Emotional Intelligence for Technical Professionals

- James Terrell & Marcia Hughes

When technical professionals, such as engineers or IT pros, need to lead teams and manage projects without direct line authority, it can create a perfect storm of problems… unless they understand how to get the emotional dynamics of their relationships and teamwork working *for* them! Emotions are invisible dynamic waveforms that have as much or more influence on cooperation and productivity as the most compelling rational arguments. This may not seem fair to the more rationally inclined, however in the decision making process the emotional brain votes first on the constant stream of environmental data and consequently predisposes much of rational thought and behavior.

In high performance organizations some of the highly trained technical specialists support and improve current technology while others are needed to lead innovation for the next generation of products. Organizations also must have leaders and managers to coordinate all of these complex individual and team efforts. Some level of skills will already be available; nevertheless emotional effectiveness training and coaching can help everyone get even better. Fortunately, the communication skills that empower leaders and managers to coordinate and communicate effectively are generic to being human. Leaders of technical teams, as well as all other leaders, are called upon to address the need to feel recognized, appreciated, respected and relied on to make a valuable contribution to the workflow. However, just because these are common needs does not mean they are easy to address.

The *quantitative*, analytical strengths for which technical experts often get promoted to managing people are not the necessary tools for guiding relationships -- not even close. Learning to recognize what motivates people to do their best work and cooperate with others (or causes them to slack off, be oppositional, lazy, or destructively competitive) is a *qualitative* skill set dealing with subjective forces and tolerances. Because so much of human behavior is driven by unconscious dynamics, the cognitive skills that make great engineers and help people solve objective, concrete problems cannot be used to help people reduce stress, resolve conflict, or sustain their optimism in tough times.   The good news is that everyone can develop and improve their emotional effectiveness through training and practice, especially when supported by a coaching relationship that lasts three months or more

Dr. Reuven Bar-On made a remarkable contribution in developing the *Emotional Quotient inventory* and the *EQ 360*. He identified the 15 critical dynamics of emotionally effective

relationships and presented them in a user-friendly assessment that has been translated into many languages and administered around the globe. These skills are at the core of effective relationships between leaders in business and the people who follow them. The magic is that the subjective skills can now be measured accurately with a reliable and scientifically validated instrument and everyone can clearly see where they stand via the straight-forward graphs. The EQi Business Report has a helpful coaching section which describes in detail which behaviors to work on to improve each of the 15 skills.

The *Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey*®, or TESI®, is scientifically validated to measure the seven critical dynamics of emotionally effective *teamwork* and gives the team a snapshot of the team members' composite view of the team's performance, together with demographic breakouts and a confidential graph for each team member comparing his or her own scores to that average.

Ultimately employees always have the final say over whether or not they do their best work and cooperate as fully as possible with their coworkers. No one can *make* them be motivated and productive. So, effective leadership becomes a matter of learning how to influence all kinds of people with all kinds of personal needs and agendas to create a positive workplace and sustainable productivity. Otherwise, as the Gallup research showed, people will quit companies they love because of a bad boss or supervisor.

Emotionally effective leadership and teamwork are no longer a mystery. We know precisely what skills are necessary and how to help our teams and leaders learn them. Now that we can finally measure people's current level of effectiveness in these behaviors we can teach them what to practice in order to improve, show them how their customers, peers, direct reports, managers, and families experience the effectiveness of using these same skills, and retest to show the concrete proof of their own improvement.

In summary, the three tier approach for introducing emotional intelligence through team assessment (TESI), self-assessment (EQi), and peer review (EQ 360) enables teams and their members to develop a working knowledge of the critical skills for effective communication and engagement and to know what specifically to practice to improve their personal and professional lives. The TESI is the Team Emotional and Social Intelligence Survey, the EQi is a self assessment on the 15 core skills and the EQ 360 is the assessment other key people in the leader's world fill out regarding the use of those same fifteen skills.