



Star performance

It is highly recognised that emotional skills are central to the success of organisations. Emotional skills are sometimes brushed aside as soft skills. Soft skills are sometimes broken down into personal attributes, such as: optimism, common sense, responsibility, a sense of humour, integrity, time-management, motivation. In addition, interpersonal abilities, such as empathy, leadership, communication, the ability to teach, good manners and sociability are included.

It's often said that hard skills will get you an interview but you need soft skills to get (and keep) the job.

In the current climate of austerity and reducing financial deficits, all organisations will be looking to increase their effectiveness and efficiency. This requires star performance from all employees. Martyn Newman concedes that Emotional Capitalists are the New Leaders.¹ So how does leadership contribute to star performance? The research relating to star performance has consistently shown that people who outperform their peers score significantly higher on emotional self-knowing, self-actualisation, empathy, inter-personal relationships, adaptability, problem-solving and stress management.²

What differentiates star performance from the rest?

A study cited in Emotional Intelligence and Your Success³ highlighted that the United States Air Force identified a problem with its recruitment and retention. Approximately 50% of recruiters were leaving employment within a short period time. The Air Force followed up by participating in a large study that examined the role of emotional intelligence and the impact on recruitment and retention. The research compared self-reported emotional intelligence data and actual performance data with other data. The results showed that many of the same components were correlated.

The five factors that were most likely to be translated into success were: assertiveness, empathy, happiness, self-awareness and problem-solving. Focus on the recruitment and retention of new employees involved a follow-up study after one year. The study consisted of the use of emotional intelligence testing in conjunction with specifically developed emotional intelligence interviews with the aim to improve the retention. Worldwide retention improved by 92%, at a cost savings to the Air Force of an estimated \$2.7M.⁴

How many organisations are taking notice of a person's ability to cope with stress?

In 1992 the CBI calculated that in the UK, 360 million working days were lost annually through sickness at a cost to organisations of £8 billion.⁵ By 2003 the CBI estimate was closer to £11.6 billion and in 2004 reached £12.25 billion. The CBI puts the total cost to the economy of mental health and stress problems at £5 billion a year⁶. The ability to withstand adverse events and stressful situations without developing physical or emotional symptoms by actively coping with stress is a necessary requirement for leaders and employees. This ability is based on three competencies:

1. The capacity to choose courses of action for dealing with stress (being resourceful and effective, being able to come up with suitable methods, knowing what to do and how to do it);
2. An optimistic disposition toward new experiences and change in general and one's ability to successfully overcome the specific problem at hand;
3. A feeling that one can control or influence the stressful situation by staying calm and maintaining control.⁷

Martyn Newman explains that in creating optimism, one needs to look on the brighter side of life as well as sensing opportunities. Even in the face of adversity, it is imperative

to have a sense of positivity and well-being. Treating yourself kindly, or simply trusting that you can eventually achieve your goals, are all optimism strategies. Other ways to become more optimistic include:

- When faced with a challenging situation, look for the positive benefit. Step back from the perceived crisis and recast it not as a catastrophe and a threat but as a challenge and an opportunity.
- Seek the valuable lesson in every problem or difficulty.
- Let go of the negative emotion that events cause and, instead, focus on the task to be accomplished.⁸

Kate Cannon's work at American Express Financial Services⁹ saying emotional skills can be improved in the work environment – is well documented. Kate designed a programme to improve Emotional Intelligence. The outcome of the programme was that sales staff showed improvement in their performance at work and that many of the same staff reported greater success in dealing with situations that arose in their personal lives. Within the aforementioned study group, the Emotional Intelligence factors that showed the most change, especially among those who initially scored low, were assertiveness, empathy, reality testing, self-actualisation, self-regard and optimism.

Beacon Organisational Development invites people and organisations to improve their star performance. We offer a menu of strategies to improve your leadership and star performance in a particular focus with the use of:

1. Emotional Capital Individual Report
2. Emotional Capital 360 Report
3. Emotional Capital (Employment) Selection Report

1 Martyn Newman, Emotional Capitalists: The New Leaders. Jossey-Bass 2010

2 D. Rosete and J. Ciarrochi, "Emotional Intelligence and Its Relationship to Workplace Performance Outcomes in Leadership Effectiveness," Leadership and Organizational Development Journal, 26 (2005): 388-399

3 Emotional Intelligence and Your Success, Steven J Stein and Howard E. Book. Jossey Bass 2006, Chapter 18

4 United States General Accounting Office, Testimony before the Subcommittee on Military Personnel, committee on National Security, House of Representatives, Military Attrition: DOD Needs to Better Analyse Reasons for Separation and Improving Recruiting Systems, March 12, 1998, (GAO/T-NSIAD-98-117)

5 Stress Prevention in the Workplace - Assessing the Costs and Benefits to Organisation" by Prof. Cary L Cooper and Dr. Susan Cartwright (both of Manchester School of Management, UMIST); Prof. Paula Liukkonen, Department of Economics, University of Stockholm, Sweden. Published by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

6 ibid

7 Definition adapted from R. Bar-On. Bar-On Emotional Quotient Inventory Technical Manual (Toronto: Multi-Health Systems 1997), p.18-19

8 Martyn Newman

9 Kate Cannon, personal communication, 1998: G. Sitarenios Pre-Analysis: American Express Co. Employees (Toronto: Multi-Health systems, 1998. See also Tony Schwartz, "How Do You Feel?" Fast Company, 35 (June 2000) p.296

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