martin Seligman's book *Learned Optimism*, which provides tools to process information and respond differently.



## The Payoff

Regardless of the EI competencies you are working on, recognize that it will be a process and will take time and practice. Keep your vision in mind and realize that you are able to acquire these skills and “cement” these new behaviors. It will not only reflect well on you in the workplace, but it will be personally gratifying. As you achieve these development goals, you will be empowered to help others in your organization tackle the development changes that they need and want to address. This is well worth your time and energy!

## Recommended Readings

If you want to delve further into this topic, here are two books that are extremely worthwhile:

***Working With Emotional Intelligence*** by Daniel Goleman. While there are many books out there, this one does a compelling job of articulating how EI can benefit or hinder success and productivity in the workplace.

***Leaders' Playbook – How to Apply Emotional Intelligence: Keys to Great Leadership*** by Reldan S. Nadler. This is a newer book, which provides cogent and consummately usable tools and strategies to enhance leadership through emotional intelligence.

*Helen T. Cooke is Managing Director of Cooke Consulting Group, LLC, a firm that specializes in executive coaching, team development, leadership development, and organizational creativity/ innovation. She has 20+ years experience with leading biotechnology and pharmaceutical organizations. Prior to founding Cooke Consulting Group in 2001, Helen held the position of Director, Organizational Effectiveness at Ortho-McNeil Pharmaceutical (a Johnson & Johnson company). She received her MS degree in Organization Development from American University/ NTL Institute, her coaching certification from the Hudson Institute of Santa Barbara, and is accredited to deliver the Hay Emotional Competency Inventory 360 instrument. Read more about Cooke Consulting Group at [www.cookeconsult.com](http://www.cookeconsult.com).*

To contact Helen – Office: 856-546-1392, [helen@cookeconsult.com](mailto:helen@cookeconsult.com).

