

# Leadership Skills & Emotional Intelligence



## **Executive Summary:**

Emotional intelligence has become a popular topic in the business press in recent years. Although we have not used the term “emotional intelligence”, the Center for Creative Leadership has helped many leaders understand and develop emotional intelligence competencies for over thirty years. One way that we have successfully helped managers move beyond intellectual know-how and expand their emotional intelligence is through Benchmarks®, a multi-rater feedback tool. This study compares scores on Benchmarks to self-reported emotional intelligence as measured by the BarOn EQ-i. We learned that key leadership skills and perspectives are related to aspects of emotional intelligence and the absence of emotional intelligence was related to career derailment.

# Leadership Skills & Emotional Intelligence

## How is emotional intelligence related to the specific behaviors we associate with leadership effectiveness?

**Findings:** Higher levels of emotional intelligence are associated with better performance in the following areas:

- ☐ Participative Management
- ☐ Putting People at Ease
- ☐ Self-Awareness
- ☐ Balance Between Personal Life and Work
- ☐ Straightforwardness and Composure
- ☐ Building and Mending Relationships
- ☐ Doing Whatever it Takes
- ☐ Decisiveness
- ☐ Confronting Problem Employees
- ☐ Change Management

**Participative Management** reflects the importance of getting buy-in at the beginning of an initiative. It is an extremely important relationship-building skill in today's management climate in which organizations value interdependency within and between groups. Of all the skills and perspectives measures on Benchmarks, participative management had the largest number of meaningful correlations with measures of emotional intelligence. In other words, managers who are seen as good at listening to others and gaining their input before implementing change are likely to be assessed as good at cooperating with others, able to find pleasure in life, able to foster relationships, control impulses, and understand their own emotions and the emotions of others.

**Putting People at Ease** gets at the heart of making others relaxed and comfortable in your presence. From the perspective of direct reports, putting people at ease was related to impulse control, which is defined as the ability to resist or delay the impulse to act. This finding suggests that being able to behaviorally put people at ease has to do with controlling your own impulses with regard to anger or other emotions. Boss ratings of putting people at ease are related to happiness, suggesting that your disposition is related to how comfortable others are in your presence.

**Self-Awareness** describes those managers who have an accurate understanding of their strengths

and weaknesses. Ratings on self-awareness were related to impulse control and stress tolerance. If you find that you explode into anger easily, it is likely that others don't see you as very self-aware. In addition, it appears that others may draw conclusions about your self-awareness from how you handle difficult and challenging situations. If you get anxious, others may interpret this as a lack of self-awareness.

**Balance Between Personal Life and Work** measures the degree to which work and personal life activities are prioritized so that neither is neglected. High ratings from bosses on these behaviors were associated with the emotional intelligence measures of social responsibility, impulse control, and empathy. Giving your bosses the impression that you are balanced is connected with your feelings of being able to contribute to a group, controlling your impulses, and understanding the emotions of others. High ratings from direct reports are also associated with impulse control.

**Straightforwardness and Composure**, which refers to the skill of remaining calm in a crisis and recovering from mistakes, is related to several emotional intelligence measures. Not surprisingly, ratings from bosses, peers, and direct reports on this scale are related to impulse control. Direct report ratings are also associated with stress tolerance, optimism, and social responsibility. Boss ratings are related to happiness. Thus it appears that being rated highly on straightforwardness and composure has to do with controlling impulses during difficult times, being responsible toward others, and having a satisfied disposition.

**Building and Mending Relationships** is the ability to develop and maintain working relationships with various internal and external parties. Ratings from bosses on this scale were related to only one measure of emotional intelligence: impulse control. This is not surprising because poor impulse control manifests itself as an inability to control hostility and explosive behavior. Obviously, this tendency will not translate into strong relationships with bosses. Similarly, scores on stress tolerance are related to direct report ratings. Difficulties handling stress may reveal themselves to direct reports as

problematic relationships or the stress may result from troubled relationships with direct reports.

Boss ratings on **Doing Whatever It Takes**, which has to do with persevering in the face of obstacles as well as taking charge and standing alone when necessary were related to two of the emotional intelligence scales: independence and assertiveness. People who are high on independence tend to be self-reliant and autonomous. Although they may ask for input from others, they are not dependent on it. Assertiveness has to do with expressing feelings, thoughts, and beliefs in a nondestructive manner. People high on this scale are not shy about letting others know what they want. Direct report ratings are associated with independence and optimism. Optimism has to do with looking at the brighter side of life. This constellation of relationships suggests that doing whatever it takes requires emotional intelligence in the sense of being able to go after what you want, being able to persevere in getting what you want, and seeing that a bright future is possible.

Direct report ratings of **Decisiveness** are related to assessments of independence. Decisiveness has to do with a preference for quick and approximate actions over slow and approximate ones. Independence has to do with the ability to be self-directed and self-controlled in one's thinking. It does not seem at all surprising that people who rate themselves as independent thinkers would be viewed by their direct reports as decisive.

Another interesting relationship has to do with peer ratings of **Confronting Problem Employees**, the degree to which a manager acts decisively and fairly when dealing with problem employees, and the emotional intelligence measure of assertiveness. Assertive people are able to express their beliefs and feelings in a nondestructive manner. These results suggest that being able to do this is helpful when it comes to dealing with problematic performance situations.

