Emotional Notions

Emotional intelligence is becoming a part of many organization's core competencies for high performers.

By Michael Laff

Inside **Intelligence**:

Every manager who abruptly halts a conversation to race off to the next meeting should be advised to brush up on emotional intelligence.

Adele Lynn, a Pennsylvania-based author and consultant, advises clients that if they feel rushed during a particular day they are more than likely to sound rushed in their communications with staff. When an employee stops by to chat only to be dismissed by the manager, it lends the impression that the staff member is not valued.

"Emotional intelligence (EQ) teaches you to look inside before you open your mouth to communicate," she says.

A decade ago any talk of emotional intelligence would draw strange looks. Now many organizations include it among core competencies required for high performers. As Joseph Liberti, a Colorado-based coach describes it, the concept has evolved from a Zen-like vocabulary term to a scientific field.

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Authors Daniel Goleman and Cary Cherniss are credited with bringing the field from academia into the public arena.

Where emotions were once dismissed as raw and inappropriate in the office, they are now utilized as data by savvy leaders, according to Joshua Friedman, chief operating officer of Six Seconds Consulting in San Francisco. Learning to read the data and act upon it is what makes for an individual with high EQ.

"Leaders don't care about emotional intelligence," Friedman says. "They care about a business problem they have. Emotional intelligence is a tool they can use in the service of solving the problem."

Instead of encouraging individuals to act differently, training in emotional intelligence teaches participants to observe and analyze their own behavior while also taking note of peer reactions.

"Most corporate training focuses on behavior such as shaking hands and making direct eye contact," Friedman says. "Emotional intelligence teaches you to pay attention to what drives the behavior of others. Emotions are data. They are real. The training takes a logical approach to emotions."

Some of the concepts that emotional intelligence teaches seem intuitive. Traits such as listening, being empathic, and keeping emotions under control are essential components of effective leadership. Yet a diligent student soon discovers that the flaw that a manager identifies in a colleague may actually be his own.

Organizations also acquired a greater understanding of leadership, specifically the traits necessary to be effective in the role. "The corporate world sees it as absolutely critical, but many probably don't know how to develop it," says Cherniss, a professor of applied psychology at Rutgers University.

In the early 1990s, long before other organizations were even aware of the term, American Express developed a five-day curriculum called emotional competency. Employees break into groups of 20 to do a number of experiential activities.

How Important Is EQ in Addressing the Primary Challenges of Your Organization?

Essential	75
Important	39
Somewhat important	10
Slightly important	0
Totally unimportant	4

Source: Six Seconds Consulting Group

The program is considered successful, according to Cherniss.

Some might dismiss emotional intelligence as a psychological analysis of one's personality, but practitioners emphasize that the assessment tools measure aptitude.

"It's different from Myers-Briggs, which just says everybody is different, but that's okay," says Ben Dattner, an organizational effectiveness consultant and professor at New York University. "The Myers-Briggs will tell you you're an introvert, but that it can be a strength. Emotional intelligence can say that you lack some fundamental skills."

Dattner says the typical flaws found in managers from emotional intelligence studies are lack of empathy, selfishness, and poor conflict management skills. It takes a courageous manager to work on emotional intelligence because she may hear comments she is unaccustomed to hearing.

Besides publications, practitioners now use more sophisticated means to collect information. When working with clients who manage people, consultants use 360-feedback and self-assessment exams to create a profile. Allowing consultants to interview subordinates is just one sign that emotional intelligence carries greater caché in the workplace.

"The idea of getting feedback today is more meaningful than threatening," says John Myers a management consultant with Colorado-based Tracom Group. "When we first started it was seen as a danger to the individual."

Upon receiving feedback many individuals are surprised by the gap between how they see themselves versus how peers view them. At first the individual attempts to categorize his behavior by making a distinction between an office personality and an actual personality.

The classic example of this split office personality is the salesperson who is adored by customers but loathed by co-workers. The person has the skills to work cooperatively with everybody but chooses to employ them only with select individuals, Myers says.

Myers advises clients to take the feedback and discuss it with a spouse or a close friend. The typical reaction from the spouse is, "You paid money for this?"

"We don't try to change who they are," Myers says. "We want them to use their behavior traits more effectively."

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New Changes to Apprenticeship Program *Could Be Forthcoming*

Apprenticeship has been an effective model of on-the-job training for centuries. The U.S. Department of Labor is seeking to update it for the 21st century.

