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Harness the Power of Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Which of the following factors is the best predictor of success in the workplace?

- A. Work Experience
- B. Intelligence
- C. Skills
- D. Education / Training
- E. None of the above

If you chose “E”, you got it right. Here’s why: even though there’s no doubt that all of these factors have an impact on success, none of them (*whether considered individually or collectively as a group*) can adequately predict success in the workplace.

Think about it. You probably know someone who’s extraordinarily intelligent, well educated, highly skilled, and experienced in his / her profession...*yet is continually outpaced by a peer with fewer talents and skills*. How is this possible? More often than not, it comes down to differences in **emotional intelligence** (EI), as measured through emotional quotient (EQ) assessments.

In fact, research shows that individuals with high **cognitive intelligence**, which is measured by intelligence quotient (IQ) testing, outperform people with average IQs only 20% of the time. What’s more, those with average intelligence outperform people with high IQs about 70% of the time!

So, while harder to identify and measure than skills, experience, or IQ — *and certainly more difficult to describe on a resume* — the power of emotional intelligence simply can’t be denied.

Emotional Intelligence Versus Cognitive Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a set of emotional and social skills that influence how you:

- perceive and express yourself,
- develop and maintain social relationships,



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- cope with issues,
- and use emotional information in productive and meaningful ways.

According to Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, authors of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, “**Emotional intelligence is your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships.**” As such, EI not only impacts how you direct your behaviors and navigate interpersonal complexities, but how you make decisions as well — *all of which influence your ability to achieve positive outcomes* (both personally and professionally).

In contrast, **cognitive intelligence** is your ability to:

- concentrate and plan,
- organize material,
- use words,
- and understand, assimilate, and interpret facts.

In other words, cognitive intelligence is your personal information bank; IQ tests measure your ability to learn.

So, how is emotional intelligence impacted by your intellectual horsepower? Well, simply put, it isn't! *Period.* In other words, EQ is independent of IQ. In addition, **IQ is fixed** and peaks around age 17. You can't change IQ. On the other hand, **EQ is a set of flexible skills that can be learned.** Emotional intelligence rises with age and typically reaches its highest level in the late 40s.

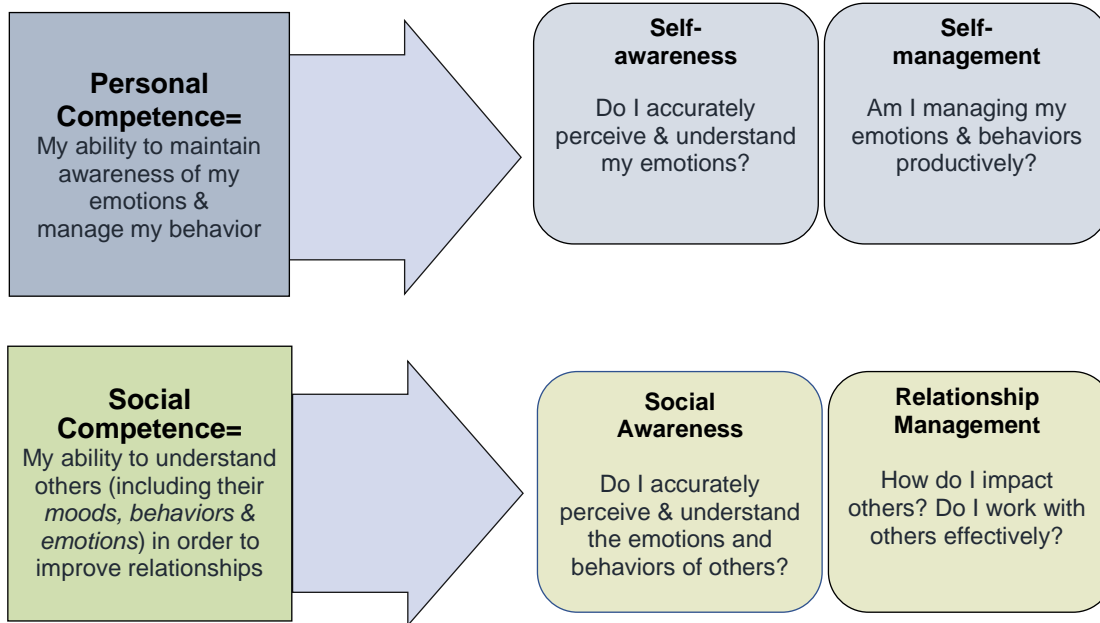
Therefore, while some of us are naturally more emotionally intelligent than others, anyone can develop or enhance four fundamental skills that directly affect EQ. Moreover (while emotional intelligence isn't the *sole* predictor of human development potential and performance), improving targeted EQ skills enables you use your abilities to their fullest, leading to higher levels of success in the workplace.

