

Ace Your Performance Review With Emotional Intelligence

By Nick Tasler, M.S.

It's no secret that job seekers will find slim pickings in their search for gainful employment in 2009. Layoff rates aren't slowing, and there are already more people competing for fewer open jobs than in any time in recent history. Faced with these odds, the best way to position yourself for the job hunt is to . . . steer clear of it. In other words, keep the job you have, put your emotional intelligence to work, and ace your performance review.

Of course, that sounds easier said than done. After all, layoffs are out of your hands, aren't they? Well, yes and no. If your whole department gets cut, then yes, you don't stand much of a chance of retaining your current position. However, no smart company is going to let go of top performers, especially when the need for solid performance is at an all-time high in virtually every organization across all industries. When the time comes to thin the workforce in your organization, those whose performance is lagging will be the most obvious prey for dismissal.

So, how can you establish yourself as a star instead of a straggler?

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is the single most important predictor of workplace success. Job experience and IQ certainly have their place, but neither of these other factors holds more sway in the realm of job performance than a person's ability to understand and manage his or her own emotions and those of other people.

Consider these facts:

- EQ explains up to 58% of a leader's job performance

- 90% of top performers are high in EQ
- Just 20% of low performers are high in EQ

To be clear, emotionally intelligent behaviors involve much more than brown-nosing or simply being "nice" to people. Emotional intelligence is such a powerful predictor of success because EQ permeates every aspect of every person's job in the knowledge economy. In a rapidly changing, information-driven world, he or she who has the skills to get the right information at the right time holds the power. On the flipside, those who fail to recognize the impact their behavior has on others, and those who are oblivious to other people's emotions, are significantly handicapped in the knowledge exchange game. The skills they so desperately need to effectively manage, innovate, communicate, or simply think clearly are perpetually plagued by emotional interference. So, while every job's performance review criteria will vary slightly, rest assured that virtually all criteria will be bolstered by high EQ.

EQ is more important to job performance than experience or IQ. Moreover, EQ can be developed. Job experience comes only with time that you don't have before your next performance review, and IQ comes only with genetic endowment—your IQ won't change no matter how many crossword puzzles you do or how many Jeopardy episodes you watch. Effectively reading and responding to emotions, however, are things you can learn to put into practice within a matter of months or even weeks so you can be ready by your next performance review.

The following list provides you with a few best practices to improve your EQ so that you *can* effectively read and respond to emotions:

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1. Target Your Development.

There are four core EQ skills—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. Different people excel and struggle in different skill sets. You might be a pro at tracking your mood changes, but not so good at addressing people in different situations. Or you might have an uncanny ability to tolerate frustration with grace and calm, but find yourself continually missing non-verbal cues about other people's emotions. The only way to know which skill set is holding back a more emotionally intelligent you is to test your skills with a validated EQ assessment like the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal®. Armed with your scores in each area, you can confidently begin marching down the road to development.

2. Take Action.

A good assessment includes scores as well as action plans for improving your skills. Your Emotional Intelligence Appraisal feedback report will provide you with specific and practical steps for ramping up your awareness of feelings and ability to manage emotion-laden interactions. To start seeing immediate progress, it's best to choose no more than one or two goals related to the core EQ skill area in which you need the most improvement. Trying to work on any more than a couple of behaviors at any one time will be overwhelming and ultimately ineffective. After a couple of months, you can then add another goal to the list and continue developing.

3. Set Goals.

No improvement process is worth undertaking without first establishing goals. You might be fired up in the

beginning, but after a few days and weeks with no way to mark your progress or no set endpoint, you will almost certainly fall off track. It's not a matter of laziness or motivation as much as it is human nature. That's why the Emotional Intelligence Appraisal® comes with a proprietary Goal-Tracking System that allows you to set specific behavioral goals for you to work on. The system automatically sends you email reminders once a quarter, once a month, or however often you choose to be reminded. 📧 *January 2010*



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