In December, the department issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to update the rules for the National Apprenticeship System. The voluntary, industry-driven training program was created in the 1930s to promote the establishment of registered apprenticeship programs and provide training and welfare standards for apprentices. More than 460,000 apprentices participate in 28,000 programs nationally. Registered programs are eligible for federal and state contracts, grants, and other assistance.

One proposed change would expand the number of pathways to apprenticeship completion and certification. Under the current model, apprentices must complete a specific number of on-the-job and technical instruction hours. Under the proposed rule change, instruction hours would be supplemented by a competency-based approach, in which candidates would be required to demonstrate competency in defined subject areas without specific time requirements; and a hybrid model combining the time and competency-based approaches.

The rule change is welcomed by Stephen Mandes, executive director of the National Institute for Metalworking Skills in Fairfax, Virginia, which has developed a competency-based model in response to the needs of the precision manufacturing industry. Mandes notes that many of his member organizations had begun to move away from apprenticeship programs earlier this decade because the time-based approach was not producing results.

"The competency-based approach provides greater certainty to employers and employees alike that employees possess the skills they need," says Mandes, who adds that changes reflect the evolving needs of the economy.

Other proposed changes include:

- permitting the use of technology-based and distance learning in technical instruction
- adding new requirements for apprenticeship instructors that include a requirement that instructors be familiar with training techniques and adult learning styles
- improving linkages of state apprenticeship agencies with the public workforce investment system under the Workforce Investment Act.

Workplace learning and performance professionals working with registered apprenticeship programs can submit comments. The proposal will remain open for public comment through February 11, 2008, after which the Department of Labor will issue its final regulations.

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THE SOUND OF TEAMWORK

His staff members may be unaware of it, but the ultra intense senior vice president just might have the pipes of Harry Connick Jr. or the soul of Sam Cooke.

A team building exercise focused on creative innovation gives organizations a chance to belt out their best melodies.

Song Division takes employees out of the office and onto the stage. Team members write and perform their own music with the aid of professional musicians in an actual recording studio. The concept began in Australia and is being expanded to the United States.

Employees are broken into groups of 10. Teams are given a topic to write a song about. The final composition must be an original. No borrowed riffs or samples lyrics are permitted.

"It's not karaoke," says Andy Sharpe, founder of Song Division. "You don't cover a song or replace the words to Hotel California. It's about the creative process."

Based in Australia, the company has worked with U.S. organizations and is launching a New York office this year. Sharpe, a former IBM worker and musician, created the business that caters to organizations seeking to enliven the creativity energy inside an office.

Taking a page from the musical contest shows that have consumed television programming, a judging competition is held by peers in the organization. When the winning song is selected, the entire team gets on stage to sing the song together. What begins as a competition ends as a unifying event. The company's Spinal Tap experience is complete with a "rockumentary" that captures footage of all teams on a DVD.

Few if any employees are likely to walk out of the studio with a record contract, but team members gain a greater sense of accomplishment.

"They come to us because of a serious issue," Sharpe says. "When they walk out, they say, 'I could hear that on the radio.' You're not going to hear it on the radio, but you get a beautifully produced song, and the group achieved something as a group that they didn't think they could achieve."

Staff members at Pricewaterhouse Coopers were among the first U.S.-based employees to break out into song. Employees with Coca-Cola in Australia were undergoing a difficult merger between departments and decided to capture their frustrations in lyrics. The final product resembled a Johnny Cash song where the protagonist finds his new companion to be less than ideal.

The entire program lasts three hours. A group of 25 employees would cost roughly $9,000. Sharpe uses the famed Skyline Studios in New York where luminaries such as Frank Sinatra, Miles Davis, Eric Clapton, and Madonna have recorded music.

As the novelty of rope climbing and bungee jumping has worn off, many team building exercises are viewed skeptically by workplace consultants who dismiss them as gimmicks that provide a few hours of escape without any measurable change in the office climate when everyone returns.

What makes the Song Division event unique, in Sharpe's view, is the opportunity for conversations among staff members at all levels. An administrative level staff member can discuss his musical tastes with an executive in an appropriate setting. As he points out, many people are uncomfortable playing golf or participating in a physical activity.

"We're not going to double a company's profit or stop them from going into insolvency," Sharpe says. "We can be a valuable tool used to maintain or improve creativity. A lot of blue chip companies place a premium on retaining high value employees."

