

Employee Commitment Benefits of Emotional Intelligence Training

Fast Food Industry — Case Study #14

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Background

Internal IT departments within companies and government agencies are characterized by phenomenal and increasingly rapid change. The life expectancy of products and programs declines each year, while the demands on them to provide broader and deeper data increase. Internal IT departments that cannot keep pace with the changes and are not sufficiently adaptable are in danger of being outsourced.

Because of the unique set of environmental pressures in IT functions — continuous re-engineering, outsourcing, more demanding customers, and general information overload — many IT employees are suffering. The price is paid by many in terms of stress related problems.

At the same time, additional pressures are placed on individuals within the IT function to influence and convince internal stakeholders and external customers to adopt new software programs — programs whose benefits are not often apparent to the stakeholders or external customers. The ability to effectively and quickly influence people in other functions, other countries, with other backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures and values is at a premium.

Science

Recent research by cardiologists and neuroscientists has shown that powerful techniques are available that can generate rapid and significant improvements in ...

- Mental clarity
- Decision-making
- Creativity
- Cardiovascular flexibility
- Hormone balance
- Immune function

Specifically, this research has demonstrated that there is a profound link between productivity, brain function, cardiovascular health, and stress. Individuals can learn how to consciously change the quality of the internal signals from the heart to the brain. This enhances brain function by a process called cortical facilitation. Cortical facilitation enhances clarity, insight, and creativity. As a result, these techniques can help individuals achieve their peak performance by being more flexible, resilient, adaptable, and effective in stressful or challenging environments.

The Developing Emotional Competence™ Program

The Developing Emotional Competence™ (DEC) program is based on this scientific research and has been shown repeatedly to impact a wide variety of business performance indicators and participants' health. DEC is a multi-contact program that includes individual personal goal setting, confidential goal setting interviews, applied Emotional Intelligence skill-building training where specific techniques are practiced and mastered, confidential follow-up coaching, and on-going email support and reminders. Pre and post measurements are an integral part of the program along with a final report of results some two to four months after the program.

The Client and His Goals

Chet (not his real name), a Senior Director in an IT function of a retail food company, was forming a new international team whose responsibility it was to influence the major business and internal IT functions of the company to adopt and implement new systems that are not uniquely developed within each market. This direction was a major change for the company to have more consistency in their technology platforms and as a result access to timely, accurate data to run the business of the restaurants.

Chet's main goals were two-fold: 1) to provide members of the team with new skills that would enable them and himself to more effectively manage the stress of a new global direction in a decentralized organization structure, and, 2) since they had no authority to require adoption of the systems, to improve their influencing skills. The international team included six directors and managers, each responsible for working with and influencing a part of the company's global operations.

Short Term Results

Approximately two months after the training, confidential one-hour, "Impact" interviews were conducted with each participant. Participants were asked to indicate the frequency of use of each of the techniques they had learned. They were also asked to indicate any improvement they were experiencing in the seventeen personal goals that they could have selected at the beginning of the program. Participants were asked to provide examples and stories of technique use that supported their estimated improvements. Following are the average reported improvements for the team.

Intra-Personal Goals

- Manage emotional reactivity 55%
- **Reduce stress and worry 45%**
- Improve mental clarity 38%
- Increase personal productivity 25%
- Stay motivated 43%
- Increase self-confidence 30%
- Increase personal creativity 35%
- Increase change flexibility 17%
- Improve work/life balance 44%

Interpersonal Goals

- Understand others 38%
- Listen more, talk less 40%
- Manage relationships effectively 28%
- **Influence others 34%**
- Resolve conflicts constructively 33%
- Improve morale/motivation 35%
- Improve teamwork 43%
- Improve team-to-team cooperation 23%

During the two confidential coaching sessions soon after the training and during the “Impact” interviews, several situations were shared by participants that demonstrated a reduction in stress and improved ability to influence clients. In one such situation, the team member used the listening technique taught in the program along with appropriate questions to make sure he understood exactly what the franchisee’s concerns were. He was able to uncover even the unspoken concerns and to address them to the franchisee’s satisfaction. Immediately after the meeting, the software was implemented. The team member said the software was implemented about three months earlier than would typically have taken place — all because he listened better.

As the year progressed Chet and his team continued to use the techniques individually and whenever they were together. Chet also shared with his boss the positive impact he was seeing from use of the techniques and even tried to convince his boss that the training would be valuable for others in the department. His boss acknowledged that, based of feedback he had received from officers and others, Chet was making significant positive changes in the way he interacted with and influenced others.

