

Emotional Intelligence is Important in Determining Leadership Success

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Academic Physician and Scientist is sent to all faculty, residents, and medical students in US medical schools. These are, arguably, among the most intelligent people in our society. The vast majority of them will perform well as individual practitioners and independent investigators. A small percentage of them will go on to positions as leaders of clinical and basic science programs and departments, deans of medical schools, and CEOs of hospitals and health systems. Most of this group will perform well in their leadership roles—but some will struggle and others will fail. It appears that cognitive intelligence is not a particularly good predictor of leadership success. A more relevant predictor of success is emotional intelligence. What is emotional intelligence and how does it affect leadership success?

IQ and EQ

Cognitive intelligence (represented as a normative score usually referred to as “IQ,” or intelligence quotient) is, in all probability, “hard-wired” at birth. Knowledge is gained through study and experience throughout life. Both IQ (inherent intelligence) and acquired knowledge are essential for entry into the field of medicine, and promotion and success in the academic ranks of the health and biomedical sciences. However, high intelligence alone does not correlate to success as a leader among the faculty and staff of academic medical centers and health care institutions. Certainly a minimum IQ and a vast array of acquired intelligence in specific areas are necessary, but it appears that these alone are not sufficient to assure leadership success.

Emotional intelligence is a term coined to describe an array of noncognitive capabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with

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environmental demands and pressures. As such, it is an important factor in determining one’s ability to succeed in life. Emotional intelligence is presented as a composite score (quotient) or index (EQi) derived from five component scores, which are in turn assembled from 15 subscale scores. The model is multifactorial and relates to the potential for performance. Factorial components resemble personality factors, but, unlike IQ, one’s EQi can change and can be altered through conscious and concerted effort.

The Binet-Simon test was developed in 1905 as the first standardized measure of IQ. It was eventually renamed the Stanford-Binet test because of the contributions of Stanford professor Lewis Terman to the format of the test. It was revised in 1916 and again several times since, most recently in 1972. Separate tests were developed for all ages in many areas including vocabulary, definitions of abstract words and spatial problems.

The more contemporary IQ measurement instrument is the Weschler Intelligence Test. There are different Weschler tests for different age groups. The Weschler reports three scores: a verbal score, a performance score, and a combined score which is generally referred to as a measure of a person’s IQ. A score of 100 is considered the normative score based on a large

sample of respondents in a given age category. One standard deviation is 15 points, so 96% of all respondents will have scores that fall between 85 and 115 (one standard deviation above and below the

norm). While the author does not have specific data to support this, it is believed that most applicants accepted to US medical



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schools have IQs that fall one or more standard deviations above the norm and thus are in the top 2% of the IQ test-taking population with respect to cognitive intelligence.

Based on 19 years of research by Reuven Bar-On, PhD, and tested on more than 85,000 individuals worldwide, the BarOn EQ-i® is the premier scientific measure of emotional intelligence. The BarOn EQ-i measures one’s ability to deal with daily environmental demands and pressures, and helps predict one’s potential for success in both professional and personal pursuits. It

is process-oriented, rather than outcome-oriented in nature. Like the Weschler test of intelligence, the BarOn EQ-i uses a normative score of 100 and a standard deviation of 15. The BarOn EQ-i® includes four validity indices and a sophisticated correction factor rendering scores for the following five components and 15 subscales (see box).

What Makes Measures of EQ so Useful?

Skills associated with emotional intelligence are acquired and can be improved through training, making the BarOn EQ-i a valuable instrument for identifying potential areas for improvement and for measuring the effectiveness of personal develop-

ment programs. The instrument is administered and interpreted by an individual trained in and certified to do so by the proprietor (Multi-Health Systems, Inc. of Toronto, Canada). Individuals who are interested in continuous improvement in their leadership performance can use the BarOn EQ-i instrument to establish a baseline measure and embark on a program, alone or with a leadership coach, to address areas that are below desired levels. Retesting after six or more months can be used to measure progress based on this self-assessment. When used in conjunction with feedback from others, such as that provided by the Lockwood Leadership Assessment, a 360-degree multi-rater feedback instru-

ment, an individual can track changes in both personal perception of effectiveness as well as the judgment of others with whom they regularly interact. Feedback instruments such as these help to highlight not only strengths and weaknesses, and effective or ineffective styles, but also “blind spots.” Behavioral and style blind spots represent “you as you are, and as you are seen by others, but not as you see yourself.” As such, just as blind spots in your car, the failure to be aware of them can get you into trouble. This is clearly addressed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham in their model of the “Johari Window,” a communication and feedback model that depicts how we give and receive information about ourselves and others.¹

EQ is but a single factor in determining one's ability to succeed in their role as a physician/scientific leader. Unlike IQ, EQ is made up of factors that can be learned, developed, and improved on. Enhanced EQ is helpful in improving performance and effectiveness. Here is what others have written about the benefits of enhanced EQ.

Goleman on EQ

Daniel Goleman has popularized the concept of emotional intelligence, publishing widely on the subject. His books, *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, are in-depth explorations of the subject. His work is summarized in two articles that appeared in *Harvard Business Review* (“What Makes A Leader?” and “Leadership that Gets Results”). In his first article, Goleman observes, “It is not that IQ and technical skills are irrelevant...they do matter as ‘threshold capabilities’...but emotional intelligence is the sine qua non of leadership...without it, a person can have the best training in the world, an incisive, analytical mind, and an endless supply of smart ideas, but he still won't make a great leader.”

Goleman's second HBR article highlights similar EQ factors as Bar-On but places them into four categories: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, and Social Skill. He beautifully describes six leadership styles (Coercive, Authoritative, Affiliative, Democratic, Pacesetter, and Coaching) and the styles/behaviors that characterize each, noting that while one appears to have a dominant style, the most successful leaders develop a facility with

What does EQ measure?

