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## Tap Your Emotional Intelligence to Engage Your Employees



When it comes to employee engagement, your emotional intelligence (EI) may be more important in connecting with—and retaining—employees than your general intelligence quotient (IQ). And with more than 70 percent of employees detached from their work, disengagement has become an acute problem in business. It comes at a cost of more than \$500B annually, as a result of lower productivity, greater turnover and lower sales.

As managers, we tend to focus much of our time at work chasing intellectual pursuits like solving challenging business problems, rather than unraveling the complexities of human emotion. But, studies conducted within the last few decades show a strong correlation between EI and employee engagement. These findings are important because they tell us where we should focus our efforts to improve loyalty among—and interpersonal relationships with—staff.

Emotional intelligence deals with the ability to manage our own emotions and influence the emotions of others. However, EI is more than just understanding emotions; having a high EI also allows you to examine the factors impacting business situations and address them appropriately by assessing the emotional elements of a situation. And while IQ remains relatively stable throughout your lifespan, you *can* improve your emotional intelligence.

### **Make the investment.**

Since a *lack* of emotional intelligence can significantly impact the engagement level of your team and the individuals within it, investing time in improving your EI has a definite payoff. Higher employee engagement leads to higher satisfaction at work, lower turnover, improved productivity, increased sales, higher profits and greater shareholder returns.

So, what do you need to focus on to improve your own emotional intelligence and increase employee engagement?

Below are the five elements comprising EI. Actively working on these areas will help improve your emotional intelligence and your staff's connection with you—and your organization.

1. **Self-awareness** is the ability to recognize and understand your own emotions; it concerns awareness of how your actions and moods affect others.
2. **Self-regulation** refers to the ability to control and manage your emotions. Regulating your emotions means that you express them in the right place, at the right time and in the right way.
3. **Empathy** is the ability to put yourself in someone else's place and understand what they're feeling. It's a critical element in the realm of EI and is one of the key factors that makes us human.
4. **Motivation** refers to the intrinsic (internal to self) and extrinsic (external to self) mechanisms that propel us to achieve a goal and fuel us to work through challenges.
5. **Social skills** help build connections and relationships through active listening, verbal communication skills, leadership and persuasiveness.

To develop your EI, focus on what you can do to improve one or more of the areas noted here. Consider how others view you in the workplace by asking a trusted colleague to share his or her insights about your behavior. Then, create an action plan to tackle the area(s) you've identified for improvement.

It will take some time before you'll see the results of your efforts, as your team will need to see consistent and continuous behavior change before their engagement will increase. Just treat every day as a new opportunity to rise to the challenge of engaging your employees and improving your own—and their—outlook.

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