

Emotional Intelligence (EI) Development for Information Professionals: Towards a Holistic EI Training Program

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This research aims to: 1) demonstrate a connection between emotional competencies and successful information and knowledge-related work, and 2) identify common components of emotional competency training programs, to develop such a program for information professionals.

Emotions have long been overlooked in organizations (Arvey & Murphy, 1998), perceived as being irrational, personal, and feminine (Putnam & Mumby, 1993), or thought to hinder efficiency, by getting in the way of sound judgment (Grandey, 2000). Goleman (1995) discredited this perception with his work on Emotional Intelligence (EI). Along with others (e.g., Bogdan, 2008; Elfenbein, 2007; Salovey & Mayer, 1990), Goleman legitimized emotions as an integral aspect of organizational life, viewed as the main rationale for essential organizational outcomes (e.g., policies, procedures, culture, individual performance, etc.) (Bogdan, 2008; Praner, 2008). Emotions are also found to play a significant role in influencing worker motivation, interpersonal work relationships, career satisfaction, and overall willingness to engage in pro-social behaviour (Mozié & Razak, 2014; Palmer et al., 2005; Praner, 2008).

EI is “the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves and for managing emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships” (Goleman, 2006, p. 317). EI is divided into four dimensions: *self-awareness*, *self-management*, *empathy/social awareness*, and *relationship management* (Goleman, 2013). These form the basis for developing emotional competencies required for effective organizational performance (Fernandez-Berrocal & Extremera, 2006) and higher performance and productivity of knowledge workers (Farkas & Török, 2011; Mozié & Razak, 2014; Praner, 2008). Emotional competencies and EI are positively associated with organizational trustworthiness, teamwork, knowledge sharing, commitment (de Geofroy & Evans, 2017; Goleman et al., 2013; Gujral & Ahuja, 2011; Gurbuz, 2012; Knight et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2010; Luca & Tarricone, 2011; Mustafa et al., 2014), and citizenship behaviour (Zamahani & Rezaei, 2014), all of which are integral aspects of information and knowledge work.

Individuals aware of their emotions, develop mechanisms for self-evaluation, reflection, and correction (Leary, 2007). For instance, people who feel guilty tend to experience empathy towards those they harmed and are inclined to engage in corrective behaviours (Tangney, 1992). Managing one’s emotions is also essential to knowledge work. For example, negative emotions hinder focused attention, which is required to enable knowledge workers’ efficiency, and overall productivity (Hunter & Scherer, 2009).

EI research, training, and practice are also beneficial to library and information management. Leaders in libraries with EI skills are better able to provide direction, build shared vision, and motivate employees to support the overall library mission (Kreitz, 2009; Porter, 2010). There is also significant evidence that they lead and manage change more effectively (Hernon, Giesecke, & Alire, 2007; Klare, Behney, & Kenny, 2014; Kreitz, 2009; Martin, 2016; McKeown & Bates, 2013). Other benefits include an increase in overall productivity and effectiveness of the library

(Kreitz, 2009; Porter, 2010; Promis, 2008), enhanced problem solving and creativity (Kreitz, 2009; Martin, 2016), the development (Martin, 2016) and adoption (Osuigwe, Ezeani, & Anyaoku, 2013) of more innovative services, as well as more effective customer service (McKeown & Bates, 2013). In addition, library leaders with EI competencies are better at building staff relationships (Porter, 2010; McKeown & Bates, 2013) and manage higher performing and more efficient teams (Khan, Masrek, & Nadzar, 2015; Kreitz, 2009; Porter, 2010; Martin, 2016; Wilkinson, 2015). These libraries also have better job environments (Khan, Masrek, & Nadzar, 2015; Osuigwe, Ezeani, & Anyaoku, 2013), with higher moral, trust (Porter, 2010, Promis, 2008; Wilkinson, 2015), commitment (Khan, Masrek, & Nadzar, 2014), and reduced employee turnover (Porter, 2010).

However, library managers rarely receive formal management training as part of their library degrees, and even less guidance in managing and motivating employees, which requires strong EI skills (Khan, Masrek, & Nadzar, 2015; Porter, 2010; Promis, 2008). Further, despite acknowledging the need for such skills (Lynch, 2001), it does not appear that libraries are soliciting EI competencies when hiring (Promis, 2008), or training these soft skills to employees once they are hired (Porter, 2010). Nevertheless, EI skills are vital, as libraries are increasingly using project teams (Promis, 2008), which require employees to effectively manage their own emotions and those of their coworkers (Martin, 2016).

