

Is EQ 4U?

The Hard Case for Soft Skills

Okay, the title of this article is a bit cryptic, but EQ doesn't have to be. Like any other, skill EQ (a.k.a. emotional intelligence) can be qualified, measured and developed. Why bother? We are all searching for ways to increase customer loyalty, attract better talent, and improve employee retention. At the same time, our employees are expected to do more with fewer organizational resources. EQ provides the essential ingredients for meeting these challenges and more.

Researchers have already made the hard case for soft skills. In general, the overwhelming research in the area of EQ supports links between emotional competencies and improvements in everything from employee engagement, collaboration and retention to increases in production, innovation and profitability. One study in particular examined competency models for 181 positions across 121 companies and organizations worldwide and found that 67% of all skills deemed essential for effective performance were emotional competencies.¹ According to the same study, at the top executive levels, close to 90% of leadership success is attributable to emotional intelligence.

Not surprisingly, astute business leaders are catching on and applying emotional intelligence in the workplace. And not a moment too soon, considering our modern business environment in which more and more logical, linear skills are being either replaced with software or contracted overseas for a fraction of the cost. As we move from the Information Age into the Conceptual Age, skills of the past are replaced with the skills of the future. Emergent human relation practices—conceptual interpretation, relationships building, pattern recognition, etc—will be the new competitive edge. Without question, emotional competence will become only more essential to great leadership, organizational competitiveness and sustainability.

Now that we know EQ is important, how do we get it? Emotional intelligence starts with individual self-awareness. A number of accurate self-assessment tools exist to help, including EQ in Action, which measures one's ability to reflect, empathize and self-regulate—all key components to high EQ. From there, emotional intelligence can be developed with exercises, reflection and practice. In doing this we can change our leadership behaviors to empower the same behaviours and skills in those around us. Come to think of it, it might be time to stop calling EQ a soft skill.

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¹ Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*