

## Emotional Intelligence: A Catalyst to Enhance Job Performance

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### **Abstract**

*Earlier, it was believed that, traditional intelligence was responsible for success in an individual's life. However, researchers have found that, factors, such as, creativity, positive attitude, integrity, cooperation, teamwork, social skills, and motivation play major roles in a person's job suitability and productivity. These qualities are rather influenced by aspects of emotional abilities. Therefore, it has been a challenge to the researchers to forward a satisfactory explanation that would recognize the contribution of the emotional abilities for success in both personal and professional life. Emotional intelligence, to a great extent, addresses the above issue. Emotional intelligence is an aggregate of individuals' cognition of own and others' emotions, feeling, interpretation and action as per environmental demand to manipulate the consequence which, in turn, results in superior performance and better*

*human relationship. The present paper makes an effort to review the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing performance.*

## **Introduction**

It was earlier believed that, traditional intelligence was responsible for success in an individual's life. To measure such intelligence, a number of intelligence scales have also been developed. However, those scales are not able to predict why some people are better in interpersonal relationships, more acceptable to people, better managers of their lives, careers, and stress. In fact, researchers have found that, factors, such as, creativity, positive attitude, integrity, cooperation, teamwork, social skills, and motivations play major roles in a person's job suitability and productivity (Goleman, 1995; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Cooper & Sawaf, 1998; Williams & Sternberg, 1988). These qualities are rather influenced by aspects of emotional abilities. Therefore, it has been a challenge to the researchers to forward a satisfactory explanation that would recognize the contribution of the emotional abilities for success in both personal and professional life. Emotional intelligence, to a great extent, addresses the above issue.

The present paper makes an effort to review the role of emotional intelligence in enhancing performance.

## **Model of EI**

Emotional intelligence is an aggregate of individuals' cognition of own and others' emotions, feeling,

interpretation and action as per environmental demand to manipulate the consequence which in turn result in superior performance and better human relationship' (Bhattacharya, 2003).

The most popular and accepted '*mixed model*' of emotional intelligence is the one proposed by Goleman (1995). He viewed emotional intelligence as a total of personal and social competences. Personal competence determines how we manage ourselves, whereas social competence determines how we handle our interpersonal relationships.

Personal competence: It comprises of three dimensions of self –skills of emotional intelligence, such as, self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation. Self-awareness is the ability of an individual to observe him/herself and to recognize 'a feeling as it happens' (Goleman, 1995). The hallmarks of this ability are self-confidence, self-assessment and openness to positive criticism. Self-regulation is the ability to control emotions and to redirect those emotions that can have negative impact. Trust worthiness, integrity, tolerance of ambiguity and attitude to accept change are some characteristics of this ability. Motivation is the ability to channelize emotion to achieve a goal through self-control and by moderating impulses as per the requirement of the situation. The people who have this ability are optimistic and committed towards organizational as well as individual goals.

Social competence: It comprises of two dimensions namely, empathy and social skills. Empathy is the ability to feel and get concerned for others, take their perspective and to treat people according to their emotional reactions. People with this ability are experts in generating and motivating others. Social skills are the ability to build rapport and to manage relationships with people. People having this skill are very effective in persuasiveness and team management. 'Social skill' is the culmination of all other components of emotional intelligence assuming that people can effectively manage social and work relationships only when they can understand and control their own emotion and can empathize with the feelings of others.

In the later version of the emotional intelligence model, Goleman (2001) proposed four components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. The first two components are the part of self-skills of emotional intelligence, whereas, the others are part of social skills. The first component is the ability to know what one feels; the second component involves the ability to regulate the distressing effect of negative emotions and to inhibit emotional impassivity; the third component deals with empathy; and the fourth component involves the skill to handle human relationship effectively.

The above mentioned four components are built on certain clusters of competences. They are as follows:

Self-awareness – This component is built on three competences, namely, emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment, and self-confidence.

Self-management – This component is built on six competences , namely, Emotional Self - Control, Trustworthiness, Conscientiousness, Adaptability, Achievement Drive, and initiative.