**Change Management** is the final Benchmarks scale to be connected with emotional intelligence. This skill has to do with the effectiveness of the strategies used to facilitate change initiatives. Ratings from direct reports are associated with measures of social responsibility. In other words, the ability to be a cooperative member of one's social group is associated with perceptions of effectiveness in introducing change. Peer ratings

of change management are related to interpersonal relationship abilities. Apparently, the ability to establish satisfying relationships has a connection to how well peers judge your ability to institute change.

**Conclusions:** Leadership abilities vary according to rater perspective and level of emotional intelligence. In general, co-workers seem to appreciate managers' abilities to control their impulses and anger, to withstand adverse events and stressful situations, to be happy with life, and to be a cooperative member of the group. These leaders are more likely to be seen as participative, self-aware, composed, and balanced.

### ***The Method and Analysis***

*This summary compiled by Jean Leslie, Manger of Instrument Research at CCL, is based on data from 302 managers attending CCL's Leadership Development Program® between July and September 2000. The managers volunteered to take part in this research by completing both the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (BarOn EQ-i), which assesses components of emotional intelligence, and Benchmarks. On average, LDP participants were 42.7 years old, 73% were male, 81% were white, and 90% had a minimum of a bachelor's degree. The results of both surveys were linked and analyzed. Results reported here are based on at least moderately associated ( $r \geq .20$ ) zero order correlations of participants*

### **Is the need to develop emotional intelligence abilities related to derailment behaviors?**

**Findings:** In his 1998 book, *Working With Emotional Intelligence*, Donald Goleman suggests that some of the reasons why people derail stem from a lack of emotional intelligence. Our research indicates the absence of emotional intelligence is related to career derailment. Low emotional intelligence scores are related to:

- ❑ Problems with Interpersonal Relationships
- ❑ Difficulty Changing or Adapting

Ratings on Problems with Interpersonal Relationships from all co-workers—bosses, peers, and direct reports—were associated with low scores on impulse control. Problems with

Interpersonal Relationships ratings from direct reports and peers were related to stress tolerance. Ratings from direct reports were related to social responsibility.

**Conclusions:** These results suggest that managers who don't feel a responsibility to others, can't handle stress, are unaware of their own emotions, lack the ability to understand others, or erupt into anger easily are viewed as likely to derail due to problems dealing with other people. High scores from direct reports on Difficulty Changing or Adapting were related to EQ-i scores on stress tolerance, and impulse control. Managers who resist change and growth, as high scores on this derailment factor imply, may be plainly visible to direct reports.

#### **Suggestions for Development**

What can you do if you want to improve your skills in the leadership arena and perceptions of your emotional intelligence too?

Self-Awareness is key to leadership development and is a skill to handling stress. The more accurately we can identify and monitor our emotional upsets, the faster we can recover. Self-awareness can be developed through the practice of seeking on-going feedback. Ask supervisors and co-workers who know you well for honest feedback on how your behavior is impacting them. Use opportunities to self-reflect upon adversity – business failures, demotions, missed promotions, unchallenging jobs, and personal trauma. Consider what you learned as a result of these hardships. Participate in a leadership development program that features self-awareness and reflection and ask for feedback on a multi-rater assessment.

The ability to demonstrate yourself as a cooperative, contributing, and constructive member of the group, is critical for long-term career success. Consider managing an inexperienced work team or employees who are resistant. Think about what you can do to contribute positively to group and organizational goals through new job assignments, existing jobs, role models or coaches.

If maintaining self-control is a developmental area for you, consider leading a task force or project team made up of diverse members, taking calls on a customer hot line, negotiating a high profile case, or representing your organization to the media or influential outsiders. Seek a job assignment such as a project or task force headed by someone known for his or her high sense of integrity and crisis management strength.

#### **References:**

Bar-On, R. (1999). *BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: A measure of emotional intelligence* (Technical manual). Toronto, Canada: Multi-Health Systems.

Goleman, D. (1998). *Working with emotional intelligence*. New York, NY: Bantam Books.

Ruderman, M.N., Hannum, K., Leslie, J.B., & Steed, J.L. (2001). *Leadership skills and emotional intelligence* (Unpublished manuscript). Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

#### ***The Measures***

*Benchmarks<sup>®</sup> is 360 degree assessment-for development tool that is based on 15 years of CCL research: 1) a body of research looking at the characteristics successful executives develop over time and 2) a series of studies investigating why some high-potential executives derail and fall off the success track. Feedback is provided on 16 leadership skills and perspectives and 5 derailment scales. The BarOn EQ-i has fifteen scales that can be divided into five larger groupings. The areas assessed are emotional self-awareness, assertiveness, self-regard, self-actualization, independence, empathy, interpersonal relationship, social responsibility, problem solving, reality testing, flexibility, stress tolerance, impulse control, happiness, and optimism. The BarOn EQ-i was selected because it had the greatest body of scientific data suggesting it was an accurate and reliable means of assessing emotional intelligence.*

For more about Benchmarks, contact Client Services at 336-545-2810

