



Steve Cooper, Contributor

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Look For Employees With High EQ Over IQ

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As the editor of a marriage publication, it seems like 90 percent of the issues we discuss involve communication, empathy, understanding, self-awareness—or more precisely, a skill set associated with emotional intelligence (EQ). It just so happens that emotional competencies also translate extremely well to the business world. The best part? These skills can be learned.



Studies have shown that people with high EQs are a better predictor of performance than those with a high IQ. (Photo credit: digitalbob8)

Psychologist Dr. Carey Cherniss has been studying emotional intelligence for a long time. In 1999 he [published a paper](#) citing a 19-point case for businesses to pay attention to emotional intelligence, using data from the research of others. Here are a few highlights from that help understand why businesses should care about an employee's E

For example, one study followed the hiring of sales agents for L'Oréal based on certain emotional competencies. These agents outsold other salespeople by \$91,370 for a net revenue increase of \$2,558,360. If that weren't enough, the high EQ employees had 63% less turnover during the first year than those selected in the typical manner.

In a separate study, a national insurance company found that sales agents who were weak in emotional competencies such as self-confidence, initiative, and empathy sold policies with an average premium of \$54,000. Not bad, right? Well, compared to agents who scored high in a majority of emotional competencies, they sold policies worth an average of \$114,000.

In a third international study of 515 senior executives, emotional intelligence was a better predictor of success than either relevant previous experience or high IQ.



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So what can a business owner do to boost emotional intelligence?

I asked Dr. Richard Mendelson, I.O. psychologist and founder of [Dynamic IO Consultants](#), a consulting firm specializing in human capital management and other services. During the hiring process, he recommends asking job candidates to complete an emotional intelligence assessment.

“There are several out there, and some are specifically designed for different levels of employment,” says Dr. Mendelson. “Assessing EQ is less about asking specific questions in an interview or on an application, and more about properly using an assessment to generate data about an individual’s level of EQ.”

Dr. Mendelson warns that not all HR departments are equipped to handle this type of assessment, but firms such as his have training programs, which can take several months to complete.

Of course, many businesses already have their staff and are simply looking to improve or boost productivity. Dr. Noelle Nelson, a clinical psychologist, trial consultant and author of “[Make More Money by Making Your Employees Happy](#),” says one of the easiest, most successful ways of supporting a worker’s EQ is to catch him/her in the act of doing something *right*. Like a healthy marriage, it once again comes down to communicating expectations and expressing appreciation.

In her book Dr. Nelson writes, “Most people worry when they see their manager looking over their shoulder or stopping by their work area. They are convinced that you are looking for something they did wrong—which is usually an accurate assessment! But that very worry will often make

them do something wrong.”

Instead, Dr. Nelson says the better situation is when workers see a manager’s visit as an opportunity to receive appreciation. “When workers know managers will be on the lookout for good work, they are far more motivated to doing good work.”

Dr. Nelson says emotional tendencies that facilitate reaching goals are critical to EQ. She adds, “Communicate employees’ duties and responsibilities clearly so they know what is expected of them.” Employees can’t live up to what they don’t know and therefore clear direction is what gives employees the confidence to go ahead and do the job competently—it sets them up for success.

As managers change their habits it’s easy to see how the work of subordinates can quickly improve. The great news is the process of improving EQ within the

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workplace can be achieved, but the intention must be there. Dr. Mendelson adds that measured EQ scores can improve in small increments over time, but significant gains can be seen by building awareness, and continuing a focused and facilitated learning process for people who wish to improve.

We've probably all had a boss who we knew was intellectually up for the task, but lacked "people skills." In today's highly competitive global economy it makes sense that businesses would continue to try and hire the smartest individuals, however it's even more important to seek those who are equally as thoughtful.