

Emotional Intelligence is Not an Oxymoron

Do you find you have employees who possess an uncanny ability to know exactly the right thing to say at exactly the right time? Do you have a salesperson who can sense what is most important to the customers and is able to develop a trusting relationship with them?

Do you have a customer service representative who excels when it comes to calming an angry customer and guides the individual to being more reasonable about his/her problem with your product or service?

What about your upper management? Do you have a technically savvy person who can't handle stress? Or do you have executives in your company who excel at their work but just do not get along well with people? How is it you think you have hired the perfect employee only to have the person quit right after you have trained him/her?

If you are a small business owner you probably have come across these exact situations. What may be missing, however, is a key component, emotional intelligence (EI).

In this article, the first in a series, we will explore emotional intelligence and how to promote it in the workplace. We use the questions framed in a technical report entitled *Bringing Emotional Intelligence to the Workplace* (Cherniss, Goleman, et al, 1998

Understanding the importance of emotional intelligence requires starting with a definition. According to AllPsy.com: "EI is the awareness of and ability to manage one's emotions in a healthy and productive manner." (2009)

Daniel Goleman's book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, describes the Emotional Competence Framework as Self-Awareness, Social Awareness, Self Management, and Social Skills. This first article will contain information on Self-Awareness.

Dr. Dianne Hill, Associate Professor of Management and former Associate Dean and MBA Director at St. Edward's University in Austin, expands on self-awareness: "If a person can understand the impact that his/her emotions have on other people, the person will have a chance of influencing behavior in another person. We cannot CONTROL another person, but by managing our emotions, we can influence another's behavior. Self-awareness is the cornerstone of emotional intelligence."

The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations (eiconsortium.com) offers ways to identify people with self-awareness by identifying the supporting traits for emotional awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence.

People with emotional awareness know which emotions they are feeling or experiencing and why; they realize the links between their feelings and what they think, do, and say; recognize how their feelings affect their performance; and have a guiding awareness of their values and goals.

Also important to an accurate self-assessment is the ability to know one's strengths and limits. People possessing this trait are also reflective and learn from experience. They are open to candid feedback, new perspectives, continuous learning, and self-development. They are also able to show a sense of humor and perspective about themselves.

Sureness about one's self-worth and capabilities defines the third component of being self-aware, self-confidence. People with this competence present themselves with self-assurance and can voice views that are unpopular and go out on a limb for what is right. They are decisive. They are able to make sound decisions despite uncertainties and pressures around them.

Recommendation to small businesspeople: after you have read this article and while you await the next one, explore which traits your current employees possess with regard to self-awareness, and remember the quote from Hill: "by managing our emotions, we can influence another's behavior."

Additional resources are available for this article and the others in this series. Contact the ASU-SBDC.

"Business Tips" was written by Ms. Peggy Hodges, Business Development Specialist and Certified Business Advisor II of Angelo State University's Small Business Development Center. For more information on the topic of this article or the services of the ASU • SBDC, contact her at Peggy.Hodges@angelo.edu.