

BOOK REVIEW FOR UNIL HEC MBA
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COURSE
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WORKING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

AUTHOR DANIEL GOLEMAN

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WORKING WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

BOOK REVIEW

OVERVIEW

The book: “Working with Emotional Intelligence” delivers a clear cut message, arguing that emotional competence is the main factor influencing success in the professional life of any person or institution.

The author, Daniel Goleman, compares the relative importance of emotional intelligence (EI) to IQ and technical competence, and how they correlate to the success of the “stars”, through a series of real world examples and anecdotes to illustrate his case.

Although not providing substantive scientific evidence in this book, he proposes framework for a breakdown of the EI skills and competencies and ways to improve.

THE AUTHOR

Daniel Goleman is an American psychologist and a former writer for the New York Times newspaper.

In 1995 he published a book called “Emotional Intelligence”, that laid the ground for the creation of his consulting company EIS – Emotional Intelligence Services. He was also founder of “The consortium for research in emotional intelligence in organizations” <http://www.eiconsortium.org/>

He is also the author of many other books on the subject of emotional intelligence.

THE BOOK

The following paragraphs summarize briefly main points brought up by the author in his book.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE?

Daniel Goleman defines Emotional Intelligence in the appendix 1 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”

This form of intelligence is confronted with the purely intellectual intelligence; the one learned at school, the purely cognitive capabilities measured by IQ tests.

The author maintains that this intellectual intelligence is entirely based on the neocortex, the most recently evolved parts of the brain.

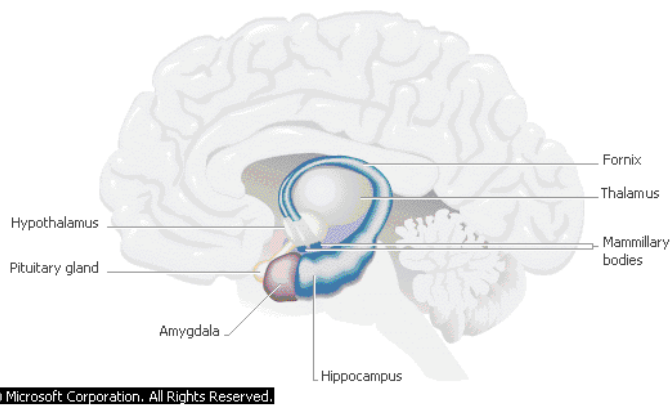
Emotional intelligence would depend much more on the emotional centers of the lower brain, the more primitive sub-cortex.

Intelligence is the potential for learning something, and technical skills learnt depend on the academic intelligence. Emotional competencies stem from the emotional intelligence of each individual.

The author shall proceed later to define a structured proposal for the principal emotional skills or competencies.

THE BRAIN CIRCUITRY

The author goes on to explain that the inner brain – and more precisely the amygdala – is responsible for triggering the emotional feelings, which sometimes are responsible for pre-programmed “primitive” impulsive actions.



The amygdala, a region of the inner brain located just above the end of the spinal cord, constantly informs us about what we feel about anything and everything in our daily lives. It gives us the “gut feeling” about everything, and allows us sometimes to say, “this doesn’t look right”, although we cannot rationally explain why.

It is also a storage place for the accumulated experience, explaining why older people seem to have stronger intuitions, as life experience adds up.

The prefrontal area is the site of the “working memory”, the capacity to pay attention and keep in mind the vital information. The working memory is essential for understanding, taking decisions and reasoning.

When the mind is calm everything works normally, but in a perceived emergency situation, the mind is taken over by the central, more primitive brain circuitry and falls back to routine, pre-programmed impulsive and protective reactions. We feel these emergencies in the form of anxiety, worries, panic, frustration, anger, irritation or rage.

Normally the prefrontal lobes keep control over the impulse orders from the amygdala. It introduces the notions of judgment and rules of social appropriateness.

When in presence of a stressful situation the emotion impedes the rational brain from functioning properly, and impulsive people can “explode” in emotional reaction. This translates in incapacity to override the emotional impulses from the emotional centers.

This can have dramatic drawbacks in our modern work environment such as shouting to the boss or acting inappropriately in the presence of colleagues/subordinates/clients, losing control in an exam or being incapable of making a presentation in front of an audience.

The author dubs these situations as “amygdala hijacks”, and argues that “star performers” have a high level of self-awareness and control well their emotions.

This self-awareness translates in better control of one’s emotions and avoids the crisis situations that can have disastrous effects.

ASSESSING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Daniel Goleman goes on to propose a framework of personal competencies that stem from the emotional intelligence concept. No one would score perfectly on all of these qualities, but instead everyone will have strengths and limitations. Typically to achieve outstanding performance several of these skills are required, spread out among the 5 domains: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills.

He defines emotional competence as:

A learned capability based on emotional intelligence that results in outstanding performance at work.

Emotional intelligence is the *potential* for learning these competencies. Being high in emotional intelligence does not guarantee that the person will have the acquired skills necessary to excel in work, it only means that (s)he has a high potential for learning them.

Below is the table that constitutes the heart of the book, and the concepts presented in the table are developed extensively throughout the book by using tens of examples and anecdotes.