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Intrapersonal Scales

- **Self-Regard**—*The ability to respect and accept oneself as basically good.*
- **Emotional Self Awareness**—*The ability to recognize one's feelings.*
- **Assertiveness**—*The ability to express feelings, beliefs, and thoughts, and defend one's rights in a nondestructive manner.*
- **Independence**—*The ability to be self directed and self-controlled in one's thinking and actions and to be free of emotional dependency.*
- **Self-Actualization**—*The ability to realize one's potential capacities.*

Interpersonal Scales

- **Empathy**—*The ability to be aware of, to understand and to appreciate the feelings of others.*
- **Social Responsibility**—*The ability to demonstrate oneself as a cooperative, contributing, and constructive member of one's social group.*
- **Interpersonal Relationship**—*The ability to establish and maintain mutually satisfying relationships that are characterized by intimacy and by giving and receiving affection.*

Adaptability Scales

- **Reality Testing**—*The ability to assess the correspondence between what is experienced and what objectively exists.*
- **Flexibility**—*The ability to adjust one's emotions, thoughts and behavior to changing situations and conditions.*
- **Problem Solving**—*The ability to identify and define problems as well as to generate and implement potentially effective solutions.*

Stress Management Scales

- **Stress Tolerance**—*The ability to withstand events and stressful situations without “falling apart” by actively and positively coping with stress.*
- **Impulse Control**—*The ability to delay or resist an impulse, drive, or temptation to act.*

General Mood Scales

- **Optimism**—*The ability to look at the brighter side of life and to maintain a positive attitude.*
- **Happiness**—*The ability to feel satisfied with one's life, to enjoy oneself and others, and to have fun.*

each and know how and when to apply which style to a given situation.

The effective leader does not apply a “one size fits all” approach to either the situation or to all members of the leadership team. The coercive and pacesetter styles rarely are viewed as positive and thus are infrequently used by the effective leader. A good leader understands what each member needs in order to be most effective and adapts his or her style accordingly, offering guidance and support in the right tenor and tempo to effect the optimal performance from those they lead.

Does a High EQ Distinguish ‘Good’ from ‘Great’?

Jim Collins has earned near-star status as a well-recognized writer in the world of business leadership over the past five years with his two books, *Built to Last* (written with Jerry Porras) and *Good to Great*. In his books and in articles that appeared in *Fortune*, *Fast Company*, and *Harvard Business Review*, Collins talks about the factors that distinguish good leaders from great leaders. In one discussion concerning what he has coined as “Level 5 Leaders,” Collins explores many of the same characteristics identified above as components of emotional intelligence.² He notes that Level 5 Leaders are “a study in duality: modest and willful, shy and fearless.” These are people who are very in touch with themselves (self-regard and emotional self-awareness); focused, determined, and motivated (assertiveness and independence); and clear about who they are and where they are going (self-actualization). They are, however, focused on the accomplishments of others and in touch with those around them (empathy and interpersonal relationships), flexible and in touch with reality, and have an ability and a discipline to commit their energies and lead those around them to focus on the salient issues that are critical to the effective pursuit of the mission and realization of the vision of their organization. Further, they perform well under stress, are seemingly always in control of their emotions and maintain a positive attitude, even in the face of adversity. Finally, they truly enjoy what they are doing and see their challenges as more play (fun) than work.

Level 5 Leaders have a strong sense of

humility—what Collins calls “compelling modesty,” which is exemplified by their persistent willingness to recognize the work of others when things go well, and an equally fervent intent to accept personal responsibility and blame when they don’t. Collins refers to this as the “window and mirror” factor.

Most important, Level 5 Leaders focus on people—recruiting the right people into their organizations and purging their organization of those who do not share the characteristics ascribed to a strong EQ, as well as the necessary knowledge and skill sets to be successful. Collins’ mantra is, “People first...structure and process to follow.” There is nothing more important, Collins believes, than having “the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats.”

One question that Collins is still uncertain of is whether these exceptional leaders are “born or bred.” He believes that the seed for exceptional performance must be present but that it often lies underdeveloped. Consistent with the principles of EQ, Collins believes that these characteristics will emerge if properly cultivated and refined with conscious and continuous effort.

Drucker on ‘Knowing Thyself’

Peter Drucker, the 93-year-old icon of business management, shares his observations of many of these same factors in his 1999 *HBR* article on “Managing Oneself” wherein he speaks to the importance of, “better understanding yourself...not only your strengths and weaknesses but also your operating style, values and talents.”³ Individuals who take the time to explore those factors that make up their EQ, to measure where they stand on the EQ scale, and to address those areas that need improvement, are likely to be far more successful as leaders of people and organizations.

Summary

General intelligence is composed of cognitive intelligence or intellect, as measured by IQ, and emotional intelligence, which is measured by EQ. The well-functioning, successful, and emotionally healthy individual is one who possesses a sufficient degree of emotional intelligence and an average or above average EQ score. The higher the EQ

score, the more positive the prediction for general success in coping with environmental demands and pressures. In contrast, the lack of success and the existence of emotional problems are a function of the extent and degree of deficiency evident in these factors over time. EQ scores, when considered with IQ scores, will give a better indication of one’s general intelligence and thus offer a better indication of one’s potential to succeed.⁴ ♦

Notes

1. Luft J. *Group Processes: An Introduction to Group Dynamics*. Mayfield Publishing Company, 1984.
2. Collins J. Level 5 leadership: The triumph of humility and fierce resolve. *Harvard Business Review*, January 2001, pp. 66-76.
3. Drucker P.F. Managing oneself. *Harvard Business Review*, March-April 1999, pp. 65-74.
4. EQi BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory, Technical Manual, 2002, p. 18.

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