

Emotional Intelligence

What Is It and What Can It Do For You?

BY NICOLE BRADEN LEWIS

Over the past 40 years, a growing body of research in the fields of psychology, neuroscience and economics has identified a framework of cognitive and emotional competencies that have come to be known as emotional intelligence. Also known as “E.I.” or “EQ” emotional intelligence as a term was first described as “a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others’ feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and action.” (Salovey and Mayer 1990, quoted at http://eiconsortium.org/reports/what_is_emotional_intelligence.html.) Emotional intelligence has more recently been broadly defined as a person’s ability to manage herself and her relationships with others, so that she can live her intentions. (Lynn AV. *The EQ Interview: Finding Employees With High Emotional Intelligence* 2008.) Thus, E.I. is different than memory and different than problem-solving, which

were some of the first aspects of intelligence to be identified by early psychologists.

See the table for some of the key E.I. competencies in this framework.

Together, these competencies make up an intelligence that, when present and developed, consistently predicts superior job performance and job satisfaction. In other words, the E.I. competencies are essential for success in the workplace and in life. All else being equal,

Self-Awareness	Recognizing and accepting one’s own feelings. Understanding how one’s emotions affect behaviors.
Self-Management	Acting rather than reacting. Controlling impulses and managing emotions.
Social Awareness	Listening, reading verbal and non-verbal cues. Relating easily to people from a variety of backgrounds.
Relationship Management	Drawing others in to discussion and problem solving.

Source: Kim Langley, LifeBalance Enterprises, Inc.

among a group of individuals with similar IQs and educations, those individuals with stronger social and emotional abilities are those who will likely be more successful.

Why is E.I. important to us in our work as lawyers?

Lawyers pride ourselves on being thick-skinned and analytical. But as Kim Langley of LifeBalance Enterprises explains, “It is deluded to pretend

that communication can all be factual without emotions. Everyone has an emotional brain. No one can park the emotional brain in the car while they go to work.” Therefore, all fact-based communication is set in the context of human emotions and the woman who recognizes that fact has taken an important first step toward putting her E.I. to work. Furthermore, voluminous published literature demonstrates a strong connection between high E.I. and great places to work — companies that are both profitable and personable. Studies have found that employees, and particularly managers, who were strong in the E.I. competencies consistently outperformed their peers who were low in E.I. and untrained. These strong-E.I. individuals were also far more likely to stay in their jobs rather than leave the company, either voluntarily or involuntarily. (See http://eiconsortium.org/reports/business_case_for_ei.html.)

As particular examples from the literature, L’Oreal sales staff who were selected on the basis of certain emotional competencies consistently outsold the staff who had been hired using the company’s old model. These new hires sold \$93,000 more per year and were 63% less likely to leave the company within one year. Similarly, when the United States Air Force began looking for emotional intelligence when hiring its recruiters, who are its primary HR personnel,

those new recruiters high in E.I. were three times more successful, saving \$3 million annually in staff turnover. When new division presidents in a large beverage firm were hired on the basis of their E.I., only 6% left their jobs within two years, compared to the previous figure of 50% attrition among division presidents within two years. Finally, research has

even found a wider effect of E.I. training on a team. American Express financial advisors whose managers had completed E.I. training were able to grow their businesses in a year by 18.1%, compared to only 16.3% business growth for advisors whose managers had not been trained in E.I. (Full citations for the above available at *id.*) Thus, attention to emotional competencies brings more than just individual contentment; it can truly help an entire company thrive and grow.

Development of one's E.I. can aid the successful navigation of working relationships, which is critically important for each of us. Among other things, E.I. helps us in handling difficult conversations at work. When you face an emotionally challenging situation, such as a decision that affects you, or when you need to make or respond to criticism, the competency of **social awareness** — seeing and respecting the emotions involved in a situation — can help you handle the situation productively. Furthermore, it takes competency in **discipline** and **self-management** to keep yourself from becoming angry in response to criticism, especially heated criticism. (Dillon K. *The HBR Guide to Office Politics*.) The competency of **courage**, the ability to manage fear, can help you stay calm when you march into court with only a good-faith argument for the extension of existing law. A **service orientation**, the desire to help others, is enormously valuable in guiding you to identify and attack your client's problem. The lawyer who is adept at anticipating, recognizing, and meeting clients' needs will find herself with lasting and likely lucrative client relationships. Emotional intelligence thus can make you a more productive member of your organization, equipped to acknowledge your emotional response to your work and move toward solutions, rather than getting derailed by emotional, intrusive thoughts.

How can you identify and improve your emotional intelligence?

A number of assessments to measure E.I. are available online, and links to many of the tests best supported by empirical research can be found at www.eiconsortium.org. Because the tests were prepared through extensive research and development, many are available for a fee and may even be limited to use by accredited administrators who will provide accurate, comprehensive feedback to participants. However, some tests and analysis of their results are available free of charge as part of ongoing research.

Although the key E.I. competencies are described as skills, E.I. is not just social skills. It is more than common courtesy and studying etiquette, important as they may be. Because E.I. is an intelligence, some people have to work harder on it than others. Some people are born with more E.I. than others, but everybody can improve it. Personal or group coaching is widely available, along with written training guides. As immediate advice, Langley offers, "Find someone who is both successful and emotionally intelligent and watch them like a hawk." Observe the facial expressions and non-verbal communications of your colleagues. Become attuned to

others' feelings and ask if you're right about them. Choose good personal, face-to-face communication instead of email where possible. The eyes are the windows to the soul. Emoticons are not. Finally, be encouraged: E.I. improves on average over every decade of a person's life.

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