EQ Skills

The diagram below shows that four core EQ skills (*i.e., self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management*) pair up under two key competencies (*i.e., personal and social*).



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Here's a closer look at the skills associated with **personal competence**:

- **Self-awareness:** According to Bradberry and Greaves, “Self-awareness is your ability to accurately perceive your own emotions *in the moment* and understand your tendencies across situations. It includes staying on top of your typical reactions to specific events, challenges, and people.”

Research shows that only one in three people can accurately identify their emotions *as they occur*. And, while all four of the core EQ skills are interdependent, self-awareness is *the* most important. Without self-awareness, it's difficult to develop or enhance your self-management, social awareness, and relationship management skills. Self-awareness is essential to increasing emotional intelligence — and, therefore, job performance.

Self-aware individuals understand their strengths, weaknesses, and motivations. Equally important, they're skilled at perceiving and accurately identifying their emotions *as they occur*. And they're mindful of the situations and types of people that trigger their strong emotional reactions (whether positive or negative).

- **Self-management:** Bradberry and Greaves describe self-management as “your ability to use your awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and direct your behavior positively.” This skill reaches far beyond simply resisting explosive or problematic



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behaviors in the heat of the moment. Instead, effective self-management requires that you understand and manage your tendencies and consistently apply your skills *in a variety of situational and interpersonal challenges*.

Yet, that's not always easy to do. As a human being, you're hardwired to have an emotional reaction to *everything* that happens in your life. Your initial reaction to any event is *always* an emotional one (whether you're aware of the emotion or not). You cannot control that!

These emotions vary in intensity based on the threats and complexities of the circumstances. The greater the force of an emotion, the more likely it is to dictate the thoughts, behaviors, actions, and decisions that follow. Fortunately, you *can* control these thoughts and behaviors — provided, of course, that you're *aware* of the emotions resulting from the trigger event!

People with exceptional self-management skills:

- understand their emotions as they occur,
- spot triggers and habitually respond to them in productive ways by directing their thoughts and behaviors,
- and consistently put their immediate needs and impulses on hold in pursuit of their larger, more important goals.

Now here's a closer look at the skills related to **social competence**:

- **Social awareness:** As defined by Bradberry and Greave, "Social awareness is your ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them. This often means perceiving what other people are thinking and feeling even if you do not feel the same way."

Chalk it up to human nature... we sometimes get caught up in our own thoughts and emotions when interacting with others. Social awareness requires that we stay focused and fully absorb the critical information another person is communicating (verbally and non-verbally). Through active listening and astute observation, people who are socially aware quickly perceive and understand another's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.



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- ***Relationship management:*** Bradberry and Greaves say that “Relationship management is your ability to use your awareness of your own emotions and those of others to manage interactions successfully. This ensures communication and effective handling of conflict. Relationship management is also the bond you build with others over time.” Accordingly, effective relationship management frequently taps into your ability to apply the other EQ skills.

People who excel at developing, nurturing, and managing positive relationships are able to see the mutually-beneficial advantages of connecting with many different types of people. Solid relationships are built when you consciously seek to understand and respect the other person (even if you disagree with his perspective or if you’re not particularly fond of him).

Harnessing the Power of Emotional Intelligence

It’s no secret emotional intelligence is critical to your success. Emotions can help you or they can hurt you. Therefore, the effective use of the EQ skills can have a big impact on your personal and professional life. And, while we all have emotional intelligence, many of us have some skill areas that can be enhanced, thereby leading to even greater success.

To positively influence the impact of emotions, you need to understand them first! So, to harness the power of emotional intelligence, start by assessing your EQ skills. Then put together an action plan to enhance your skills as appropriate.

Job satisfaction comes from doing work that fits well with your natural talents and interests – blending the things you do best with the things you enjoy. Emotional intelligence helps you use your talents and abilities to their fullest to adapt to and thrive in a successful and satisfying career.