

Emotional intelligence in the workplace



Introduction

The emotional intelligence field is a very new area of study in psychological research. The definition therefore is varied and is constantly changing. It was only in 1990 that Salovey and Mayer came up with the first published attempt in trying to define the term. They defined emotional intelligence as “the ability to monitor one’s own and other feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one’s thinking and actions”. (Salovey P. & Mayer, J. D, 1990)

Emotional intelligence to a larger extent involves “emotional empathy” which is the ability to concentrate on one’s emotions and recognize mood both of themselves and others. It further describes how well one is able to adapt to various life challenges like stress and difficult incidences. It also involves the ability to balance “honest expression of emotions against courtesy, consideration and respect”. This would obviously involve possession of some level of good social and communication skills.

Emotional intelligence is often times measured using the Emotional Intelligence quotient (EQ) which is more of a description of the capacity or ability to perceive, then assess and eventually manage one’s own and others emotions, To date there are 3 main emotional intelligence models which include:

- Emotional intelligence Model based on Trait
- Emotional Models based on Ability
- Emotional intelligence from Mixed models

i) The Trait Emotional Intelligence model

Trait emotional intelligence or Trait emotional self efficacy refers to “ a constellation or behaviour dispositions and self-perceptions regarding a persons ability to recognize, process and utilize emotional-laden information” where the trait emotional intelligence should be measured within the framework of an individuals personality.

The trait emotional intelligence is measured by several tools of self-report and include the EQ, the Six seconds emotional intelligence assessment, the Swinburne University emotional intelligence test (SUEIT) and the Schutte self report emotional intelligence test (SSEIT). A trait emotional intelligence questionnaire (TEIQUE) that is in 15 languages was designed specifically in an open- access manner to measure EI compressively.

ii) Emotional intelligence model based on ability

Salovey and Mayer revised their earlier Emotional Intelligence definition and upgraded it to read as “ the ability to perceive emotion, integrate emotion to facilitate thought, understand emotions and regulate emotion to promote personal growth” (Mayer, J. D. & Salovey, P., 1997)

This model upholds emotions as vital information sources that enable a person to make good use of the social environment. According to the model, an individual’s ability to process emotional information varies from one person to another and certain adaptive behaviours manifest themselves in this ability. The model thus goes further to propose four ability types that include

- Perceiving of emotions

- Using of emotion
- understanding emotions and
- Initiating the emotions

Upon the development of this model, it heralded the development of a measurement instrument that was named after its proponents, Mayer-Salovey- Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT) which is based on various “ emotion- based problem solving items” (Salovey P & Grewal D, 2005).

The ability of a person is measured on the four branches of emotional intelligence which then generates a score for each branch and eventually the total score.

iii) Mixed models of emotional intelligence

Included in the mixed emotional intelligence model are Golemans’s Emotional Competencies and Bar-On’s emotional-social intelligence model.

1. The emotional competencies (Goleman) model

This is a model that was introduced by Daniel Goleman who portrays emotional intelligence as a combination of a variety of skills and competencies that strengthen managerial performance. The managerial performance in human resources is measured by a 360-degree feedback program known as the “ multi-source feedback” or “ multi-rate feedback” or “ multi-source assessment” which assesses the employee in totality. (Goleman, D. 1998).

In this model, Goleman developed 4 outlines for emotional intelligence.

These main outlines include;

- Self- awareness: This is the ability to understand ones emotions and recognizing their impact.
- Self-management: being able to adapt to changing circumstances by controlling ones emotions.
- Social awareness: being able to understand sense other people emotions and reacting to them while understanding the social networks.
- Relationship management: which includes being able to inspire, develop and influence others in a conflict management set-up. Within each outline, Goleman included a set of emotional competencies which are learned capabilities and to achieve outstanding performance, must be developed and worked on. To learn the emotional competency, each individual is born with a level of emotional intelligence which determines the potential to learn.

Measurement tools utilized in this model include the ECI (Emotional Competency Inventory) an emotional intelligence appraisal taken as a 360-degree assessment or a self- report assessment. (Goleman, D. 1998).

1. The Bar-On model of emotional-social intelligence (ESI)

This model was developed by Reuven Bar-On who was a psychologist. He defined emotional intelligence as “ involving the effective understanding of others including oneself and being able to relate well with people and developing the ability to deal effectively with the environmental dynamics

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and adapting and coping with them. According to Bar-On, emotional intelligence is developed over the time and improved by training therapy and programming (Bar-On, R. 1997).

He developed what is termed as the “ Emotional Quotient” which indicated a measure of emotional intelligence where higher EQ individuals are successful under any form of environmental demands and pressures. He also posited that Emotional Intelligence deficiency is usually accompanied by emotional problems. Therefore according to him, the potential to succeed in life lies in both the cognitive intelligence and emotional intelligence. (Bar-On R. 1997).

