



## Building an Emotionally Intelligent Work Team

It certainly is no secret that we need people with “smarts” to join and interact on our teams. As leaders, we have built-in attraction to people who can figure how to maximize performance. A complete picture of an employee’s intelligence is one of the things that we hope to see during hiring interviews, and it is the primary purpose of asking about academic performance.

Our experience at Learning Dynamics of seeing how managers deal with intellectual needs during interviews covers a wide spectrum.

One manager may tell us that it isn’t good to hire an employee who is “smarter” than they are. Some supervisors are threatened by employees with better educational experience and performance. But others welcome those candidates with open arms.

We know about a manager of quality control in the Commercial Lending department of a small community bank who needed to hire two new employees to minimize the stress on the manager. Her boss also reviewed the resumes and notes the manager took during the interviews. He selected those candidates he felt were best but agreed to defer to the manager’s decision. When she told her boss which candidates she wanted to hire, he was surprised that neither of her choices matched his. When he asked the manager why she chose those two, her answer surprised and impressed him. She explained that those two candidates were smarter than she is. She explained that their job was primarily problem solving. She felt certain that she could provide the technical training that each needed, but that their intuitive problem-solving skill couldn’t be trained. Both were hired and soon thrived in their positions.

There are a few pitfalls to avoid when focusing too much on intelligence. Sometimes leaders forget that success on the job is often social, not intellectual. Sometimes other employees complain that they can’t understand what the highly intelligent employees mean when they interact with them. Too often, the skill they lack is the first rule of communication: Connect with people where they are, and then you can move them forward.

### Emotional Intelligence:

A number of studies by Daniel Goleman and others have shown that focusing on intellect alone is not enough or not thorough. If there are elements of the job that require effective social skills, then those skills need to be taught and developed. The concept is called Emotional Intelligence (EI). One easy way to define EI is to answer four fundamental questions.

1. Do you know how you are feeling; can you identify your current emotions?
2. Can you manage those emotions?
3. Can you sense how others are feeling?
4. Can you use the information from the first three questions to establish and maintain effective work relationships?

So, we can see that this is a very different way to measure intelligence. In fact, we all have had experience with employees and leaders who possess high levels of EI. They can be seen establishing relationships that can provide information that they previously lacked. They are often effective negotiators and conflict managers. Their ability to fully engage others in the work flow is much more evidence of EI than traditional intelligence.

(OVER)

We know of a young new manager who was required to attend a production planning meeting every Friday morning. Typically, these meetings were difficult and feared, because most times somebody was singled out by the boss and criticized. Nobody ever knew whose turn it would be this week, and everyone hoped they'd be spared. The new manager felt the fear quickly, and she also noticed that there was a lack of sharing among the attendees. On more than one occasion, she saw one person in the hot seat for some error when others in the room who could have easily exonerate him remained silent. The new manager felt that this group was not producing their best effort. Clearly, the manager was lacking in the self-awareness component of EI and not recognizing the adverse reaction of her behavior on the group.

So, she began to bake. An accomplished baker, she began to bring baked goods to the meeting. In just a couple of weeks, the feelings in the meeting began to change. Each week was a different delight, and soon the meeting attendees began to look forward to the meeting. The impact was not lost on the boss either. She found it hard to be highly critical of someone while they're sharing a piece of cake. This enhanced her relationship aspect of EI.

So, is our new manager intelligent? Surely, she possessed the "academic" skills she needed to get the job. But her awareness of a difficult situation and the ability to try to do something about it separated her from the others. The importance of possessing strong Emotional Intelligence is critically important for all managers.