Social awareness - This component is built on three competences, namely, Empathy, Service orientation, and Organizational Awareness

Relationship management - This component is built on three competences, namely, developing others, Influence, Communication, conflict management, leadership, change catalyst, building bonds, collaboration and teamwork

### **Role of EI in Influencing Performance**

EI help in enhancing job performance in various ways. Considerable amount of researches have been conducted in this regard, with various view points and perspectives. In the following section, the most prominent researches, based on the similarity of the research parameters have been summarized.

#### ***Self-Skill Of Emotional Intelligence***

Emotional self-awareness is one of the self-awareness competences. It aids us to recognize our own feelings and how they affect our performance. For example, when a customer care manager interacts with an errant customer, he/she needs to understand that his own emotional outburst, as a result of the customer's behavior, may make things worse. Self-Awareness is another competence, which

act as the key to realizing one's own strengths and weaknesses. Several studies (e.g.; Boyatzis, 1982; Kelley, 1998. Goleman 1998b) have revealed that, accurate self-assessment was a characteristic of the superior performers. Individuals with the accurate self-assessment competence are more aware of their capabilities and drawbacks, are open to feedback. They are also keener to collaborate with others, who have complementary strengths, and learn from them. Self-Confidence is the third competence in the self-awareness cluster. The level of Self-Confidence was in fact a stronger predictor of performance than the level of skill or previous training (Boyatzis, 1982, Saks, 1995). In a sixty-year study of more than one thousand high-IQ men and women tracked from early childhood to retirement, those who possessed Self-Confidence during their early years were most successful in their careers (Holahan & Sears, 1995).

### **Self-Management Competence**

In this competence, emotional self-control is manifested as a competence of remaining unperturbed in stressful situations or dealing with an intimidating person without reacting inappropriately. For example, counselors and psychotherapists with better emotional self-control, tend to respond calmly to angry attacks by clients and, therefore, have more possibility to succeed. Same way, the flight attendants with more emotional self-control are better able to handle the customers' requirements (Boyatzis & Burrus, 1995; Spencer & Spencer, 1993). The trust

worthiness competence one's ability to communicate his/her values and principles, intentions and feelings to others, and acting in ways that are consistent with them. This competence help individuals to accept their own mistakes and confront others about their lapses. The Conscientiousness competence includes self-discipline and dependability. Studies have revealed that, Conscientiousness is imperative for success in job, at all levels (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Barrick, Mount, & Straus (1993) have found that, among sales representatives for a large U.S. appliance manufacturer, those who were most conscientious had the largest volume of sales.

Adaptability is the competence which is exhibited by all superior performers (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Adaptable individuals are open to change, and, let go of old assumptions.

Emotional resilience is a competence which makes an individual comfortable with the anxiety that often accompanies uncertainty. Individuals having this competence tend to be more creative at workplace and ready to accept the risk of failure.

Achievement drive refers to an optimistic striving to continually improve performance. Studies that compare star performers in executive ranks to average ones find that stars display classic achievement-oriented behaviors-they take more calculated risks, they support enterprising innovations and set challenging goals for their employees, and so forth (Goleman, 2001).

Initiative is the sixth competence in the self-awareness cluster. People with this competence are proactive and tend to act in anticipation to avoid possible problems in future. Individuals, who lack Initiative, are reactive rather than proactive.

### **Performance and 'Self' Skill Component of Emotional Intelligence: Empirical Evidence**

A study on 100 bank employees by Manila University (cited in D. Singh, 2001) showed that IQ scores were virtually unrelated with job performance whereas, emotional quotient score accounted for 27% of job performance. Several studies revealed that, despite having high IQ, executives with low emotional intelligence failed in their jobs (for example, Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995, 1998; Weisinger, 1998; Cooper, 1997; Ryback, 1998).

A national survey of American employers found that six of seven desired traits for entry-level workers were non-academic (Goleman, 1998), and were related to the understanding and recognition of self and others' feelings and taking appropriate actions (Sims, 1998). Inevitably, these were components of emotional intelligence.

Seligman (1995) opined that new salesmen who were optimists sold 37 % more insurance in their first year than did pessimists; when the company hired individuals who scored high in optimism, but failed normal screening, they outsold the pessimists by 21 % in their first year and 57 % in the second year. Farnham (1996) also opined that optimistic sales persons sold 37% more insurance than their pessimistic peers.