As a measurement tool the Bar-On Emotion Quotient Inventory (EQ-i) was developed and estimates a person’s both emotional and social intelligence. It measures the individual’s mental ability to succeed in any environmental circumstance. (Bar-On, R. 1997).

To obtain a Total Emotional Quotient (Total EQ), 133 items are used that inform and produce scores to correspond with the 5 main components of the model. (Bar-On, R. 1997).

Emotional intelligence in the workplace.

At the work place the ability to “ exercise clear and sound judgement in situations that the jobs role presents” solely depends on the emotional intelligence employees possess. It encompasses the ability to manage their own impulses, cope with change, effectively communicate with others, and solve problems and being able to make use of humour to defuse a tense situation. Such employees have the ability to empathise with others, are optimistic in the face of down turns and are effective in resolving customer

complaints. Therefore emotional intelligence plays a vital role in separating top performers from weak ones at the work place.

At the work place certain emotional quotient Competencies correlate with each other to make it a successful place, such competencies include;

1. Social competencies

Social competencies describe a person's ability to handle relationships.

Inherent in the person is the awareness of the feelings and concerns of others. The social competency at the work place is very important because of various reasons mentioned below.

- It enables the person to understand others by actively showing interest in other peoples' concerns and interests. It's an intuitive way of sensing the perspectives and feelings of others.
- Customer service adaptation: being able to handle customer service responsibilities in a successful manner by being able to recognize, anticipate and meet the needs of customers.
- Development of people: being able to identify other people's needs of growth, development and mastering on the individuals strength.
- Leveraging on others: being able to harness and cultivate growth opportunities through diverse people.

Social skills and political acumen

This is another important competence that is very important at the work place and it describes "our adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others" it is important because of various reasons, which include:

- Communication: the ability not only to sent clear and convincing messages but messages that are under hood by others.
- Influencing – ability to effectively utilize persuasion techniques to achieve positive and desired results.
- Leadership being able to inspire and guide teams or groups of people by creating synergy to pursue and achieve collective goals in a team set up.

b). Personal Competencies

Personal Competencies are competencies that determine how an individual manages him/herself. This competency includes self awareness which is the ability to know the internal state of oneself, by understanding such factors as resources, instincts and inclinations At the work place the competence is of great importance for various reasons, some of which are;

- Awareness of specific emotions: the ability to recognize one’s own emotions and the impact they have on those around us.
- Accurate self-assessment: the ability to recognize one’s span of strengths and abilities
- Self-confidence: Being sure of one’s self-worth, self esteem and capabilities.
- Self Regulation: This is the ability to control or manage one’s internal impulses, states and resources. The competence is very important at the work place because it enables the individual cultivate a high level of self control in which he/she is able to manage any form of disruptive

impulses or emotions. An individual is able to maintain a higher level of integrity and honesty which results to trustworthiness and conscientiousness by taking personal responsibility and accountability in any form of personal performance.

- Motivation Emotional and self expectation tendencies which are important to achieve set goals. At the work place this competency is of great importance because it gives us the ability to impose on ourselves standards of excellence that we want to achieve in a certain time period. This in turn enables us to remain aligned and committed to the group's and organization's goals.

An individual also at this level acts at every opportunity without being told because he/she is self motivated and takes initiatives to achieve success in whatever challenge he/she comes across. The particular individual is always ready in whatever circumstance and is full of life and optimism, thus is very persistent in trying to achieve whatever goals regardless of the setbacks and obstacles placed on the path to the eventual success. <http://www.zeroriskhr.com/Articles/EmotionalIntelligence.aspx>

The Impact of Emotional Intelligence on a company's Bottom Line

Since the development of the Emotional Intelligence field, many companies have resorted to hard skills and personality traits assessment while focusing on the criteria for selection and training. Such hard skills include industry knowledge, technical expertise and education among others.

Previously such competence topics like “ empathy, political/social acumen, stress management and assertiveness skills” were ignored and never

measured in most companies' development and training programs. Yet they are important factors that companies cannot afford to ignore, because in reality they have an effect on the company's bottom-line.

To show the importance, a study of forty four Fortune 500 companies revealed that sales people with higher Emotional Quotient produced double revenue compared to the sales people with less or average Emotional Quotient scores. In yet another survey, technical programmers with higher EQ were developing up to 3 times more software than those ones with lower EQ.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the field of emotional intelligence is quite new in the field of psychological research, it is a field that should not be ignored by any progressive minded organization. Highly emotionally intelligent employees would turn out to be great assets not only to the organization but to the community of employees and customers that the organization interacts with. It is important therefore for the organization to delve much deeper into this field and develop or adopt certain measurement procedures that would help with identifying and developing competent employees that would be the delight of the organization in the long run.

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