Analyzing Existing EI Training Programs

EI training programs are increasingly being embraced by information and knowledge-based organizations (Cherniss et al., 1998; Goleman, 1995; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). However, there is no consensus on the criteria for a holistic training program (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2010; Grant, 2007; Riggio & Lee, 2007), possibly because there is no consensus on a conceptualization of EI (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2010). Moreover, not all authors are explicit about the theoretical foundations on which they developed their program.

Building on the work of McEnrue, Groves, and Shen (2010), who critically examined twelve empirically tested EI training programs, a search of the literature on EI training was conducted across, Google Scholar, all the ProQuest databases, ERIC and Emerald. The search terms included: “emotional intelligence”, “emotional competence”, “social competence”, “emotional intelligence training”, “training”, “teaching” and “programs”. Considering the limited amount of research on the topic, no publication date was set as a search criterion. In total, twenty EI training studies were retrieved.

McEnrue et al. (2010) suggested the importance of “well-designed ‘clinical trials’ of EI assessment and development tools” (p. 9); therefore, each study showed evidence of empirically testing a training program. The authors also suggest other important inclusion criteria, such as evidence of “the conceptual model of EI employed, the measure that served as the criterion, participants, duration of training, nature of activities, experimental design, and outcome reported by researchers.” (p. 9). Using a similar analysis, comparisons were made across all twenty training programs, identifying common characteristics in theory, duration, procedure (activities, lectures, workshops), and assessment.

Despite a variety in EI training approaches, many of the programs shared commonalities. The following common characteristics are discussed below: 1) theoretical foundations; 2) duration; 3) grounding in self-awareness; 4) combining theory and practice; 5) combining individual and team learning; and 6) incorporating assessment and feedback (see Table 1 for more detail).

Table 1: Summary of EI Training Study Results

Empirical Studies	Theoretical Foundation	Dur.	Self-awareness	Theory + Practice	Ind. + Team Learning	Assessment + Feedback
Bardzil & Slaski 03	Bar-On 97	4 wks	Yes	N/A	N/A	Pre and post training assessment by self and line managers
Jaeger 03	Bar-On 97	4 mos.	Yes	Lecture, required readings, case studies, group project	Yes	Pre and post-training self-assessment, feedback with org. psychologist
Slaski & Cartwright 03	Bar-On 97; Dulewicz & Higgs 99; 00	4 wks (1 day/wk)	Yes	Short lectures, group discussions, role play, paired exercises	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment, and feedback with facilitator.
Beigi & Shirmohammadi 10	Boyatzis et. al. 00	8 wks	N/A	Lecture and 75-min discussion, in-class workshops	Yes	360° assessment pre and post training
Boyatzis et al. 02	Goleman 95; 98	MBA program	N/A	N/A	N/A	360° assessments pre and post training, skills profile, interview, group discussion, and presentation exercise
Cherniss et al. 98	Goleman 95; 98	N/A	Yes	Role-play, emulation, visualization	Ind. Only	Pre training 360° assessment
Clark et al. 03	Goleman 95; 98	4 mos.	Yes	Mgmt. readings, experiential learning in-class/ practice outside	Yes.	Pre and post training self-assessment
Latif 04	Goleman 95; 98	4 mos.	Yes	Lecture, self-awareness exercises, progress journal, debates, presentations	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment, assessment of group activities, instructor assessment of student
Turner & Lloyd-Walker 08	Goleman 95; 98	2 wks	Yes	Lecture, group discussions, exercises, case studies, online reading material, group projects	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment
Mausolff et al. 06	Mayer & Salovey 90	13.5h	N/A	Listing feeling words, role play, active listening exercises, group discussion, listening of common irrational assumptions, journal development and discussion, self-control tactics	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment
Murray & Jordan 06	Mayer & Salovey 90	2.5 days	N/A	N/A	N/A	Pre and post training self-assessment
Murray & Lawrence 06	Mayer & Salovey 90	1.5 days in 2wks	N/A	Course on supportive communication, conflict resolution, and goal setting	N/A	Pre and post training self-assessment
Murray et al. 05	Mayer & Salovey 90	4 days	N/A	N/A	N/A	Pre and post training self-assessment
Meyer et al. 04	Mayer & Salovey 90; 97	1 day	N/A	Lecture, discussion with facilitators, team building exercises	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment
Clarke 10	Mayer & Salovey 97	14 wks	Yes	Lecture, ind. and group exercises, team report	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment
Grant 07	Mayer & Salovey 97	13 wks	N/A	Weekly workshops with action learning, face-to-face training	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment
Groveset al. 08	Mayer & Salovey 97	11 wks	Yes	Self-development plan, coaching, on-site exercises, interview, critique, readings, progress report, film clips, 1-on-1 meeting with instructor, journal/summary of learning	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment
Gruicic & Benton 15	Mayer & Salovey 97	8 wks	N/A	Ind. mind/body training, role play	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment
Moriarty et al. 03	Mayer & Salovey 97	12 wks (24h)	Yes	Lectures, group project and presentation	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment, peer evaluation
Kotsou et al. 11	Petrides & Furnham 03	2.5 days (15h)	Yes	Readings, 2 training days, half-day course session (3 hr), email with follow-up exercises	Yes	Pre and post training self-assessment

