

Managing with emotional intelligence

To be a good manager you need to be organized, highly efficient, an on-the-spot decision maker, and a creative thinker. But to be a *great* manager you need all of that, and a fine sense of **emotional intelligence**



(EQ). What is emotional intelligence, you might ask? It is an increasingly used term that refers to a set of skills that reside in the realm of feelings. Emotional intelligence is often broken down into a few areas that interact with each other to form a whole:

Perceiving emotions. This is the ability to read and understand the emotions of other people as well as your own.

Using emotions. This means having a facility with emotions that allows you to harness them into productive engines - emotions are there for a reason and learning to listen to them can help with problem solving and decision making.

Understanding emotional sources. This means you understand that there are lots of underlying causes of emotions, and they aren't necessarily obvious. For example, if someone appears rude to you, and you're tapped into this aspect of EQ, you're able to acknowledge that it may or may not have anything to do with you; they could be having a bad day.

Managing emotions. Emotions are a part of every person's life, and the ability to integrate them is important to maintaining emotional health. Managing emotions means not allowing them to overwhelm you, while staying attentive to what they are trying to say, and eventually dealing with what is causing them.

Reading this, you can probably begin to get an idea of why emotional intelligence is so important for managers. Managing is as much about being conscious of your employees' personal and interpersonal well-being as it is about taking care of organizational tasks and structures. Being compassionate and empathic goes a long way to help a team and an organization to run smoothly.

Thankfully, EQ is something that it is very possible to improve and strengthen. Here are some ways to become more aware of your team's emotional well-being:

- Pay attention to all members of your team. If someone seems angry, constantly frustrated, or consistently stuck in a low mood, let them know you're there for them and willing to listen.
- Thank your team for their hard work and acknowledge their strengths and successes.
- Track your own feelings, especially negative ones. Becoming more aware of your emotions will strengthen your ability to manage them. For example, if you are feeling overly stressed, it is important not to take this out on your team, and increased emotional awareness will greatly reduce the likelihood of this.
- Demonstrate empathy: even if you don't feel the same way as someone else, you have probably experienced a similar emotional state, use this experience to try to understand where they're coming from, even if you don't agree.
- Get outside help: talking with a mentor, life coach or counsellor can greatly increase your ability to perceive and manage your emotions.

Remember, emotional intelligence is never about suppressing or ignoring emotions, but in fact about integrating them gracefully into all that you do. This means it's integral to successful leadership to learn to understand and express your emotions constructively. This can set a great example and even be a source of inspiration for your whole team.