

Who Needs Emotional Intelligence Skills?

BY BYRON STOCK

What is Emotional Intelligence (EI)?

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is the ability to acquire and apply knowledge from your emotions and the emotions of others. You can use the information about what you're feeling to help you make effective decisions about what to say or do (or not say or do) next. Emotional Intelligence is NOT about being soft! It is a different way of being smart — having the skill to use your emotions to help you make choices *in-the-moment* and have more effective control over yourself and your impact on others.

Who Could Benefit From EI Skill Enhancement?

Due to the pressures both at work and in our personal lives, people from every walk of life experience emotions that keep them from doing their best. These “negative” emotions not only don't feel good, they inhibit one's ability to think clearly and communicate effectively. In the following samples, you'll find typical situations from a variety of positions or jobs where this happens. Find a job title (see list below) similar to yours and read through the description on the following pages. I think you'll find the description reflects what typically occurs in your job and why developing your emotional intelligence skills can be beneficial for you, your organization, and the people you interact with daily, both at work and at home.

- Customer Service Representatives
- Executives
- High Potential People
- Sales Professionals
- Supervisors/Managers
- Teams
- Team Leaders/Project Managers
- Technical Professionals
- Staff

Customer Service Representatives (CSR's)

Customer service representatives deal with angry, frustrated customers continuously throughout their day. They find themselves being verbally abused through no fault of their own. The customer's anger, frustration and rage can cause representatives to become nervous, mad, disgusted, and angry themselves. If the representative does not have a high level of EI skills, the discussion may escalate and require the intervention of the CS Supervisor. Or worse, it can cause the company to lose that customer. An upset customer will typically tell 10-15 friends about the poor treatment they received. CSRs who have enhanced their EI skills can easily manage their emotional reactivity to angry customers, maintain a calm, polite and sincere attitude and conversation with customers in-the-moment. Being able to empathize with the upset customer allows for faster, more effective problem-solving and better communication. Maintaining customer satisfaction in the face of adversity and conflict builds customer loyalty. Loyal customers tell their friends. Higher customer loyalty leads to higher profitability.

Executives

Executives must make decisions daily that may make or break their companies. They must rely on more people than ever to achieve results they, personally, are held accountable for by the board. They must quickly and flexibly lead system-wide organizational change, while inspiring and energizing their followers. This constant, burdensome pressure can create feelings of anxiety, fear, caution, and even guilt and depression. The wrong decision, an untimely decision or no decision may cause “The Street” to undervalue the company, hampering its ability to meet its goals and stockholder expectations. Research has shown that high EI skills are the distinguishing characteristics that separate star performing executives from average ones. Enhanc-

ing leaders’ EI skills enables them to lead with courage, demonstrate their passion, grow and retain talented leaders, and empathize with people while humanely challenging them to meet demanding business goals. The resilient, flexible, strong organizational culture that is created by such a leader attracts talented people, ensures organizational success (through thick and thin), and creates a lasting legacy.

High Potential People

High potential people take on demanding multiple projects and leadership roles. Unforeseen events occur that delay or derail critical business initiatives under their responsibility. They have daily contact with customers, suppliers and even competi-

What are the Competencies of Emotional Intelligence?

There are five basic competencies that comprise the field of Emotional Intelligence. The first three are *intra*-personal, that is they are invisible to others and occur inside of us. The last two are *inter*-person, that is they occur between us and other people and are observable in our behavior. The better developed your *intra*-personal skills, the easier it is to demonstrate your *inter*-personal skills.

- 1. Emotional Self-Awareness** — Having the skill to focus your attention on your emotional state. Being aware, *in-the-moment*, of what you’re feeling. Are you happy, excited, worried, angry? Given that information about your emotional state, what should (or shouldn’t) you do or say next? Use that information to help you make effective decisions to achieve better outcomes for yourself and others.
- 2. Emotional Self-Regulation** — Having the skill to be able to choose the emotions you want to experience, rather than being the victim of whatever emotions occur. Not letting others “push your buttons.” Possessing the ability to manage your

emotional state. Do not confuse this with “burying” or “stuffing” your feelings. The skill to choose the emotions you want — typically to be able to transform negative draining emotional states into positive productive ones.