Michael Laff

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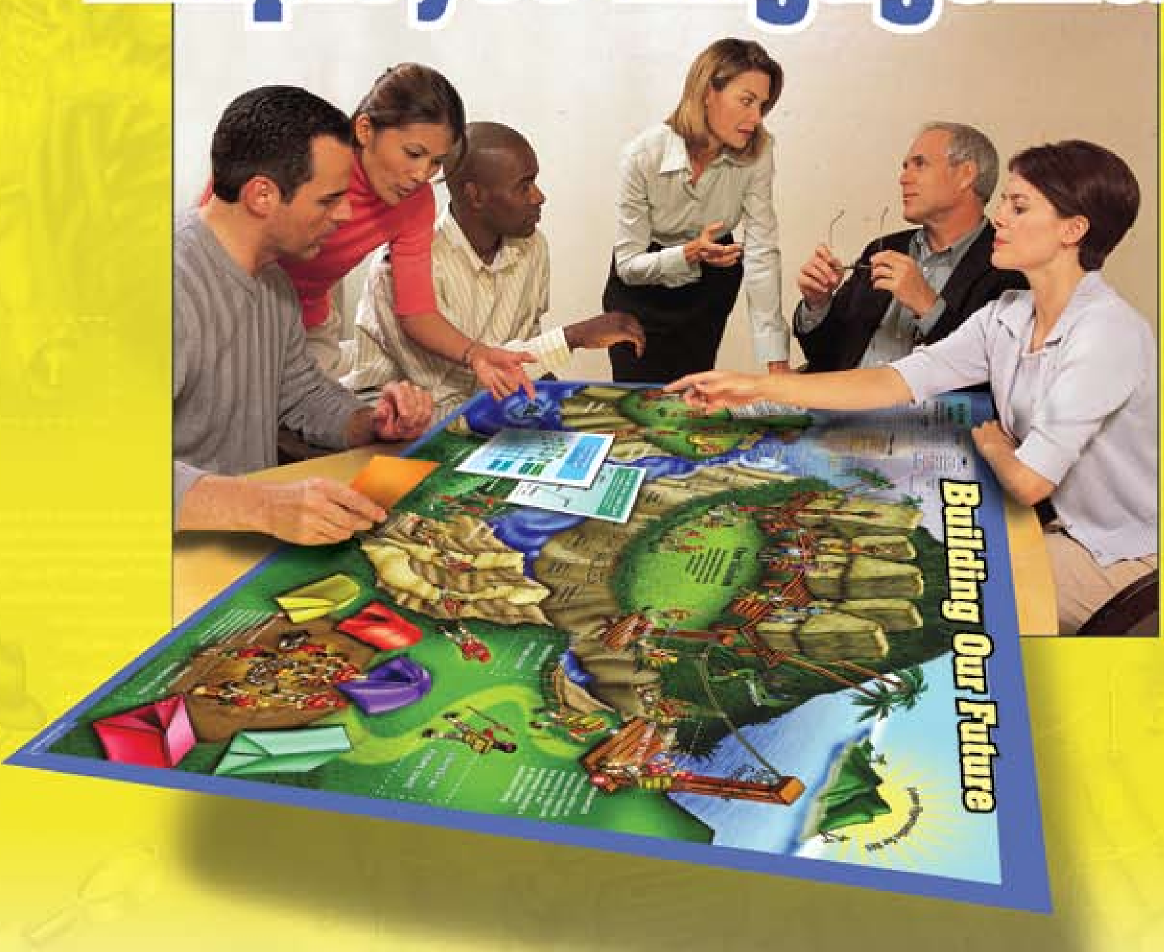

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Workplace Gloom Is Universal

THERE ARE A LOT OF GLUM FACES IN THE WORKPLACE, REGARDLESS OF AGE, BUT THE YOUNGER GENERATION IS BY FAR THE MORE DISSATISFIED.

Learning professionals are all too familiar with the prevailing profile of Generation Y. Its members expect autonomy, crave praise, and become frustrated easily. While those characteristics may ring true, a new survey reveals that older workers are nearly as discontented with their employers.

Leadership IQ, a Washington, D.C.-based leadership training company, polled more than 11,000 United States employees across a wide range of ages. As might be expected, the 21 to 30 age group registered the most discontent with their employers. While the older generation was the more satisfied, all generations expressed some level of dissatisfaction. The rate of discontent was almost directly related to age—the younger generations expressed the lowest satisfaction rates.

> Many managers are not learning the intangible skills necessary to manage a staff.

The survey asked a variety of questions ranging from whether employees would recommend their employer as a good place to work to whether the boss recognizes accomplishments with praise and if the boss holds people accountable for mistakes.

"Employees are not asking for million dollar salaries," says Mark Murphy, CEO of Leadership IQ. "They want attention and focus from managers."

