

Emotional Technologies

In the wake of new research, plenty of people have embraced the notion that emotional smarts are every bit as critical as IQ. Now, with business and industry scrambling to build emotional intelligence into their infrastructures, more attention is being paid to how “EQ” can be achieved – at both the individual and team level.

By PILAR GERASIMO

For a long time, conventional wisdom had it that when we headed to work, we should leave our emotions at home. Suddenly though, many businesses are regarding human emotion with renewed interest and respect.

Business gurus are telling Fortune 500 companies that it's their people's passion, empathy and integrity, even more than their physical technology or their supply chain, that have the power to separate them from the competition. The business community is not merely reading but touting books that suggest that understanding and mastering our personal and interpersonal lives is every bit as important as mastering our outward technical skills.

But how do we do that? Upgrading a computer hard drive or getting a faster Internet connection is one thing, but when it comes to upgrading our own emotional technology – as individuals and as teams – what do we need to know? And what's the professional payoff? To get some answers, ASID ICON read up on the subject and asked some experts, including a best-selling author and a professional emotional-mastery seminar facilitator, to share their insights.

From the American Heritage Dictionary ...

tech·nol·o·gy (tĕk-nŏl'ē-jē) *n., pl. -gies.*

- 1. a.** The application of science, esp. to industrial or commercial objectives. **b.** The entire body of methods and materials used to achieve such objectives. **2. *Anthropol.*** The body of knowledge available to a civilization that is of use in fashioning implements, practicing manual arts and skills, and extracting or collecting materials.
[Gk. *tekhnē*, skill + -LOGY].

Most dictionary definitions of “technology” identify it as a body of knowledge, methods and/or materials that can be wielded to advance certain objectives – typically industrial, commercial or societal. Although the word is customarily used to describe the evolution of scientific or technical know-how, it serves equally well to describe the evolution and application of emotional know-how. It applies particularly well to the growing body of emotional knowledge and methods that are currently being evolved to serve the objectives of business.

If you doubt that the emotional realm has much to do with the world of commerce, just probe the *Harvard Business Review*. Scan a few business magazines, or read an interview with a popular business authority like Tom Peters, Peter Drucker, Steven Covey or Peter Senge. What you'll find is that explicit discussions of emotion-centric topics – including emotional intelligence, emotional competence, emotional energy and emotional dynamics of all kinds – are a lot more common in business dialogue than they were 10 years ago.

The reason? A large body of new, highly regarded research into how humans think, function and behave indicates that emotional intelligence – as opposed to IQ or education or even raw talent – may be the single most important factor in individual success and, at a group level, one of the most significant predictors of business success.

As a result, the study and stewardship of emotion has become an applied science. Many businesses are now doing emotional analyses of new hires, exploring the emotional dynamics of existing employees – even entire functional teams – and using the information to make hiring, promotion, management and organizational development decisions. ⇨



Illustrations by Andy Powell



Emotional Know-How

One of the leading experts on the scientific exploration of emotion — and one of the first to convincingly demonstrate the importance emotional intelligence plays in individual and group success — is psychologist and best-selling author Daniel Goleman.

Goleman, who holds a Ph.D. in personality and development from Harvard, has written several books on the topic of emotional intelligence, including *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* (Bantam, 1995), a work that quickly became a global bestseller and launched the concept of emotional intelligence into popular culture. This book also paved the way for Goleman's most recent work, *Working With Emotional Intelligence* (Bantam, 1998), which explores the impact of EQ in a professional context. Both books trade on massive amounts of scientific data — including neurobiological, behavioral and psychological studies as well as copious field research — on the nature of human emotion.

Today Goleman consults internationally and lectures on emotional intelligence to business and professional groups. He is also co-chair of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations, a group of researchers who hail from business schools, the federal government and industry.

The net conclusions of the compiled research, says Goleman, are clear: "For jobs of all kinds, emotional intelligence is twice as important an ingredient of outstanding performance as cognitive ability and technical skill combined. And the higher you go in the organization, the more important these qualities are for success. When it comes to leadership, they are almost everything."

Goleman points out that emotional intelligence can be even more important in intimate organizations, like small and mid-size design firms. "Smaller firms are a little like extended families. It is harder to hide a problem, and a ripple in one area between two people will quickly be felt elsewhere," he explains. "Emotions are contagious, and in a smaller business, it's easy for one conflict or a single troubled relationship to poison the atmosphere and effective-

ness of an entire organization."

If you've worked a job or two, you probably already know this from direct experience. You've probably seen the impact that a domineering boss or a manipulative, prima-donna designer can have on a project. Perhaps you've noticed that, as a rule, the most pressing issues confronting your own firm have less to do with strategic planning than they do with faulty communication, passive-aggressive behavior and personality conflicts. But perhaps you didn't realize that there is a very real and direct correlation between individuals' emotional intelligence and their ability to do their jobs.

