

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE: How really smart ARE you?

I've been reading around EI for some years now, and off-and-on it's been a specific topic in our leadership programs. I'd like to share some thoughts with you as further follow-up on your leadership experience with TEAM International®.

As you may know, the concept of Emotional Intelligence has been around since the term was first coined in articles published in 1990 by Jack Mayer (U.New Hampshire) and Peter Salovey (Yale).* These authors defined EI as the ability to perceive emotional information and use it to guide thought and action; they distinguished it from cognitive intelligence, which is what we have used to predict school performance, usually measured by IQ tests. Daniel Goleman went on to popularize the concept in his books *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, and later *Primal Leadership*, in 2002.

What all the studies behind this literature point to is the importance in life of what we used to call "people skills". But there is more to it than just this colloquialism. In the classroom, we sometimes use Goleman's 5 early categories:

1. **Self-awareness** – the ability to recognize and understand one's moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their impact on others
2. **Self-regulation** – the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods
3. **Motivation** – a passion to work that goes beyond money and status, and the ability to persist in goals
4. **Empathy** – the ability to understand the emotional makeup and drives of others, and to "put oneself in their shoes"
5. **Social skills** – proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, the ability to build rapport.

Of course, the whole concept of EI is at the core of any leadership development experience. Throughout our near-30-year history, one of our approaches to leadership development has been to help executives better understand themselves and their impact on others, and to increase their self-awareness, self management, and interpersonal skills. You are, by reason of the completion of your leadership experience, a part of that history.

What I don't think we have always been as focused on is the necessity of continual growth *after* the program. Emotional intelligence is an ongoing process over time, and Goleman's later work emphasizes the "sustainability" of leadership growth -- through a continuation of the process of *building* EI. This makes EI very different from IQ, which tends to be stable over time.

Over the next couple of my communiqués, I would like to examine this process with you. Some participants have spoken over time about “keeping the leadership experience fresh” in their minds and behaviors. Others have asked us for on-going coaching to maintain the energy generated by their leadership program. These are the themes I would like to pursue, as well as to bring us all up to speed on research and practice around Emotional Intelligence. (See subsequent articles in this series on our website www.teaminternational.net .)

* EI is sometimes called “EQ”, a term coined by the Israeli psychologist Reuven Bar-On, in about 1985. Bar-On developed his own self-assessment tool to measure his version of EQ.