



Are You Using the Single Most Critical Ingredient of Effective Leadership? Do You Even Have It?

While you probably know the general limits of your IQ and are careful not to stray beyond them (for fear of frustrating yourself, if nothing else), do you have the same grasp of the limits of your EQ? If an EQ blindspot or deficit were getting in the way of your own success, would you even know it?

It's been a while—almost 16 years—since Daniel Goleman first introduced the concept of *emotional intelligence* (EQ) to corporate America. Decades of psychological research before and since have consistently shown positive links between “soft skills” and leadership success. In our work with hundreds of executives and executive teams, EQ competencies have been the clearest differentiators between the outstanding leaders and the ordinary ones. Why, then, is EQ still minimized—even ignored—by so many executives?

Why, indeed? Perhaps it is because most business measures over-focus on the numbers, while EQ seems difficult to quantify. Perhaps being measured by our cognitive abilities from a very early age gives us a greater comfort level with IQ-related metrics. Maybe it is simply counterintuitive that something so intangible could really make much of a difference in business success.

Regardless of the reason, there is a hidden pitfall for executives who minimize or ignore EQ in favor of the hard-skill measures like IQ or financial prowess. Consider this example of an executive we worked with a few years ago: She had been a great success “by the numbers” for her international company. Her division routinely outperformed her peers’. As a result, she was considered a strong candidate for the top executive spot in the company. The problem was that she left bodies in her wake. Her persistence and drive were apparent in both her strong financial numbers, as well as in the large number of people who refused to work with her. Every common business measure indicated she was executive material, but her lack of self awareness kept her from seeing the main obstacle between her and the C-suite: her impact on others. She was patently blocking her own success, yet had no idea that she was.

What helped her most was a good dose of reality, provided via our 360° assessment process. For the first time she heard first-hand how she was experienced by colleagues. She learned that what she had always perceived as action-focused assertiveness was experienced by most everyone else as a bullying, take-no-prisoners attitude. By the end of our work together she had learned how to watch her own actions and how to interpret the reactions of others. She learned that the higher she climbed the corporate ladder, the more critical interpersonal finesse became. From an EQ perspective, she got pretty darn “smart!”

How smart do you think you are?