The 5 main competencies are grouped in two main categories: Personal and social skills. Each of the competencies is detailed further and explained into its components and thoroughly explained in the book.

The author details for each competence and sub-competence, the profile and typical attitudes of the people who excel in these skills and illustrates his case with an example.

THE EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE FRAMEWORK

Personal Skills (how we manage ourselves)	<p>Self-awareness</p> <p>Emotional awareness Accurate self-assessment Self-confidence</p>	<p>Knowing one’s internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions</p> <p><i>Recognizing one’s emotions and their effects</i> <i>Knowing one’s strengths and limits</i> <i>A strong sense of one’s self-worth and capabilities</i></p>
	<p>Self-regulation</p> <p>Self-Control Trustworthiness Conscientiousness Adaptability Innovation</p>	<p>Managing one’s internal impulses and resources</p> <p><i>Keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check</i> <i>Maintaining standards of honesty and integrity</i> <i>Taking the responsibility for personal performance</i> <i>Flexibility in handling change</i> <i>Being comfortable with novel ideas, approaches, and new information</i></p>
	<p>Motivation</p> <p>Achievement drive Commitment Initiative Optimism</p>	<p>Emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals</p> <p><i>Striving to improve or meet a standard of excellence</i> <i>Aligning with goals of the group or organization</i> <i>Readiness to act on opportunities</i> <i>Persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks</i></p>
Social skills (how we manage relationships)	<p>Empathy</p> <p>Understanding others Developing others Service orientation Leveraging diversity Political awareness</p>	<p>Awareness of other’s feelings, needs, and concerns</p> <p><i>Sensing others’ feelings and perspectives, and taking active interest in their concerns</i> <i>Sensing others’ development needs and bolstering their abilities</i> <i>Anticipating, recognizing, and meeting customers’ needs</i> <i>Cultivating opportunities through different kinds of people</i> <i>Reading a group’s emotional currents and power relationships</i></p>
	<p>Social Skills</p> <p>Influence Communication Conflict management Leadership Change catalyst Building bonds Collaboration & cooperation Team capabilities</p>	<p>Adeptness and inducing desirable responses in others</p> <p><i>Wielding effective tactics for persuasion</i> <i>Listening openly and sending convincing messages</i> <i>Negotiating and resolving disagreements</i> <i>Inspiring and guiding individuals and groups</i> <i>Initiating or managing change</i> <i>Nurturing instrumental relationships</i> <i>Working with others toward shared goals</i> <i>Creating group synergy in pursuing collective goals</i></p>

COLLABORATIONS AND TEAMWORK

All throughout the book we also find extensive references to statistical studies, all referenced in specific chapters at the end of the book.

One of those mentioned studies tries to ask the following question: *“What percentage of the knowledge you need to do your job I stored in your own mind?”*. In 1986 the study answers 75%, but in 1997 this is reduced to 15 to 20%.

This demonstrates the increasing importance of teamwork and collaboration. Another study demonstrates that group IQ is almost always superior to the IQ of the best of the individuals in the group. Teams can however perform poorer than the average individual score if frictions arise between team members. A team of intellectual “stars” may also not perform best, as everyone will concentrate on the intellectually challenging parts of the project and neglect the necessary planning, collecting and exchanging the necessary basic information.

The social skills described in the previous table are of prime importance for the performance of teams in the work environment.

HOW TO IMPROVE & TRAINING GUIDELINES

The author claims that the EI competencies can all be worked on, and improved, and that contrarily to IQ, people can improve their EI by receiving feedback, practice and correct training and guidance.

He also makes the case that the capability to acquire EI skills apparently increases with age, due to increased experience.

He goes on to give several examples of what not to do with respect to training in this domain, an ends up with a second table with areas to develop in a successful training program. The table contains also very detailed explanations, but only the main contents are outlined here:

GUIDELINES FOR EMOTIONAL COMPETENCE TRAINING	
1 – Assess the job	9 – Give performance feedback
2 – Assess the individual	10 – Encourage practice
3 – Deliver assessments with care	11 – Arrange support
4 – Gauge readiness	12 – Provide models
5 – Motivate	13 – Encourage
6 – Make change self-directed	14 – Reinforce change
7 – Focus on clear, manageable goals	15 – Evaluate
8 – Prevent relapse	

Again in a very systematic way, all the points are reviewed, emphasizing the best-practices and pitfalls of each subject in Emotional competence training.

FINAL IMPRESSIONS

The book presents a simple concept in a persuasive way. Easy reading and convincing.

Although D. Goleman is not the originator of the concept, he comes across as a god communicator to the layman, presenting the subjects in an accessible way with simple language. Extensive references are presented almost in a maniac fashion, in order to justify almost all his statements.

It is very systematic. The author presents the basic concepts in tables 1 & 2 and then develops each point, systematically, using many stories and anecdotes, probably not enough from a scientific viewpoint, but then again, this does not seem to be the objective of this book.

One of the drawbacks is that it is too long for its purpose. The same messages seem to come across over and over again with the many examples. It can become tiring after a while.

Generally an interesting and informative book, on a subject we all think we know.