

How high is your EI?

EI is now thought to account for up to 70% of our effectiveness in the workplace.

John Howard had a folksy version of 'it' going, and it helped make him the 2nd-longest serving Australian prime minister, despite his impediments.

Kevin Rudd has a twisted version of 'it', and at times you wonder if he has in fact lost 'it' – particularly after the accusations of "expletive-riddled brain explosions" following his 'sh#tstorm' comments early this year, and his tendency for dropping the f-bomb in party meetings.

Without 'it', teamwork would be impossible, leadership ineffective, customers would desert our businesses, and our lives would be less rewarding.

'It' is Emotional Intelligence, or EI.

EI is a personality trait that enables us to use emotions effectively. It includes recognising, understanding, managing, and expressing emotions in ourselves, and evaluating and influencing emotion in those around us.

It's important at work. A 2008 survey found that employers increasingly value EI for successfully managing and for working in teams, and are dissatisfied with the EI of many graduates, saying they lack empathy, self-awareness and thoughtfulness. At the same time, younger staff members often question the EI of their managers or team leaders. But how can you tell if you have - or anyone has - EI?

Demonstrating high EI includes:

- Recognising, expressing and regulating our own emotions.
- Recognising emotions in other people, and influencing them.
- Non-verbal expression - communicating emotions through movement, gesture and facial expression.
- Empathy, willingness to understand the emotions of others - 'walk a mile in their shoes'.

EI can be measured, and the result is sometimes referred to as EQ (similarly to the old IQ measures). However unlike EQ, IQ is overrated as a predictor of success in life. We've all probably known the maths genius who struggled to relate to peers, or the successful politician who couldn't control their anger and faked normal emotions (sorry Kev!).

We ideally apply our EI to areas including decision-making and pursuing life goals, including:

- Using intuition to expand options for life planning and major decisions.
- Incorporating emotions into our creative thinking.
- Staying motivated, optimistic and persevering.
- Interpreting strong negative emotions in a positive light.

And high-EI strategies help us enormously at work, especially when handling conflicts.

Handling conflicts.

Steps towards handling a conflict¹, as noted by Goleman in "Working with Emotional Intelligence", demand high EI:

- First, calm down, tune in to your feelings, and express them (responsibly).
- Show willingness to work things out by talking, rather than aggressively escalating the issue.
- State your points in neutral language rather than an argumentative tone.
- Work together to find equitable resolutions that both parties can embrace.



EI and Leadership.

And as for leadership, we've all known leaders who can deliver an inspiring vision for their business, organisation or country (and some who can't!). It takes great know-how, and also that mysterious and compelling quality of charisma.

Daniel Goleman in *Working with Emotional Intelligence* says that charisma depends on three factors: feeling strong emotions, being able to express them forcefully, and being an emotional sender, not just a receiver. Highly expressive people communicate through facial expressions, voice, and gesture – and they captivate, move and inspire us.

There are many more areas where EI comes to the fore, including great customer service where the key to is to be a superb communicator, in touch with your emotions and those of your customers.

As well as being tested and measured, EI can be developed, building the behaviours that emotionally intelligent people naturally demonstrate. It's important while practicing new behaviours to keep it real. This might be where Howard had an edge over Rudd – even if we didn't agree, no-one doubted his authenticity, even when he used planned emotional strategies to connect with the masses. We'll watch with interest to see how Kevin's EI develops!

An EI assessment can be completed easily online. If you'd like some support with testing or building EI, for teams, individuals or leaders, you are welcome to give us a call on 5442-6445.

¹ assuming both parties are ultimately willing to resolve it, a different approach is needed if not.