

Emotional Intelligence – The Key to Your Success ?

How are you feeling now ? I mean right now as you are reading this.

“OK. Fine. Yeah, I’m all right.”

Perhaps you don’t want me to ask. None of my business, right ? You feel how you feel and that’s it !

Well, I want to talk about your emotions – and I want to take that even further and explore your Emotional Intelligence.

Let’s go a little further into how you feel at the moment. At any one moment - right now as you’re reading this or when you’re in a board meeting or standing in the supermarket queue - you will be feeling and experiencing emotions. Life is an ‘emotional experience’ for the human species; we are always subjected to the impact of our emotions. Every aspect of our behaviours is to a greater or lesser degree influenced by our emotions. The emotions we feel will impact significantly at certain moments:

“I want that report NOW. Don’t you know who’s in charge here ?!”

Yes, that would impact – on you and the other person.

Maybe the negative emotions are less significant at other times. What about when something small but positive happens ? There may be a physical reaction or there may not but you will experience the emotion of that moment.

But how aware are you of your emotions – when you are experiencing them?

Right now you could be experiencing ...oh, any one of the emotions of which the English language has around 600 words to identify: happy, sad, bored, intrigued, open, frustrated, anxious, interested, pressured, excited, annoyed...

Or it may be a combination of those emotions as one thought moves to become another and another emotion attaches to that thought or idea. How you deal with that emotion and, equally, how you deal with and influence the emotions of others, will be a major contributor to your success.

Ok, I know, you’ve got an MBA, probably from one of the top ten universities in the world, you can calculate reverse depreciation interest and write the terms of a multimillion dollar merger and acquisition deal between the morning management briefing and lunch (if you ever take lunch).

But how’s your Emotional Intelligence and how does that impact on your effectiveness as a leader?

There was a time when managers pushed the line “Don’t bring your emotions to work, No place for emotions here. Keep them at home.” Some ‘bosses’ still follow this line, usually because of their own inability to manage the emotions of others and, likely, their own.

But of course it is impossible to keep your emotions locked up in a cupboard at home. And if you’re still stuck in the idea that emotions can be left at home, what about when you lock in a major deal for the company, or when one of your most successful managers suddenly resigns to work for the opposition. Or when the board demand an unachievable increase in performance levels across all levels of operation.

Of course there are emotions when these things happen.

And the reason for that is we are living our lives reacting to ‘emotional experience’. Our behaviours as individuals are likely to be ‘programmed’ to follow one of two sequences:

1. Event_____thought _____ emotion _____response
2. Event_____memory of similar event _____ emotion____response

Following on from the response there will be more emotions.

What about the airline pilot dubbed the ‘Hero of the Hudson’ for his amazing, cool-under-pressure landing of a passenger aircraft on the Hudson River in New York. No emotions ?

Captain ‘Sully’ Sullenberg who quite rightly captured world attention for the successful landing on a river - when the plane he was flying was designed to land on a large, and very solid, runway – recounted later that as he approached the landing he felt “sick to the stomach.”

This physiological response was related to his emotional state. Even though he had years of solid flying experience and he extensively trained in emergency procedures, he had ‘feelings’ at that moment of peak pressure.

So if we’ve identified that we can’t leave emotions at home - well, the more effective leaders have – what was the catalyst for the change in thinking around emotions and the workplace?

It began in the late 1980’s two academics, both professors of psychology at different universities in the US, Peter Salovey (of Harvard University) and John Mayer (of Stanford University) postulated that there was something else contributing to the success of leaders, and indeed, the success of people generally, other than the previously accepted indicator, IQ. Indeed, it became apparent through their studies that IQ alone was not a predictor of success in life.

These two academics who pioneered this new way of thinking about success first called the attributes which successful people has as being ‘emotional competencies’. They suggested that some people have levels of skills which were related to the connection between emotions



and their behaviours which other people did not seem to display.