- 3. Emotional Self-Motivation** — The ability to use your emotions to cause yourself to take positive action, to continue to persistently pursue goals even in the face of significant adversity or difficulty. This is about using your emotions to be positive, optimistic, confident, and persistent rather than negative, pessimistic and second guessing yourself and your decisions.
- 4. Empathy** — Not to be confused with sympathy. Possessing the ability to listen effectively and accurately enough to put yourself in the other person’s shoes. Not to necessarily agree with them, but to truly understand the situation from their point of view in

order to improve communication, problem-solving, and trust.

- 5. Nurturing Relationships** — The ability to demonstrate sincere care (as contrasted with “required courtesy”) for others. Through word and deed, demonstrate appreciation for people’s efforts and contribution. Setting a positive tone of cooperation no matter how difficult the situation or conversation. Having other’s best interests in mind while focusing on achieving goals to create win-win outcomes.

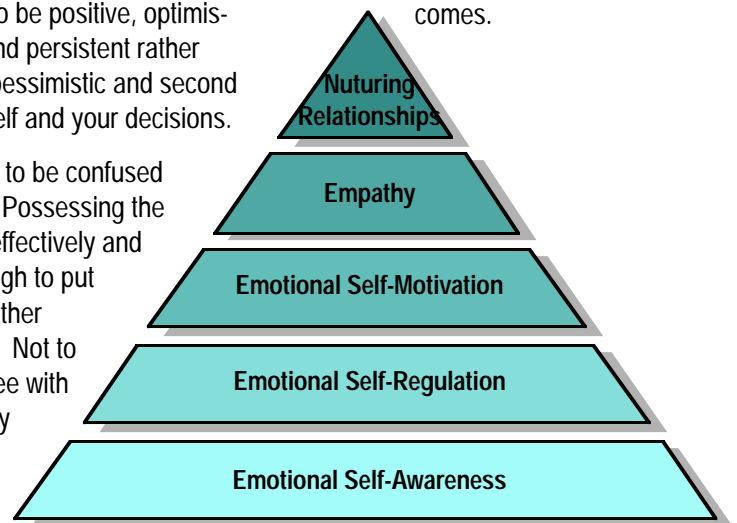


Figure 1: Emotional Intelligence Competencies

tors who are often irate and threatening. Hundreds of emails demand immediate attention. These situations can cause the person to feel anxious, fearful and overwhelmed. They may feel frustrated that things are not moving faster and may worry that problems are hurting their career. Negative emotions lead to poor decisions and multi-million dollar flubs. Products flop and marketing campaigns go awry as critical details fall through the cracks. A shallow talent pool can keep the company from developing new products and services, crippling its chances in its industry. Research has shown that high EI skills are the distinguishing characteristic that separate star performers from average ones. The earlier these skills are developed and ingrained, the more likely High Potentials and the company are to experience success. Ensuring that high potential people develop their EI skills to the fullest ensures a cadre of competent global leaders available to introduce new products, start new businesses, and lead the integration of new acquisitions.

Sales Professionals

Sales people frequently work with difficult prospects and customers. They often find themselves in adversarial situations over price, features, delivery schedules, etc. These situations can generate anxiety, fear, frustration or even outright anger on the part of both the salesperson and the customer. This can lead to a vicious negative emotional cycle where sales decline, sales people are demotivated, and customers are unsatisfied and leave. Enhancing EI skills allows the sales person to have more control over themselves and thus the situation. They are not as apt to let the customer “push their buttons.” They can stay mentally focused on the key issues and not “give-away-the-store.” Research shows that the more optimistic a sales person is, the higher their volume and sales dollars. Optimism leads to persistence which leads to more sales. Being able to empathize with the customer allows for faster, more effective problem-solving and better communication. Developing strong positive relationships with customers, through thick and thin, ensures higher sales and better cooperation when problems do arise.

Supervisors / Managers

Supervisors’ and Managers’ behavior and treatment of their people determine turnover and retention. They interact daily with individuals who have distinct needs, wants and expectations. They significantly influence the attitudes, performance, and satisfaction of employees within their department and other departments. The stress of trying to lead and satisfy so many people’s changing needs and expectations can be overwhelming, to say nothing of the demands from upper management. Being both firm and caring at the same time causes many to feel inadequate for the role. Forty percent of turnover is reportedly due to an inadequate relationship between the employee and their direct supervisor. Where trust is lacking, performance suffers. Enhancing EI skills enables Supervisors and Managers to regulate their emotions and motivate themselves more effectively — allowing them to manage their own emotional turmoil effectively and demonstrate compassion and empathy for their employees. It also provides them with the courage to push against the system to make necessary changes for their people. All employees want a supportive, caring Supervisor or Manager who has their best interests at heart — knowing this, the employee will be more likely to turn down offers from other companies to work for such a person.

