

# Developing Your 'EQ'

What is the most valuable contribution employees make to their companies, knowledge or judgment? I say judgment. Knowledge, no matter how broad, is intangible until it is applied.

And application takes judgment, which involves something of a sixth sense--a high performance of the psyche.

This raises interesting questions about the best training for today's businesspeople. As Daniel Goleman suggests in his new book, *Emotional Intelligence*, the latest scientific findings seem to indicate that brainy but dogmatic people don't have the right stuff in an age when organizational adaptability is the key to survival.

In a recent cover story, *Time* magazine sifted through the current thinking on intelligence and reported, "New brain research suggests that emotions, not IQ, may be the true measure of human intelligence." The bottom-line significance of what *Time* called "EQ" was suggested by management expert Karen Boylston: "Customers are telling businesses, 'I don't care if every member of your staff graduated from Harvard, Stanford and Wharton. I will take my business and go where I am understood and treated with respect.'"

If the evolutionary pressures of the marketplace are making EQ, not IQ, the hot ticket for business success, it seems likely that individuals will want to know how to cultivate it. I have a modest proposal: Embrace a highly personal practice aimed at improving these four adaptive skills:

► **Raising consciousness.** Psychologists have called this process meta cognition, Buddhist monks know it as mindfulness. I think of it as thinking differently on purpose. It's about noticing what you are feeling and thinking and escaping the conditioned confines of one's past. Raise your consciousness by catching yourself in the act of thinking as often as possible. Routinely take note of

## EQ, not IQ, may be the hot ticket for success,

your emotions and ask if you're facing facts or indulging a bias.

► **Using imagery.** This is what you see Olympic ski racers doing before entering the starting gate. With their eyes closed and bodies swaying, they run the course in their minds first, which improves their performance. You can do the same by setting aside time each day to dream with gusto

about what you want to achieve.

► **Framing and reframing events to choose the most creative response to them.** When the Greek Stoic Epictetus said 2,000 years ago that it isn't events that matter but our opinion of them, this is what he was talking about. Every time something important happens, assign as many interpretations to it as possible, even zany ones. Then go with the interpretation most supportive of your dreams.

► **Integrating the perspectives of others.** Brain research shows that our view of the world is *physiologically limited* by our genes and the experiences we've had. Learning to incorporate the useful perspectives of others is nothing less than a form of amplifying your senses. The next time someone interprets something differently from you--say, the verdict of the Simpson trial--pause to reflect on the role of life experience and consider it a gift of perception.

The magnetism of habit--literally the electromagnetism of neural path

ways--will pull you away from practicing these skills. Keep at it, however, because they are based on what we're learning about the mechanisms of the mind.

Within the first six months of life the human brain doubles in neural capacity; it doubles again by age four and then grows rapidly until adolescence. The body has about a hundred billion nerve cells, and every experience triggers a neural response that literally shapes our senses. The mind, we now know, is not confined to the brain but is distributed throughout the body's cellular universe. Yes, we do think with our hearts, brains, muscles, blood and bones.

During a single momentous three week period of adolescence, metabolism of the brain is cut in half. That done, we are "biologically wired" with what Dr. Robert Livingston, one of the nation's leading brain researchers, calls our own "world view." Livingston says it is impossible for any two people to see the world exactly alike, so unique is the experience that molded the apparatus with which they "know."

However, it is not only possible to change your world view, he says, it's actually easier than overcoming a chemical dependency. But you need a discipline for doing it. Hence, the method recommended here.

No, it's not a curriculum in the sense that an MBA is. But the latest research seems to imply that without the software of emotional maturity and self-knowledge, the hardware of academic training alone is worth less and less.

---

MICHAEL O'BRIEN, Ed.D., is president of O'Brien Group, Cincinnati, Ohio, an Executive Coaching and consulting firm. He is the author of *Profit From Experience: A Handbook for Learning, Growth and Change* (Berkley, 1998) and *the Learning Organization Practices Profile*. Dr O'Brien also conducts "Profit from Experience" presentations and workshops. For more information, call 513821-9580.