

How to ... develop emotional intelligence



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The world's most effective leaders are alike in one crucial way: they all have a high degree of emotional intelligence (EQ). Research by Daniel Goleman, psychologist and author of the book Emotional Intelligence, suggests that EQ levels determine up to **85 per cent of leadership success!**

Some of the characteristics of high EQ include the ability to cope successfully and proactively with life's demands and pressures, and to build and make use of rewarding relationships with others, while not being afraid to make tough decisions.

1 Introduce EQ-i testing

Reuven Bar-On's EQ-i test is one of the more famous emotional intelligence questionnaires available, but there are many websites that offer free interactive EQ testing. These EQ-i questionnaires assess areas such as self-regard, interpersonal skills, stress management and handling change to enable employees to play to their strengths and highlight areas to develop.

It is also possible to carry out team EQ-i testing to show how emotionally intelligent a group of colleagues are, how they work together and how they like to be led. EQ cultural surveys can also be carried out to identify the emotional intelligence of an organisation as a whole.

2 Focus on leadership

The leadership style of those at the top will dictate the culture of the whole organisation, so invest time in choosing the right leaders and developing them once they get there. Leaders must show that they are always open to learning, to enhancing their emotional intelligence and leadership and to finding ways of being more successful with less effort.

3 Carry out 360 appraisals

In order to develop their emotional intelligence, employees need as much objective feedback as possible, using tools such as 360 appraisals. This gives a candid assessment of strengths and weaknesses from colleagues who employees know well and work with on a daily basis. The bigger the difference between an employee's own feelings and beliefs and those contained in their feedback, the more work they probably have to do to develop.

4 Introduce coaching

Coaching can be invaluable in providing employees with someone to talk to about handling different situations, what to do in the case of setbacks and how to learn from them.

It is possible to adopt emotionally intelligent behaviours through practising them in the work environment and, while these behaviours may not always come naturally, it is possible to develop certain skills. Run through any unpleasant or awkward scenarios with an executive coach to work out the most constructive and sensitive way of tackling them.

5 Recruit for emotional intelligence

When recruiting, a candidate with a sharp analytical, financial, or technical mind is often sought after, but this on its own is not sufficient for success. Many firms are now recruiting people for their attitude – ie, those possessing high EQ. Technical skills and IQ are important; however, a person can have the best training in the world, an endless supply of ideas, and they still will not make a great leader without a high EQ.

6 Pick out a benchmark group

In order to set a standard for emotional intelligence in your organisation, pick out a benchmark group by identifying those who inspire others, have leadership qualities, display a healthy work-life balance and exemplify the qualities you would like to see in the organisation. Benchmarking in this way will enable employers to identify future leaders of the organisation, as well as to begin to recruit those with a similar personality style.

Key points

- EQ has been found to be crucial to effective leadership, and therefore crucial for successful organisations.
- An EQ-i test and 360 appraisals are good ways to discover where your staff are at, and what areas you need to focus on.
- Coaching, especially at executive level, should be used to develop EQ.
- Consider EQ levels when recruiting staff.
- Pick out your best employees and use them as a benchmark.

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