Low emotional intelligence can actually hamper a person's ability to perceive and consider all kinds of information, including how they and other people are feeling, what the underlying source of a conflict might be, and so forth. If that information never makes it in to be processed by the intellect, it can cause an otherwise brilliant, talented person to make some very bad, unproductive — or even destructive — decisions. It can also make them unpleasant to be around, and in a work world that hinges on effective teaming, it's easy to see how that shortcoming could severely limit an individual's — and ultimately a team's — prospects for overall success.

Inside EQ

So what is "emotional intelligence?" While there are virtually as many definitions as there are books on the topic (which is to say, plenty), Goleman describes it simply as "the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships." In *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, he outlines five basic areas of personal and social competence that constitute the practical expressions of emotional intelligence:

Personal Competence

These competencies determine how we manage ourselves.

1. **Self-awareness** — knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions
2. **Self-regulation** — managing one's internal states, impulses and resources
3. **Motivation** — emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals

These competencies determine how we handle relationships.

4. **Empathy** — awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns
5. **Social skills** — adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others

In Goleman's model, each area of competence is composed of specific sensibilities and skill sets. For example, "self-awareness" involves all the of the following:

- **Emotional awareness** — recognizing one's emotions and their effects
- **Accurate self-assessment** — knowing one's strengths and limits
- **Self-confidence** — a strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities

Developing these skills, according to Goleman, is usually a matter of recognizing one's current strengths and weaknesses, identifying high-priority areas for improvement, and committing to a defined plan of action toward bolstering necessary skills and sensibilities. There are several EQ testing instruments available. There are also various methodologies or "technologies" one can adopt in developing better emotional skills (see *Resources* for more information on these topics). However, experts are quick to point out that many of these methods are poorly devised and/or ill-constructed, and as a result, prove largely ineffective.

In *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, Goleman devotes an entire section to providing guidelines for designing and evaluating group training programs. At the individual level, he suggests that a 360-degree personal inventory — a comprehensive emotional and social evaluation administered and interpreted by a professional — can be invaluable. He also recommends working with a qualified personal coach who can help you define and actively pursue specific emotional-intelligence goals. "You can raise your consciousness by reading books and doing written exercises," says Goleman, "but it's only through practice that new emotional habits and skills become second nature."

In Search of New Models

In her earlier life, before she began teaching workshops and developed a consulting practice, Cat Thompson was a producer and location manager for film and television. When the grueling schedules and high-tension environment of on-location life eventually compromised her physical and emotional health, she knew she had to make a change.

Experience and observation had convinced Thompson that the success or failure of most professional projects hinges on emotional dynamics. Having studied holistic topics informally for several years, she decided to complete more advanced curricula focused specifically on emotion. This included a variety of philosophical and practical disciplines, including Blueprint Energetics™, Conscious Language and Chinese Five-Element theory. In 1995, Thompson began teaching and consulting from her own conceptual model.

Since then, Thompson has facilitated a wide variety of seminars on individual and group emotional dynamics, including a series of week-long "emotional-mastery" retreats in Mexico. We interviewed Thompson there, via an e-mail chat with her office in Bacalar, where she was completing work on *Heaven On Earth*, her book about the nature of the emotional body.

ICON: What do you see as some of the fundamental misunderstandings regarding emotion in our society? How are people's notions about emotion misguided?

Cat: To begin with, we vastly underestimate the extent to which emotions run virtually everything — every situation, every business deal, every conflict. One of our most misguided beliefs has been that emotions are "negative" and must be hidden in order for us to be taken seriously or be

regarded professionally. There is also an underlying assumption in our culture that if you understand your emotions, you don't have to feel them, and that is simply not true. Most of us believe that acting out any strong emotion is childish, yet the passive-aggressive model we currently use is much more destructive and damaging. And interestingly, acting as though emotion is childish is actually a lot of what keeps us childish. To get smart about our feelings, we must first get responsible about feeling and evolving them. We have to develop new ways of expressing our feelings — without making others responsible or making them part of our expression.

ICON: Describe what you see as the emotional landscape in most workplaces.

Cat: I see many workplaces as environments of covert resentment. People think of work as a place where you're supposed to keep all your "negative" feelings to yourself. Because there are few work models in place that really encourage evolution through expression, a lot of emotions are held down at work. They don't go away though; instead, they begin to move covertly. Covert emotion cannot evolve, so it continually creates patterns of blame, resentment, control issues, withholding, etc.

There is an inherent belief system in our culture that someone can "make you feel" one way or another. As long as we can blame someone for our feelings, we never responsibly evolve those feelings. Instead we start to shut down.

The other thing is, when we are unable to passionately commit to our work, we inevitably direct our passion in other ways. Work relationships become highly charged and start feeding off all the unexpressed emotion.

Dramas get created to absorb all the undirected passion, and over time, the majority of people's passionate energy is going into interpersonal crisis dramas and undermining the very goals they may think they are committed to.

Without a realistic work model that includes the ability to express anger, fear and anguish, people are forced to act these things out in covert ways. The result is usually a lot more collateral damage that requires more time and resources to repair.

ICON: How do you think that landscape is changing?

