

# IQ or EQ?

Career success doesn't just rest on how clever you are, but how in touch you are with your own and other's feelings. A study by *Ross Donohue* and *Louisa Stevenson* examines these claims.

**E**motional intelligence (EI) is a relatively new construct that has attracted considerable interest in both empirical and popular management literature.

There are a number of competing definitions of emotional intelligence however one of the most robust concepts is from Mayer and Salovey (1997): "Emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own, and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thoughts, actions, and to promote emotional and intellectual growth."

While a number of authors have asserted that emotional intelligence is predictive of the likelihood and extent of an individual's advancement and success, many of these claims have been made without the support of empirical evidence. Thus, the first purpose of this study was to examine whether individuals who were higher in emotional intelligence were more likely to advance in their organisation (when the effects of age, gender, education and tenure are controlled statistically). Concrete results provided support for the previously theoretical argument that emotional intelligence is an important factor in determining career success.

The study also looked at the potential mediating role of transformational leadership in this relationship. The transformational leader is the leader who is able to energise, align, and excite followers by providing a compelling vision of the future. While some studies identified that EI was related to trans-

formational leadership and others revealed that transformational leadership was related to individual advancement, no previous research had examined the potential mediating role of transformational leadership. The finding in this study that the relationship is fully mediated by transformational leadership is significant as it redresses this gap in literature.

Consistent with the recommendations of a number of theorists the study conceived EI to be an antecedent of transformational leadership. However, it may be the case that transformational leadership is an antecedent of EI. Similarly, while it may be intuitively logical to assume that EI leads to higher individual advancement, the possibility that working at more advanced levels raises an individual's level of EI cannot be excluded from consideration.

A final implication of this study was that, while emotional intelligence is related to individual advancement, this relationship is transmitted through the intervening variable: transformational leadership. It may be the case that individuals who are high in EI are likely to exhibit a transformational leadership style, which in turn may increase their likelihood of advancement. This tentative interpretation is made based on the theoretical assumption that EI is an antecedent of transformational leadership and the logical assumption that individual advancement is an outcome variable.

It has been argued that EI, unlike IQ which is an immutable characteristic, can be learned to some extent. As a consequence of the study's results, it is clear that

**"We are being judged by a new yardstick: not just how smart we are, or by our training and expertise, but also by how well we handle ourselves and others."**

*Daniel Goleman Working With Emotional Intelligence, 1998*

individuals seeking advancement in their organisation should attempt to increase their EI. Thus, individuals should attempt to develop their self-awareness, practise delayed gratification, enhance their listening skills and improve their rapport building and networking.

However, the findings also suggest that increasing emotional intelligence may not alone be sufficient to advance in an organisation; individuals may also have to develop their transformational leadership skills.

Performance and advancement in the workplace is dependent on interpersonal workplace behaviours that occur as a result of high emotional intelligence: effective interpersonal relationships, adaptability, empathy, and tolerance. As 'people' or 'soft' skills become increasingly important as individuals advance in their organisations, it makes logical sense that those demonstrating these skills are promoted. Additionally, as these individuals are proficient in regulating their own emotions and are sensitive to the emotions of others, it is likely that they have well-developed impression management and social capital skills. These social factors have been found to be more important than technical factors in terms of being identified for promotion.

Organisations are advised to provide leadership training, targeted at employees with high EI and to

integrate emotional intelligence assessment and development into these programs. Indeed, a number of companies are already integrating EI assessment and development into their leadership identification and training programs.

In terms of future research directions, subsequent studies should attempt to examine the relationship between EI and individual advancement, as well as the potential mediating role of transformational leadership, longitudinally. Prospective designs would allow for examination of whether EI is predictive of transformational leadership and whether transformational leadership, in turn, predicts individual advancement.

Subsequent studies should attempt to employ more rigorous sampling procedures to improve the extent to which the findings can be generalised beyond the study sample. Additionally, given the modest amounts of variance explained by EI and transformational leadership, future studies examining individual advancement should include additional variables believed to be predictive of this outcome.

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