



Emotional Intelligence and Coaching: A Winning Combination

The concept of Emotional Intelligence (EI) is based on the work of David C. McClelland, a psychology professor at Harvard in the early 1970s. He was first to challenge the generalized use of IQ tests as indicating anything more than a person's abilities to take tests. He instead recommended finding an approach that measured "experience, wisdom and ability to perform effectively on various tasks that life presents."

McClelland's contributions notwithstanding, the primary contemporary source for understanding EI is Daniel Goleman, whose books are readily available, as well as Richard Boyatzis, Professor of Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve. Goleman defines EI as: "The capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships." Goleman, along with several colleagues, established and launched what we presently refer to when we discuss Emotional Intelligence. While Goleman's main focus has been the work world, with a special emphasis in the area of leadership, his writing, and EI in general, are definitely applicable and highly relevant to every aspect of life and offer a potentially valuable tool for coaches.

EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY MODEL

EI is defined as consisting of four basic capabilities: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness and Relationship Management. Each of these basic capabilities has several identifiable and measurable competencies or skills associated with it.

Self-Awareness is viewed as the core of EI. The skills of Self-Awareness are:

- Emotional Self-Awareness: recognizing how our emotions affect our performance.
- Accurate Self-Assessment: Knowing one's own inner resources, abilities and limits.
- Self-Confidence: a strong sense of one's self-worth and capabilities.

Self-Management skills are:

- Emotional Self-Control: keeping disruptive emotions and impulses in check.
- Transparency: maintaining integrity, acting congruently with one's values.
- Adaptability: Flexibility in handling change.
- Achievement: striving to improve or meeting a standard of excellence.
- Initiative: readiness to act.
- Optimism: persistence in pursuing goals despite obstacles and setbacks.

Social Awareness skills are:

- Empathy: sensing others' feelings and perspectives, and taking an active interest in their concerns.
- Organizational Awareness: reading a group's emotional currents and power relationships.
- Service Orientation: anticipating, recognizing and meeting customer or clients' needs.

Relationship Management skills are:

- Developing Others: sensing others' developmental needs and bolstering their abilities.
- Inspirational Leadership: inspiring and guiding individuals and groups.
- Change Catalyst: leading change.
- Influence: having an impact on others.
- Conflict Management: negotiating and resolving conflict.
- Teamwork and Collaboration: working with others toward a shared goal.

Each of these 18 competencies is, in turn, defined in terms of behaviors, or things that people do.

HOW COACHING IMPACTS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

IQ is basically a fixed score that changes little over a person's lifetime. While increases in IQ scores can, and do occur, they are usually slight. By contrast, EI and the scores one gets on such testing are highly subject to improvement based on the effort one chooses to put into them.

Because the competencies are defined in terms of behaviors, people who are being coached learn what they need to do in order to improve. For example, initiative is defined in terms of one specific behavior called *Acting Proactively*. The description of this competency is: "People who are proactive deal with issues before they become problems. They think ahead and anticipate possible problems and address them before they become problems."

Learning to do this does not require magic. When I coach someone to become more proactive, I ask them to spend time regularly thinking of possible problems, then addressing them before they develop into problems.

For example, if they anticipate that a subordinate may not meet a deadline, I would suggest that they call that person to see whether or not the deadline will be met. If it appears that it may not be met, we would discuss how they could act so that the problem will be addressed before it evolves into a crisis. By doing this, the person being coached is practicing a new behavior: as they experience success acting in a new way (fewer crises), the habit becomes natural and the person begins to think of this new way as a habit.

My answer to the question about how coaching impacts EI comes in two distinct categories: direct experience in the workplace and experience with people outside of the work environment in life-coaching situations.

In the business setting, there tends to be greater formality regarding the structure of the engagement, explicit hierarchical relationships that need to be taken into account, and at times some fairly major implications about a person's job.

In literally every business engagement I conduct, I use a 360 assessment tool called the Emotional Competence Inventory (ECI); "360" refers to 360 degrees of vision or a complete picture. Input is given anonymously by people at different levels in the organization: peers, subordinates, superiors, customers and others. All this input is correlated and presented in a single report in the form of graphs, charts and also free-form comments.

As coaches, we well understand that change requires motivation as well as sustained support. And we know that it is the client who best determines what work they need to do. What the feedback from the ECI provides is an irrefutable set of data that tells how the client is perceived by others. While it is not rare for a client to initially resist negative input, almost all come to realize that regardless of their own inner intentions and beliefs, there are things about how others experience them that are limiting their success. This is usually enough to initially motivate a client. At this point, a development plan is created. This can be done with just the coach and the client, or more often, with the input and support of the client's boss.

I have conducted more than 100 of these engagements with people, from the top executives of organizations down to individual contributors, in both small and large companies. It is from this first-hand perspective that I am able to report that every committed client grows, develops improved skills and receives both formal and informal positive feedback. Also incredibly satisfying for me is that many report changing their behavior outside of work, especially with their families. So I see people's EI improving with the help of coaching and their whole lives improve with it. This is also scientifically verified in some cases when individuals re-take the ECI a year or so later. Their improvements are not only seen from quantifiable scores but also from the comments written by participants.

HOW I USE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN MY COACHING

EI provides me with an organized and coherent model to help my clients understand the behaviors and forces that are influencing their lives. I have used the ECI in a few life-coaching situations, but not often. It can be a viable tool, but it is primarily designed for use in organizations. However, the concepts of EI, an understanding of the model and the ability to offer that as a perspective to life-coaching clients has frequently been useful.

I have found that integrating the principles of EI into my coaching has helped some of my clients develop a more-or-less concrete way of establishing the focus of their work and the baseline measure of where they are starting from, as well as a way to see that they are progressing. I find EI to be a very interesting and effective "arrow in my quiver." It is especially valuable in my business coaching.

At the end of the day, while EI is a great model and the ECI is a great tool, I still believe that how well we develop ourselves as people/coaches, how well we focus on the client's agenda, and the degree to which we really do trust the client's innate strengths are the most important factors in this work.

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Testing for Competence Rather Than For "Intelligence" American Psychologist 1973

Emotional Intelligence, 1995, Working with Emotional Intelligence, 1998, Primal Leadership; Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence 2002

ECI is owned jointly by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and the Hay Group