Goleman (1995, 1998), however, argued that emotional intelligence itself was not a strong predictor of job performance, but it provides the bedrock for competences that were important to become successful. This view was supported by a number of authors (for example, Cavallo & Brienza, 2002).

In a study, data from more than 30 different behaviors from banking, mining, geology, sales, and health care industries documented that a number of emotional intelligence competences, qualities such as, achievement drive, developing others, adaptability, influence and self-confidence distinguished top performers from average ones (McClelland, 1998). Studies conducted in high-tech behaviors found that star performers differed from average performers in assessing their self-ability (Goleman, 1998). Boyatzis (1982), in another survey, showed that degree of self-confidence was higher in better achievers. These findings were also supported by a study conducted on 112 entry-level accountants (Saks, 1995) that found that just after ten months of joining, new recruits, with higher self-confidence, were rated higher by their supervisors. Positive attitude was also found to play a vital role in developing personal relationships with clients and made an individual, successful (Crant, 1995).

A survey was conducted among 63 managers and 192 subordinates to see whether self-awareness of managers would moderate relationship between aspects of emotional intelligence and transformational leadership behavior, and between transformational leadership behavior and

managerial performance (Sosik & Megerian, 1999). Results indicated a positive correlation between performance and self-awareness of the participants. Rosch and Pelletier (1984) reported that job stress influenced productivity. An analysis of job competencies in 286 behaviors worldwide indicated that 18 of the 21 competencies in their generic model for distinguishing better performers were based on emotional intelligence (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Dulewicz & Higgs (1998) found that emotional intelligence accounted for 36 % of the variance in behavioral advancement whereas IQ accounted for 27 %. This suggested that emotional intelligence contributed more than IQ in career advancement. A research on 250 Indian Executives also found the role of emotional intelligence in leadership effectiveness (Punia, 2003).

### **The Social Awareness Competence**

The Social Awareness cluster manifests in three competences. The Empathy competence enables individuals to read others' emotions through on-verbal cues, such as, facial expressions. The sensitivity to others' feelings is critical for superior job performance, as it helps to understand the motivational needs of others. The Empathy competence also enhances our capability to avoid stereotyping, which eventually leads to more openness to accept people, and thus, to work with them with more comfort (Steele, 1997).

Service orientation, another social awareness competence, is the ability to identify others' unstated needs and

concerns. This is especially important for the professionals who are in direct touch with the clients and customers. This, along with the empathic strategy distinguishes star sales performers from average ones (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). A study of an office supply and equipment vendor indicated that the successful sales executives were able to appreciate customers' viewpoints and market their products accordingly (McBane, 1995).

Organizational awareness is the ability to read the emotional experiences and political realities in groups. It is significantly helpful for networking and coalition building that allows individuals to wield influence. Insight into group social hierarchies requires Social Awareness on an organizational level.

### **The Relationship Management Competence**

The Relationship management set of competences includes essential Social Skills. Developing others' competence encourages individuals to understand others' developmental needs and augmenting their abilities. This competence is needed by any leader.

Influence competence is a vital requirement for all the star performers, which assist them to build persuasion strategies, including impression management, arguments or actions, and appeals to reason. At the same time, the Influence competence requires them to be genuine and put collective goals before their self-interests; otherwise what would manifest as effective persuasion becomes manipulation (Goleman 2001).

People with the Communication competence are effective in discussing listening actively, sharing information, and, fostering open communication. This competence builds on both managing one's own emotions and empathy. Research findings found that, managers and executives with this competence, better manage people (J. Walter Clarke Associates, cited in Goleman, 1998b).

Conflict Management competence is crucial to sense brewing resentment and disagreement among people and resolve the same through negotiation. Listening and empathy are crucial in this context.

Leadership competence builds on personal skills to inspire the followers to work in teams toward achieving common goals. The more positive the style of a leader, the more positive, helpful, and cooperative are those in the group (George & Bettenhausen, 1990). And the emotional tone set by a leader tends to ripple outward among the subordinates (Bachman, 1988).

Leaders must be able to recognize the need for change, challenge the status quo, and convince followers to accept the challenge for implementing the change. Thus, competence as a change catalyst is critical for a leader. A leader's competence of bringing change results into better performance by subordinates (House, 1988).