Organizations are so focused on measuring quarterly success that they forgo investments that could keep employees content. Such short-term priorities have become the norm to the point where employees no longer see multiple options.

"Later never comes for most organizations," Murphy says. "As bad as retention is, the only reason it isn't any worse is because employees ask, 'Where else can I go?'"

No generation is happy with their current employer. The low level of satisfaction is a sign of the times, Murphy believes, and it began with the retrenchment that occurred in the 1980s with regular layoffs.

Unlike many development professionals who are seeking to build bridges between the so-called attention-starved Generation Y and the assumed reluctance of managers to lend praise, Murphy suggested that discontentment among young professionals is universal and not unique to the contemporary age. Very little research has been conducted comparing worker satisfaction rates during different eras.

"It may be simply because they are in the infancy of their careers," he explains. "Were 21- to 30-year-olds in the 1950s any different?"

Unfortunately, many managers are not learning the intangible skills necessary to manage a staff. Organizations do not emphasize them in promotions, and they are infrequently addressed in education, says Murphy.

"Most MBA programs teach students how to read a profit and loss statement or develop a marketing plan," Murphy says. "They don't teach people skills. The vast majority of organizations don't invest in management skills and tools so that managers can motivate their staff."

Michael Laff

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// INFO GRAPH //

WITH RESPECT TO *T&D* SPENDING AND STAFF PRIORITIES FOR NEXT YEAR, HOW MUCH WILL YOUR ORGANIZATION BUDGET FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING KINDS OF LEARNING CONTENT?

	MORE	SAME	LESS
SUPERVISORY/MANAGEMENT SKILLS	42%	43%	6%
LEADERSHIP/EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT	41%	39%	8%
DIVERSITY/INCLUSION	26%	41%	8%
SALES/CUSTOMER SERVICE	22%	43%	7%
INTERPERSONAL/TEAMWORK	20%	53%	2%
IT SKILLS/SYSTEMS	19%	45%	1%
COMMUNICATIONS	19%	51%	12%
TECHNICAL TRAINING (INDUSTRY SPECIFIC)	19%	52%	7%
CROSS-CULTURAL COMPETENCIES	18%	42%	5%
STRATEGIC PLANNING	17%	47%	7%
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	16%	44%	8%
CHANGE MANAGEMENT	16%	46%	11%
BUSINESS PRACTICES	15%	48%	8%
BASIC SKILLS	8%	62%	12%

Source: Novations Group

// IN THE NEWS //

SHORT-SIGHTED CHANGES PREVENT HR FROM BECOMING TRUE ASSET

More than 84 percent of 150 global companies surveyed in a new study say they are revamping their HR functions, but many are missing an opportunity to build value and make the department an integral part of the company's business strategy.

The survey conducted by Deloitte Consulting indicated that revamping HR is still mostly about savings, systems, and processes, despite rising demands for the HR department to meet the challenges of an increasingly competitive business environment.

One strategy that companies azre still using to improve their HR functions is outsourcing administrative activities while retaining HR's strategic capabilities in-house. Approximately 40 percent of surveyed companies that are transforming HR have outsourced some routine activities such as compensation and benefits (94 percent), HR administration inquiry (94 percent), shared service center operations (88 percent), HR information system (88 percent), and payroll (85 percent).

Other companies are now looking to outsource more strategic HR activities, such as training and development (42 percent), recruiting and staffing (36 percent), compliance (36 percent), talent management (27 percent), and global mobility (21 percent).

"HR needs to focus more on supporting business objectives—revenue growth and talent," says Robin Lissak, Deloitte Consulting principal and director of the survey. "For instance, new market entry is an important growth strategy for many companies and is often a risky proposition because talent can't be sourced, retained, or trained in the company's culture. It is clear to us that a long-term focus can have a bigger positive impact on corporate results."

The primary motivations behind HR improvements continue to be cost savings or efficiency (85 percent) and effectiveness of service (75 percent). Only one-third of respondents cite building HR capability as a driver for the overhaul and even fewer (30 percent) responded that they were making improvements to free HR to undertake a more strategic role.

Some organizations are moving toward business-HR alignment and are identifying key business issues that are driving future HR improvements—training the next generation of leaders (40 percent), building and managing a global workforce (33 percent), mergers and acquisitions (31 percent), and an aging workforce (27 percent). However, only 40 percent of respondents have structured processes for future HR planning. This is clearly an area that needs improvement because HR will likely find it difficult to support business strategy without a formal mechanism to solidify this alignment.