

# Manage with emotional intelligence

## What is emotional intelligence (EI)?

Emotional intelligence can be described as:

- Connecting with others or 'empathy' - the ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people and deal with their emotional responses appropriately.
- Knowing and controlling your own emotions and moods.
- Using feelings to get more positive outcomes in relationships with others.
- Coping better with frustration, controlling outbursts and getting along with others.
- Having a good idea of how our feelings and emotions are impacting on others
- Choosing how we think, feel and act (rather than being flooded by our feelings).
- Being able to control or redirect disruptive, damaging or impulsive urges.
- Pursuing goals with energy and persistence and applying ourselves to a task with focus.
- Managing relationships, building networks and establishing rapport.

## Four dimensions of EI

1. **Self-awareness:** Being fully mindful of what I feel in the moment and using that to guide how I choose to behave or respond. If I'm not in touch with my own feelings, I won't be good at controlling them - or reading other people's.
2. **Self-management:** How well I can control or regulate my emotions to keep them in balance - especially negatives ones. If I'm out of touch with what I feel, I'm at the whim of my feelings - and my feelings control me - especially powerful ones like anger, frustration or panic.
3. **Social awareness:** Includes the most powerful of emotionally intelligent management practices: empathy - the ability to read how others are feeling, step into their perspective and relate to others - without allowing yourself to be hijacked by someone else's feelings.
4. **Relationship management:** Building enduring, positive relationships and using the other EI dimensions to persuade, lead, negotiate, collaborate and network.

These dimensions are closely tied together. For example: emotionally intelligent managers monitor their moods with self-awareness, control them with self-management, understand the impact they have through empathy and act in ways that resonate well with others' moods through relationship management.

The practice of EI at work provides managers with a whole new set of tools and techniques for motivating staff, keeping themselves positive under pressure and building a better and more productive work climate for your business!



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## Why is emotional intelligence important to your business?

The cost of lack of emotional intelligence is huge in terms of staff turnover, low work output, stress, mistakes and poor customer service - but they often go unnoticed. The basic business case for EI is simple. Good moods equal good work. Bad moods are bad for business. As a manager, you exert a powerful emotional pull on the feelings of your people:

- Your moods can deeply influence the way other people feel about work, the workplace climate and ultimately performance and productivity.
- When leaders manage emotions positively, they inspire extra effort and focus. They resonate and bring out the best in others.
- The reverse applies too. Managers who use emotions negatively cause dissatisfaction, demoralise and sap the spirit of their staff.

A landmark leadership survey Daniel Goleman cites in *Working with Emotional Intelligence* (1998, pp. 40-41) reveals seven main reasons why leaders fail. All seven connect directly with the key EI dimensions:

1. **Rigidity:** Leaders couldn't or wouldn't adapt their leadership style to different situations.
2. **Relationships:** Being too harsh, insensitive, critical or demanding - alienating others.
3. **Self-control:** Leaders who couldn't control angry outbursts, prone to moodiness, tantrums or who handled pressure poorly.
4. **Self-responsibility:** Leaders who reacted to failure/criticism by denying, covering-up, or passing the blame onto others.
5. **Integrity:** Leaders not being seen as authentic or trustworthy (ie. saying what they mean and doing what they say).
6. **Social skills:** Leaders lacking in empathy and sensitivity, being abrasive, arrogant, intimidating or coercive towards staff.
7. **Building bonds:** Leaders neglecting to build strong teams or networks of cooperative, mutually supportive relationships.

Here are some typical work situations where you can exercise your EI faculties to get better outcomes:

1. Coping with difficult customers/colleagues.
2. Handling pressure situations or responding positively to crises.
3. Dealing with change resistance and anxiety.
4. Managing poor performance or discipline.
5. Confronting dysfunctional work behaviour.
6. Influencing or negotiating with others.
7. Building cohesive, high-spirited teams.
8. Networking and selling your business.

## Emotional intelligence and leadership

A growing body of research on the human brain proves managers act as emotional amplifiers for the people around them. As Daniel Goleman (2002) says: 'all eyes turn to the leader for emotional guidance' - especially in times of pressure or stress.



