

Success in today's workplace requires supervisors and employees alike to be flexible and able to manage change effectively. A necessary part of being adaptable is the ability to interact with people productively, that is, in ways which get things done and maintain a positive environment. An essential component of this ability is described as "Emotional Intelligence".

This is the first of a three-part series in which The Successful Supervisor will provide information and tips on being emotionally intelligent at work. The focus this month is defining emotional intelligence. The ideas are adapted from the book Primal Leadership by Dr. Richard Boyatzis and "Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace", a workshop developed by Cliff Cohen, EAP Clinical Director.

We are interested in your feedback. Email your questions and comments to the EAP at askeap@eapsolutions.com

"I've been a supervisor for years. My staff works hard and usually meets their goals, but there are times when things don't go well. I'm getting feedback that I'm frustrated a lot and it's having an impact. The group is pretty negative. I'm just human like everyone else. What's the big deal?"

The work may get done, but at what cost? Employee retention and engagement require paying attention to "how" the work gets done. The 'big deal' is that the supervisor is key to success.

The brain is a seat of both our practical intelligence ("IQ") and our Emotional Intelligence ("EI"), which includes creativity, leadership, and intuition. Behaving in an emotionally intelligent way enables us to achieve desired outcomes in highly charged emotional situations (like ongoing frustration). Learning about Emotional Intelligence may help you identify strengths and what is needed to successfully resolve the challenges facing you as a supervisor.

Emotional Intelligence includes the ability to:

- Accurately perceive, appraise and express emotions, including anger
- Understand emotions and what they tell us
- Delay immediate gratification
- Have resilience to cope with high levels of stress and
- Correctly judge when and with whom to share personal thoughts (Cliff Cohen workshop).

Dr. Boyatzis groups these abilities into four clusters. The first two are presented this month.

- (1) The Self-Awareness Cluster includes:
 - Recognizing our emotions and their effects
 - Knowing one's strengths and limits and
 - Having a strong sense of one's worth and capabilities
- (2) The Self-Management Cluster includes:
 - Flexibility in dealing with changing situations or obstacles
 - Inhibiting emotions in the service of the group or organizational norms

- A positive view of life
- Being proactive
- Striving to do better and
- Integrity or consistency with one's values, emotions, and behavior.

Let's look at how these abilities relate to the supervisor situation presented here, where frustration and a negative team are identified.

- You, the supervisor, need to recognize that showing personal frustration is making things worse. Part of the job of a successful supervisor is to create healthy boundaries around personal challenges in the workplace. E.I. abilities: "Recognizing our emotions" and "Inhibiting emotions in the service of the group or organizational norms".
- Frustration can come from many sources. A key step to turning this situation around is to carefully examine what is contributing to the frustration and then develop a plan of action to deal with it more effectively. E.I. abilities: "Having a strong sense of one's worth and capacity" to deal with the issues.
- Part of the process will be to identify personal "strengths and limits" and how they relate to being frustrated. The goal here is to use your strengths to problem solve, while being respectful of your limits. Limits don't diminish one's worth to the organization; acting on your emotions may.
- A next step is to "be proactive" in dealing with the sources of frustration. That's what the plan of action is for...to enable the supervisor to "manage with integrity", which includes actively addressing real concerns. Act when action is required.

Ultimately, being Emotionally Intelligent at work is about consciously using all of the skills and talents each of us has to a) manage ourselves, b) manage those we supervise and c) achieve workplace objectives. Choosing well what we say, what we do, and how we communicate with others is the goal, especially in challenging times. Tune in next month for more information.