The Building Bonds competence is characterized by the ability for networking. Effective performers with this competence build close relationship with the key people, who may play pivotal role in achieving the target. Highly

effective managers are adept at cultivating these relationships, whereas less effective managers generally fail to build bonds (Kaplan, 1991).

The collaboration and teamwork competence is the eighth competence under relationship cluster. This competence is crucial for the success of today's managers, which aids in working with peers. The positive mood of a team leader at work promotes worker effectiveness and promotes retention (George & Bettenhausen, 1990). Positive emotions and harmony on a top-management team predict its effectiveness (Barsade & Gibson, 1998).

People often exhibit these competences in groupings, across clusters, which allow competences to support one another. Emotional competencies seem to operate most powerfully in synergistic groupings, with the evidence suggesting that mastery of a "critical mass" of competences is necessary for superior performance (Boyatzis, Goleman, & Rhee, 2000).

### **Performance and 'Social' Skill Component of Emotional Intelligence: Empirical Evidence**

Social skill components of emotional intelligence, such as, interpersonal skill, relationship management, etc., have been proved to predict success (Goleman, 1995, 1998; Brown, 1999; Sternberg, 1996; Dulewicz & Higgs, 1998). Social awareness played a key role in handling customers also. It was found that the better salespersons, with empathy, identified a client's or customer's even unstated needs and concerns and then matched them to products or

services (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Supportive data have been also found from various other researches on counselors, psychotherapists, flight attendants and (Spencer & Spencer, 1993) management executives (Lusch & Serpkenci, 1990; Boyatzis, 1982) which revealed that superior performers were likely to handle their occupational hazards by managing their emotional responses in a better way. Research showed that physicians who were better at recognizing emotions of patients were more successful (Friedman & DiMatteo, 1982). The importance of empathy for success in sales job was also proved in a study among large and small retailers (Pilling & Eroglu, 1994). A study on top 10 Indian companies documented that enhancement of emotional intelligence of the members generated more positive work culture in the behaviors (S. Singh, 2001). A study found that despite sound technical ability, executives failed due to their interpersonal flaw (Gibbs, 1995).

Williams and Sternberg (1988) found out that the members of the effective groups were more socially skilled. Another study found that senior executives were more likely to have an inflated view of their emotional intelligence competencies, and less congruence with the perception of others, compared to lower level employees (Sala, 2001).

Effective conflict management and negotiation skills were also proved to be important in maintaining effective business relationships. Drucker (1994), from another study, concluded that knowledge workers were successful only when they maintained proper coordination with others in the workgroups through social skill of emotional

intelligence. Other researchers also argued that members of high performance groups had greater harmonious relationship amongst themselves (Goleman, 1995; Willams & Sternberg, 1988; Druskat & Wolff, 2001).

### **Conclusion**

The concept of emotional intelligence is an evolving one and has found its origin in the cradles of a variety of disciplines. Primarily, the concept was derived from major research done in the area of neurosciences and later found its way into the literature of psychology. Though earlier it has been argued that, emotional intelligence is only a kind of personality trait, it has proved that, emotional intelligence needs to be classified as a concept with self and social competences, which need to be practiced, keeping various situational factors in mind. This inevitably indicates the significant role of emotional intelligence in job performance. The above-mentioned research-based studies provide valuable information towards proving the relationship between EI and job performance. Yet, one cannot deny in this context the significance of certain situational and organizational variables, which may play an important role in making a person star performer. Also, although numerous studies indicate that there is a relationship between EI and job performance, cognitive intelligence cannot be overlooked. In fact, it is believed that the higher the cognitive intelligence the smaller the impact of EI will be on a person's already superior job

performance. To summarize, emotional and cognitive intelligence compensate for each other in the context of job performance (Cote & Christopher, 2006).

In addition to this, one must also appreciate the fact that a person's grooming, childhood exposure, and other environmental and genetic factors may play a crucial role in determining job performance of an individual. A multiplicity of factors may be responsible for enhanced or subdued job performance. Further, a person's ability to manage both the task and relationship components at once may be determined by such factors, as position in the organizational hierarchy, the type of access given by higher authority to resources and general norms of empowerment and power distance prevalent within an organizational context.

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