Teams

Teams are shouldering more and more responsibility for major organizational initiatives. They are under pressure to work smoothly with people they may never see face-to-face both inside and outside their organization. Deadlines are tight, resources are scarce, technology is rapidly advancing, and team members are constantly changing. It’s easy to be dejected, overwhelmed and confused as things change about you. It’s normal to feel angry when a team member doesn’t deliver, disgusted when resources are taken away, and angry when you are still expected to meet tight deadlines. Team cohesion and effectiveness breakdown and progress slows to a creep. Product introductions are missed and market share can be lost to competitors. Teams with enhanced EI skills can dramatically shorten the storming phase of team formation. Team members deal effectively and efficiently with their own and

other members emotional turmoil, using it as a source for developing team cohesion and trust. *Esprit de corps* is developed with a can-do attitude. Major projects of significant importance to the organization are achieved on time and on budget. The organization gains a reputation as a great place to work and grow.

Team Leaders / Project Managers

Teams Leaders and Project Managers are held accountable for setting and maintaining a positive environment where very diverse, non-local individuals can work together to achieve success in shorter and shorter time periods on projects of greater magnitude and importance. They must eliminate roadblocks and internal and external organizational barriers so their teams can achieve success. Working in the political environment of organizations can cause a lot of frustration, anxiety, suspicion, and resentment as the maze of organizational change is deciphered. Teams frustrated by impediments their leaders cannot remove become discouraged. Team morale sags and projects fall behind schedule. Members leave the team, causing further delays. Enhancing EI skills of Team Leaders and Project managers enables them to maintain a positive attitude as they eliminate impediments to team success. By improving their own internal motivation and persistence, they motivate their team to high sustained levels of performance and achievement. Major projects of significant importance to the organization are achieved on time and on budget. Critical talented staff are developed and retained.

Technical Professionals

Technical Professionals are constantly under pressure to do more with less faster, better, and cheaper. They work long hard hours to complete projects. They are challenged to create and innovate, interact with a multitude of people from different functions, and do tasks, in many cases, they would like to avoid. These situations can cause technical professionals to be agitated, resentful, anxious, frustrated, and stressed-out much of the day. These negative emotions cause what is known as “emotional hijacking” — a physiological response

in the brain that literally keeps people from thinking clearly. Communication is hampered, more mistakes and errors are made, and creativity is blocked. Enhancing the Technical Professional’s EI skills provides them with what they never were taught in school - how to manage their own emotional reactivity to people and situations and how to build interpersonal skills that allow them to get other technical colleagues to help them when they need it. Strong EI skills ensure that projects are completed on schedule, and that they incorporate the best innovative thinking that is available both inside and outside the organization.

Staff

The sheer volume of work that most Administrative Staff must deal with is overwhelming. They support more people who travel more and need more work done with shorter deadlines for each task. New computer systems, new requirements, new policies and procedures, all add to the frustration. Constant minute-by-minute interruptions are the norm. Is it any wonder they feel completely overwhelmed, worried, dejected, confused, fearful and even guilty by all the various demands and expectations placed on them? These feelings can lead to situations where Staff feel paralyzed by all they have to do. Procrastination becomes evident, errors and mistakes increase, and feeling like they have no control often leads to a depressive state where complaining and absenteeism increases. Health, attitude, and morale suffer. Enhanced EI skills enable people to gracefully handle multiple demands, interruptions, and tight deadlines. Processes, databases, and projects run more smoothly, details do not fall through the cracks, and professional staff are freed-up to focus on their work.

BYRON STOCK, a former engineer and director of corporate education, guides individuals and organizations toward excellence by showing them how to use their emotional intelligence as a powerful tool to achieve strategic objectives, lead change, and improve organizational culture. Byron is best known as an international speaker and seminar leader, teaching people to achieve immediate, significant, and sustainable improvements in mental clarity and personal productivity. To discuss this article or for more information, email Byron at Byron@ByronStock.com.