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The way you see or feel about things has special weight because you are the manager and everyone watches what you say and do (even if you sometimes think they ignore you).

You guide feelings and have emotional impacts on the workplace in many ways. For example:

1. Providing positive appreciation or negative criticism.
2. Modelling positive principles and a can-do attitude or reinforcing negative attitudes.
3. Inspiring people to follow a shared vision or leaving them directionless.
4. Giving people a sense of meaning and confidence in their work or detracting from it.
5. Encouraging innovation and unleashing creativity or stemming it.
6. Being moody, withdrawn, insensitive or emotionally open and connective.

If a manager's mood sways the feelings of others and has a big impact on workplace performance, then being able to manage your moods - remaining positive, balanced and supportive - is a productivity necessity.

Resonant leadership is when:

1. You tune in to the feelings of staff - read their emotions, empathise with them and sometimes voice them on their behalf.
2. Our emotional state is picked up by others and creates the same feelings in them - they resonate with us. This too, is a biological process called 'entrainment'.
3. People feel acknowledged, understood, cared for - which can help them regain energy and focus, get themselves out of the doldrums and make work more meaningful.

Dissonant leadership is when managers are 'out of touch' with the feelings of their people. Lacking empathy, they act in ways that set off negative emotional chain-reactions in others:

1. In dissonant workplaces there is excessive anger, fear, high anxiety or sullen silence. Things just feel continually 'off-key' - and there's little laughing or fun.
2. Dissonant managers create toxic climates. Their conversations are laced with cynical contempt, sarcasm, put-downs, personal attacks and other kinds of aggressive behaviour that creates distress.
3. Dissonant managers come in many guises - from dictators, bullies, coercers and polite manipulators to those who are oblivious or just don't care about how people feel - but they all have some things in common: they lack empathy; they lack a sense of how they come across and impact on others; and they have touchy, defensive triggers.

## How to develop emotional intelligence

Emotions may seem trivial from a tough business viewpoint but they have a real impact on getting work done. Goleman (2002) cites Yale University findings that:

1. 'Emotions may spread like viruses' amongst working groups. Buoyant moods boost performance.
2. But when people feel down, concentration lapses, mistakes increase and work is likely to be less productive than when they feel good and work at their best.
3. Managers who come to work constantly cranky or get exasperated at the drop of a hat can create a toxic climate if this continues over time.



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Mood management means controlling how you express emotions. Here are some critical mood management practices to think about:

- 1. Name your feelings:** Emotionally intelligent managers in touch with their feelings can name them. They know the triggers that activate them, they know the thoughts that fuel them - and through this process of naming feelings, they can control them.
- 2. Minimise emotional hijacks:** Managers unaware of their own emotions can't control their feelings - their feelings control them. This is an 'emotional hijack' - getting swept away by anger or paralysed with panic. You can't stop these brain-driven feelings but you can minimise their disruptiveness.
- 3. Thought-changing:** Thoughts fuel feelings - so one effective technique is to change the thoughts that give rise to negative feelings.
- 4. Expressing feelings:** One of the hardest tasks for many managers is being open and honest with yourself and others about what you feel. People look to their leaders to set the emotional tone by talking about feelings. As a leader, your feelings are important. People want to know what they are.
- 5. Learn optimism:** If your moods set the emotional work tone, productivity will be better if you're 'up' rather than 'down'. This means replacing 'learned pessimism' with learned optimism. Notice the word 'learned' - the way you feel is conditioned behaviour, and you can learn to change or moderate the way you manage your feelings - around deadlines, performance pressure, setbacks, failures, scarcity, challenges, etc.
- 6. Exercise empathy:** Empathy is not about being nice to others. It's about being able to see where someone else is coming from (even if you don't agree with it). Empathy makes practical business sense. People can't focus and do good work if they're distracted by strong emotions. Leaders lacking in empathy often act in ways that further antagonise or upset people and create more dissonance.

## Further information

The following fact sheet provides further information on these issues:

- Leadership – introduction