



EMOTIONAL IQ: *using empathy to get ahead*

Who said being a softie would stymie success? The verdict is in: nice people really do come first. Performance coach, mentor and founder of Transilient Coaching, **Barbara Nugent** puts your Emotional IQ to the test...

Newman has identified 10
**CORE EQ
COMPETENCIES**
that successful business leaders
manifest, to which I'm adding my
personal advice. My hope? To help
you **ACCELERATE YOUR
EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE** development
and in turn your career.

Intelligence and experience: the baseline competencies required to get a job done well. But what happens when you want the next job, and find yourself pitted against equally experienced, equally qualified candidates? What will differentiate you from the competition?

Harvard psychologist and author Daniel Goleman made the phrase 'Emotional Intelligence', or EQ, famous. His thinking? Unchecked emotions can make smart people behave stupidly. A low EQ, he has suggested, is more restrictive than a low IQ. To illustrate, he relates the story of two Yale students, Matt and Penn.

Penn was a brilliant, hugely creative student. Trouble was, arrogance accompanied his exceptional on-paper record. On graduation, he was offered interviews by all the leading organisations in his field.

His classmate Matt wasn't quite so brilliant, but everyone he worked liked him. Seven job offers derived from eight interviews, with career success following closely thereafter. Penn, meanwhile, received just one job offer, from a second-tier organisation, and he was let go after only two years.

Matt had emotional intelligence; Penn did not.

This idea is not new. In the past we have talked about 'soft skills' and instinctively we know that personable people get on in life. Goleman and his colleagues have however turned this intuition into a science. Their studies show that irrespective of field, or of organisation, EQ – and not IQ – is a key indicator in determining those set to succeed. Now, isn't that something worth knowing?

Psychologist Martyn Newman meanwhile refers to Emotional Capital. I really like this because as we know, the foundation of successful business is capital. This idea of emotionally intelligent employees being viewed as assets places great value where it should be: the leader's role therefore to create and develop emotional capital within the organisation.

1 SELF-KNOWLEDGE... Every effective leader is self-aware. They know how their feelings and emotions impact their attitudes, and their judgment. So, take time to notice your impact on others: does the room light up when you enter, or does it empty? Tune into your thoughts and consider how they affect your behaviour. Ask a trusted friend what they notice about you. Suspend judgement of yourself, and of others.

2 SELF-CONFIDENCE... Great leaders accept and respect themselves. They basically like themselves. They are confident in their actions and inspire confidence in others. Start by making the decision that you are ok. Ok is enough to start! Challenge images you hold of yourself that may be based on fear or harsh criticism. Remind yourself of the great things you have achieved thusfar and set some new goals to progress. Respect the work you do and value opportunities. Be unafraid to make mistakes. Interestingly, women's scores on confidence tend to be lower than their male counterparts. What's that about?

“Invest more time in nurturing relationships, not just in your department, but across the organisation.”

3 SELF-RELIANCE...Emotionally intelligent leaders develop ideas and make decisions. Practice doing these things: sounds simple, but the more you do them the easier they become. Ask yourself: what am I afraid of in making this decision? Communicate confidently: again, practice is the key. Respect your own ideas and your ability to decide.

4 SELF-ACTUALISATION...I never quite knew what this meant, but Maslow had it on the top of his Hierarchy of Needs. For me, it's about finding that balance in life and having interests outside of work. You learn things about yourself through hobbies and pastimes. I often imagine myself at age 90, looking back over my life. What will I regret? Most people regret not taking risks, not spending more time with family and friends and not pursuing their dreams. How about you?

5 ASSERTIVENESS...High-performing leaders express their point of view in a straightforward way. They are comfortable challenging the views of others. They communicate clearly. If you have anxiety about speaking in a meeting, identify what is driving that anxiety. Prepare in advance, jotting down the points you want to make.

To avoid being bulldozed, make sure you know what your objective is and communicate it clearly. Know your motive and express why it's important to you. Try to avoid defaulting to others by focusing on the payoff of achieving what you want.

6 RELATIONSHIP SKILLS...This is a key one for gaining support of others and widening your circle of influence. Invest more time in nurturing relationships, not just in your department, but across the organisation. Strengthen your belief that people are basically your equals and treat them as such. Show care, respect and interest in people you meet and encourage an environment where expertise is shared.

Build up trust with your colleagues. This is based on:

- Your reliability – do you do what you say you will? Nothing erodes trust more than failing to do this.
- Your competence – do you know what you're talking about?
- Your ability to connect – get to know people.

7 EMPATHY...Emotionally intelligent leaders have the capacity to understand other people's feelings and thoughts. They take other people into account before making decisions and they listen to their views. Practice active listening – one of the most important skills you can develop. Listen to understand, not to reply or to argue. Ask open questions that elicit more information. Suspend judgement and be curious about the people you meet. Take an active interest in them as people. Women tend to score higher on empathy than their male colleagues – unsurprisingly!

8 SELF-CONTROL...Managing your emotions well is a sign of good leadership. Restrain actions until you have time to think (don't send that knee-jerk email!). Being able to stay calm in stressful situations and presenting a reliable presence gives your team reassurance and maintains productivity.

When the plane experiences turbulence I always look at the faces of the cabin crew! If they don't look worried, then I relax. Teams look to their leaders in the same way.

Practice responding rather than reacting. Remember how your mother always told you to "count to ten" when you were about to blow a fuse?! Wise woman – it's based in neuroscience – you need time for the cognitive side of your brain to kick in. Then you can choose a more appropriate – less regrettable! – response.

9 ADAPTABILITY...Never before have organisations needed people who can adapt to changing and volatile circumstances. Be receptive to new ideas and tolerant of change. Consider a range of perspectives and options before deciding. Elicit the views of others and be open. Challenge yourself – what is it about this change that is making me dig my heels in? Don't sweat the small stuff!

10 OPTIMISM...This has been identified as possibly the most important trait of a successful leader. The capacity to look for opportunity, even in the face of adversity, is critical. Don't take set-backs too personally. Look for the learning in the situation. Focus on the task to be done, rather than the negative emotions around it. Be logical. Look at the bigger picture and the longer term to gain some perspective. ■

There you have it! **SO WHAT NOW?**
How can you put all this to use?

#Identify one of your biggest challenges at work currently.

#Identify one of the above competencies that if you improved, would help you with your challenge.

#List some reasons how you think improving this area will benefit you.

#Note down some ways in which you could tackle this – they don't have to be big actions.

#Give yourself a timeline and review your progress weekly. Stick with it.

Remember successful change is embedded by doing small things in the direction of your goal, consistently, every day. At the end of a week, a month, a year, big strides will have been achieved.

For me, leadership is about showing up at your best. It's about being aware – of yourself, your colleagues, your environment. Leadership is about taking opportunities and risks and keeping the big picture in mind.

And remember, you don't have to be the boss to be a leader. You just need the courage and self-belief to speak up and step out.

To learn more Barbara, and Transilient Coaching, see transilientcoaching.ie.

