

The smart way to succeed

Emotional intelligence is crucial for successful career progression, writes Caroline Allen

Employing people with high intelligence quotients (IQs) is of little use if they don't have the emotional nous to back it up. That is according to business psychologist Mike Fiszler, director of leadership development at Edinburgh Institute of Leadership and Management Practice.

Emotional intelligence assesses non-cognitive capabilities and competencies that influence our ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures. It is a key determinant in our ability to succeed in our professional and personal lives.

"IQ, on the other hand, is really a standardising measure of our cognitive abilities – reasoning, recall, symbolic thinking and visual motor performances. IQ is necessary, but it is EQ [emotional quotient] that allows people with IQ to rise to the top," said Fiszler.

To find candidates with the right mix of emotional and cognitive abilities, Fiszler advised employers to compile job descriptions with the "key discriminating strengths that very talented people would utilise in that role, and recruit against those".

Key strength

In the highly collaborative workplace of today, the ability

to understand and respond appropriately and effectively to those around you is a key strength, and one with significant benefits for employers.

"What is separating exceptional from average performance is the level of emotional intelligence or competence that people display and use in work and life. The research in this area recently – and especially since the publication of Daniel Goleman's book, *Emotional Intelligence*, in 1995 – has been phenomenal. Year-on-year, as we continue to research, we are discovering that assessing and developing emotional intelligence is having an impact on the bottom line," said Fiszler.

When he was a lecturer with the Irish Management Institute in Dublin, Fiszler worked with Masterfoods in 2002 and 2003 on an EQ project aimed at unearthing the key emotional intelligence competencies that set the company's star salespeople apart. The competencies identified in the study included self-awareness, self-regard, assertiveness, flexibility and independence.

"For Masterfoods, this organisational research project brought a number of tangible benefits. It showed the company the competencies it should seek when recruiting, enabled it to motivate salespeople and to know how best to improve not only individual but team performance, and gave valuable insights and a framework to allow other parts of



Petra Costigan-Oorthuijs, senior behaviour specialist and director of toBE

the multinational to enhance results," Fiszler said.

Successful managers

Dr John Avella, president of

EQ International Perspectives, has been researching the application of emotional intelligence (EI) in customer service and loyalty for the past seven years. He has conducted studies that point to what he calls the "overwhelming" success of people with more than average EI in the work environment.

"A Johnson & Johnson worldwide study of successful

found that 50-70 per cent of competencies were EI skills," said Avella. "In 1996, a US Air Force study revealed that, when recruiters were selected for EI competencies, 90 per cent achieved their own recruiting goals. Before EI competencies were used in selection, a very low percentage of recruiters achieved their goals.

"Restaurant managers for Whitbread in England who had better than average EI skills achieved significantly better profitability, according to 2004 research. A 1998 survey by the US Department of Labor found that the three most highly sought-after skills in new hires were oral communication, interpersonal abilities and teamwork abilities – all EI skills."

Career ladder

According to Petra Costigan-

Emotional intelligence is a key factor in our ability to succeed in our lives

Oorthuijs, senior behaviour specialist and director of toBE, a Laois-based company specialist in theatre-based learning, EQ becomes more important the higher up the career ladder you go.

"Hiring leaders for now or for the future has been a big focus of most business schools and successful organisations over the past decade, and sometimes EQ has been used in identifying good leaders. However, research shows that the focus on leadership skills has been too much on the personality and individual abilities side, rather than on the group and team abilities," said Costigan-Oorthuijs.

"Most books in the past ten years on super leaders are taking examples of this super

being at the top of an organisation who has these amazing 'leadership skills', and all leadership development and hiring of people was totally focused on this trend.

"Many of these high-flyers have fallen big time or have not proven to be as successful and the trend in the past 12 months is to identify leaders that can rely on others, whose

egos do not count, who actually motivate their future successor to become successful as soon as possible.

"In this trend, EQ is particularly ahead in the game, as there is a strong emphasis on inter-personal skills in EQ. Much of EQ development in this particular area is called social intelligence, while tapping into some key EQ areas like persuasiveness, networking, self-confidence, empathy and optimism," she said.

Developing soft skills

Pauline McEvoy, director of the International Coaching and Training Institute (ICTI), said that training in soft skills could benefit companies in all sectors.

"From any organisation's point of view, an emotionally intelligent person at any level is an absolute asset. A self-aware, emotionally intelligent workforce enables a company to innovate, operate effectively and deliver ongoing improve-

ment and results. Companies who are always looking for 'the edge' invest in developing their people's emotional intelligence. It is the building block to having a fully engaged workforce," said McEvoy.

Stephen Neale, occupational psychologist and author of *Emotional Intelligence Coaching*, said that companies were coming under increasing pressure to recognise the important role played by emotions in the workplace. "Our understanding of how humans work has increased dramatically and more than ever,

science shows that human beings are emotional, irrational and illogical creatures," he said.

"There will be less emphasis on traditional competencies – not that they are not important – and more on how well leaders and managers motivate, inspire and encourage people to grow. There will be a shift away from more traditional styles of 'directive' leadership to more emotionally intelligent styles, where leaders coach their staff more to help improve and reach their potential more."

El pioneers

value of empowering employees and giving them

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