Cat: People are realizing that their emotional energy is a valuable commodity, and they're no longer as willing to simply exchange it for a paycheck. We're moving out of the old parent-child model of relationships — "I will take care of you in exchange for control over your life in my workplace/home/relationship" — and entering a more egalitarian age of partnership. But on some level, we are instinctively aware that we must have all of our resources available in order to be true partners. So businesses that require people to check their emotions at the door will mostly draw people who are looking for a victim-blame paradigm, and they'll have trouble attracting more self-motivated and capable people. ↩



ICON: How do you see emotional work and organizational success as linked?

Cat: Passion is essential – to the health of an individual, a project or a business. Organizations want passion. They need it. But passion cannot be faked, bought or coerced. It is either present or not. And passion is the domain of emotion. No emotion, no passion, no results.

Many people come to their jobs filled with passion, but lose it as emotional issues arise and go unresolved, and they discover they are required to hold their emotional selves separate from the workplace in order to do their job. As time goes by, these unresolved issues bleed off more and more of a person's passion, and eventually the person finds his or her job has become flat, boring, hard, unfulfilling, etc. To counter that, we must create new work models based on the shared knowledge that *feelings are not wrong or bad*, and then cultivate realistic behaviors that evolve

feelings, and their associated insights, to a higher place. This is also an area that cannot be forced or faked. The current models show us either stuffing our feelings or blaming someone else for them. Both of these models are doomed to failure. For organizations to succeed, they are going to have to get smarter about emotional expression and encourage their people to do the same.

ICON: What can workplaces do to encourage healthy emotional dynamics?

Cat: First, workplaces need to honestly assess where their energy is going. If the majority is in interpersonal crisis dramas or boredom, they need to invest in changing the emotional and social norms of the organization. Companies can generally change most effectively by educating executives and team leaders first and then providing support for other employees. No worker is going to learn about emotional passion, cultivate it and then just hand it over to the company

– the company has to be willing to invest time and energy in changing its beliefs and in creating a flexible, supportive environment that enables their workers to change. The rules have to be the same for everyone.

ICON: Any last thoughts about emotion and the evolving world of work?

Cat: The businesses that thrive in the next decade will be those who invest in their workers first. Providing real alternatives takes courage, and that means that employers must be willing to first change their own beliefs about what is possible. It's a big challenge, but the payoff is worth it. When people are given permission to feel strongly and to be imaginative in directing their feeling, the passion they generate can achieve virtually any goal. ○

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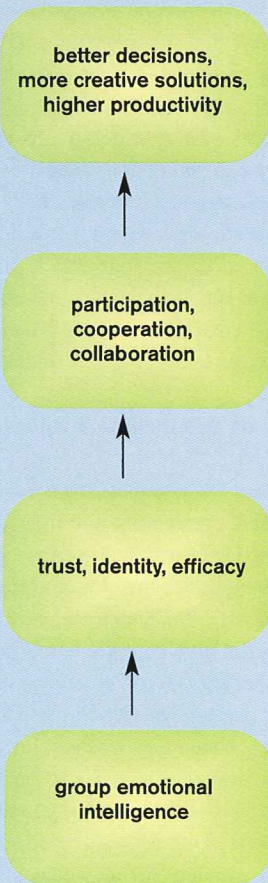
A Model of Team Effectiveness

Excerpted from the article "Building the Emotional Intelligence of Groups," by Vanessa Urch Druskat and Steven B. Wolff (Harvard Business Review, March 2001).

Study after study has shown that teams are more creative and productive when they can achieve high levels of participation, cooperation and collaboration among members. But interactive behaviors like these aren't easy to legislate. Our work shows that three basic conditions need to be present before such behaviors can occur: mutual trust among members, a sense of group identity (a feeling among members that they belong to a unique and worthwhile group), and a sense of group efficacy (the belief that the team can perform well and that group members are more effective working together than apart).

At the heart of these three conditions are emotions. Trust, a sense of identity and a feeling of efficacy arise in environments where emotion is well handled, so groups stand to benefit by building their emotional intelligence.

Group emotional intelligence isn't a question of dealing with a necessary evil – catching emotions as they bubble up and promptly suppressing them. Far from it. It's about bringing emotions deliberately to the surface and understanding how they affect the team's work. It's also about behaving in ways that build relationships both inside and outside the team and that strengthen the team's ability to face challenges. Emotional intelligence means exploring, embracing, and ultimately relying on emotion in work that is, at the end of the day, deeply human.



Resources

Books

- *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ* by Daniel Goleman (Bantam, 1995).
- *Working With Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman (Bantam, 1998).
- *Raising Your Emotional Intelligence: A Practical Guide* by Jeanne Segal (Henry Holt, 1997).

Web

- www.eiconsortium.org
Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations
Compiled research findings, reports and publications from Daniel Goleman and other members of the consortium.
- www.hbsp.harvard.edu
Harvard Business School Publishing
Articles, essays and book reviews from the Harvard Business Review.
- www.eisglobal.com
HayGroup/Emotional Intelligence Services
Emotional intelligence information, resources and tools based on work by Daniel Goleman and others.