Long Term Results — Employee Commitment Survey

Approximately a year after Chet’s international team was trained, he requested that we train his other team. After Chet sent out an informational letter describing the DEC program and the events and timing, he chose to convene a brown bag lunch where he could talk about the program and why the data standards team was scheduled to receive it. Chet gave both personal and work examples of how applying the techniques had benefited his relationships and his performance.

He then shared with the data standards team their results from the company’s annual Employee Commitment survey. He told them that their overall average score was 77.6, a good score and up about 2 points from 2005. Then he said, “And now I want to share with you why I did not give you or your manager’s a choice in attending the Developing Emotional Competence program. The trained international team’s average score was almost 90, up 13 points from last year. Following are the 2005 and 2006 scores for both teams.

| Survey Category | Data Standards | | | International | | | Intl vs. DS % |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|--------|----------|---------------|--------|----------|---------------|
| | 2006 % | 2005 % | Change % | 2006 % | 2005 % | Change % | |
| • Personal commitment | 87 | 79 | +8 | 100 | 84 | +16 | +13 |
| • Supervision & Perform. Mgmt. | 79 | 81 | -2 | 95 | 79 | +16 | +16 |
| • Skill Utilization & Development | 78 | 73 | +5 | 95 | 75 | +20 | +17 |
| • Teamwork | 86 | 88 | -1 | 92 | 82 | +10 | +6 |
| • Innovation | 81 | 81 | 0 | 90 | 80 | +10 | +9 |
| • Support & Recognition | 72 | 68 | +4 | 90 | 71 | +19 | +18 |
| • Compensation & Benefits | 72 | 68 | +4 | 85 | 74 | +11 | +13 |
| • Workload | 66 | 70 | -4 | 85 | 72 | +13 | +19 |
| • Empowerment | 79 | 77 | +2 | 84 | 79 | +5 | +5 |
| • Leadership | 76 | 74 | +2 | 83 | 72 | +11 | +7 |
| Average | 77.6 | 75.7 | +1.9 | 89.9 | 76.8 | +13.1 | +12.3 |

Soon after the data was available, Chet sent the summary comparing the two groups to his boss. As Chet entered his boss' office to discuss the results, his boss said, "You've been telling me all year that the Emotional Intelligence training was having an impact on your team. Are you going to tell me this is the proof?" Chet said, "Jim, I can't think of any other reason for the difference in the scores of my two teams except the training." Chet then reviewed with his boss responses to a number of specific questions in the Employee Commitment survey. The responses to these questions show that the international team scored significantly higher than the overall Corporate Average. Some examples follow...

| Category | Statement | Int'l. Score | Corp. Avg. | Diff. |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|------------|-------|
| Personal Commitment | • I feel valued as an employee of this company. | 100 | 76 | +24 |
| Personal Commitment | • Overall, how strongly would you recommend working at the company? | 100 | 77 | +23 |
| Personal Commitment | • If you have your own way, will you be working for the company several years from now? | 100 | 82 | +18 |
| Support & Recognition | • How satisfied are you with the recognition you receive for doing a good job? | 100 | 70 | +30 |
| Leadership | • I feel confident in the fairness of management in my department. | 100 | 71 | +29 |
| Comp. & Benefits | • I feel that the compensation system encourages improved performance. | 100 | 68 | +32 |
| Workload | • The amount of stress I experience on my job is acceptable. | 80 | 59 | +21 |
| Empowerment | • I am allowed to make decisions that affect my ability to satisfy my customers. | 100 | 83 | +17 |
| Teamwork | • In my work group, people treat one another with trust and mutual respect. | 100 | 83 | +17 |
| Superv./Perf. Mgmt. | • My immediate supervisor gives me feedback that helps me improve my performance. | 100 | 76 | +24 |
| Innovation | • The people I work with consistently seek to identify ways to better meet business goals. | 100 | 83 | +17 |
| Special Topics | • Decisions in my work group are made in a manner that reflects an understanding of the needs of the owner operators, restaurant employees, and customers. | 100 | 85 | +15 |

The Benefits of Improving Emotional Intelligence Skills

- The Developing Emotional Competence program enables people to achieve specific goals (Ex: reduction in stress, improvements in influencing) and to experience improvement in other areas (Ex: Personal commitment, workload, teamwork, innovation, etc.).
- There are immediate, sustaining, and long-term benefits that accrue to the individual and to the company when individuals learn and practice techniques designed to enhance their Emotional Intelligence skills.
- Individual team leaders who develop and use Emotional Intelligence skills become better, more effective leaders who can create high performing teams.

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