Theoretical Foundations: The ability-based model (Mayer & Salovey, 1997) appears to be the most empirically tested theoretical foundation for developing EI training programs, because it conceptualizes EI as a set of interrelated abilities (versus personality traits or dispositions), which suggests that they can be improved through training (Wong et al., 2007). Furthermore, the conceptualization of EI determines its measurement and, unlike self-reported EI measurement tools, ability-based ones are less susceptible to social desirability effects and faking (Clarke, 2010; Whitman et al., 2008). Moreover, the ability-model is differentiable from measures of personality and cognitive intelligence (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Day & Carroll, 2004; Groves et al., 2008; O’Conner & Little, 2003; Palmer et al., 2005). Ability-based measurement tools also distinguish between the actual development of EI abilities and the mere motivation to use those abilities (Clarke, 2010).

Program Duration: While arguments exist for short training programs (Kotsou et al., 2011), Grant (2007) demonstrated that longer (e.g., spaced 13-week) programs provide a larger improvement of EI abilities than, for example, a 2-day block-intensive program (see Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2010). Depending on their complexity, certain EI competencies take longer to develop and/or improve, with some requiring 3 to 6+ months of practice (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2010; Goleman, 2006). Goleman (2006) argues, the longer the training, the more EI competencies can be developed and/or improved.

Grounding Self-awareness: Self-awareness is the cornerstone of EI (Bar-On, 1997; Goleman, 1995; 2013) and foundational for successful EI training (Clarke, 2010; Groves et al., 2008; Kotsou et al., 2011; McKeown & Bates, 2013; Moriarty et al., 2003; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). Since it is a prerequisite of self-management, empathy, and effective relationship-management, it is an important starting point for all EI training (Goleman, 2013). Individuals must be aware of their own emotions in order to learn how to regulate them (Goleman, 2013; Kotsou et al., 2011).

Combining Theory and Practice: Many EI training programs provide limited information regarding the nature of their specific interventions (e.g., activities, workshops, lectures, etc.) (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2010). However, programs designed exclusively around theory-based learning are not effective in changing behaviour or breaking/replacing long-established habits (Moriarty & Buckley, 2003), because behavioural changes require regular practice. Developing EI competencies requires experiential methods, such as role-play (e.g., replaying an incident), emulation (i.e., observing and imitating behaviour), and visualization (e.g., anticipating stressful situations and adopting adequate behaviours) (Cherniss et al., 1998; Goleman, 2004). Other practical training activities include film clips, diary keeping, and paired exercises (Groves et al., 2008; Latif, 2004; Mausolff et. al, 2006; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003). Furthermore, EI improvement depends on practice intensity (i.e., the time spent on practicing is more important than the frequency) (Clarke, 2010; Gruicic & Benton, 2015).

Combining Individual and Team Learning: Self-motivation and commitment to training is required for developing EI competencies and for behavioural change to occur (Cherniss et al., 1998). However, the best results are obtained when individual learning is combined with team-based learning (Clarke, 2010). Team-based learning is conducive to the development of emotional abilities, because team environments generate substantial emotional experiences (Clarke, 2010; Groves et al., 2008; Moriarty & Buckley, 2003).

Valuing Assessment and Feedback: All the programs measure improvement with an EI assessment at the beginning and the end of training. Since it is difficult for individuals to objectively reflect on their learning, Cherniss et al. (1998) suggest using a third party to assess

the individual (e.g., a 360-degree evaluation), since third party feedback reduces the potential for biases (Moriarty & Buckley, 2003). Assessments should be accompanied by frequent feedback throughout the program, as a significant motivator for change (Cherniss et al., 1998). This is particularly true when feedback is implemented along the right support structure (e.g., coaches, mentors, etc., who help the learner sustain their motivation and practice EI competencies) (Cherniss et al., 1998; Slaski & Cartwright, 2003).

A full-length manuscript will elaborate on these commonalities and outline techniques for training specific emotional competencies. Future research can then test this EI training program framework using quantitative and experimental approaches.

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