



# Emotional intelligence and competence in a knowledge citizen's world

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## Introduction

Throughout this series of articles on information and knowledge citizenship, we have continually emphasized that knowledge citizenship is a personal choice, a set of behaviours that an individual embraces and actively carries out, a commitment to themselves as well as to others. Knowledge citizenship is about taking Peter Drucker's concept of a knowledge worker one step further.

A recent conference presentation highlighted the importance of emotional intelligence in knowledge management, which induced the writer to consider whether a knowledge citizen is actually a typical knowledge worker conceptually with a relatively high degree of emotional intelligence. Having reviewed literature about emotional intelligence, the writer found a closer link with emotional competence.

The author therefore compares the emotional intelligence competence framework to the various attributes that (as was discovered) a typical knowledge citizen would present.

## Defining emotional intelligence and emotional competence

Emotional intelligence is a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and action (Salovey and Meyer, as cited in Cherniss 2000). It has as much to do with knowing how and when to express emotion as it does with controlling it.

Dulewicz and Higgs (cited in Russell and Land) refer to emotional intelligence as achieving one's goals through the ability to manage one's own feelings and emotions, being sensitive to and able to influence key people and being able to balance one's own motives and drives with conscientious and ethical behaviour.

While emotional intelligence is not a strong predictor of job performance, it does provide the bedrock for emotional competencies that are. Goleman (Emmerling and Goleman 2003) represents this idea by making a distinction between emotional intelligence and emotional competence. Emotional competence refers to the personal and social skills that lead to superior performance in the world of work.

Emotional competencies are linked to and are based on emotional intelligence. A certain level of emotional intelligence is necessary to learn emotional competence. For example, the ability to recognize accurately what another person is feeling enables one to develop a specific competency such as influence. Similarly, people who are better able to regulate their emotions will find it easier to develop a competency such as initiative (Cherniss 2000).

Goleman identifies five emotional competencies (Emmerling and Goleman 2003):

- The ability to identify and name one's emotional states and to understand the link between emotions, thought and action

- The capacity to manage one's emotional states – to control emotions or to shift undesirable emotional states to more adequate ones
- The ability to enter into emotional states (at will) associated with a drive to achieve and be successful
- The capacity to read, be sensitive to and influence other people's emotions
- The ability to enter and sustain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.

While several theories associated with the emotional intelligence paradigm currently exist, all share a common desire to understand and measure the abilities and traits related to recognizing and regulating emotions in ourselves and others. All the theories seek to understand how individuals perceive, understand, utilize and manage emotions in an effort to predict and foster personal effectiveness (Emmerling and Goleman 2003).

### **Emotional intelligence competence framework**

This framework as presented by Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (cited in Boyatzis and Van Oosten 2002) includes the following:

#### **Personal competence**, including the:

- *self-awareness cluster*, which is recognizing and understanding your emotions in the moment as well as your tendencies across time and situation. It includes individuals who are neither overly critical nor unrealistically hopeful but honest with themselves and others. It extends to a person's understanding of his or her value and goals; and
- *self-management cluster*, which includes using awareness of emotions to manage response to different situations and people. It includes the ability to roll with the changes, suspend judgement, seek out information and listen, then move forward with new initiatives (Goleman cited in Hopper 2005). Generosity is an act of self-regulation and closely matches with traits of being accessible to others and tolerating some mistakes.

#### **Social competence**, including the:

- *social awareness cluster*, which includes understanding the perspectives of other people including their motivations, their emotions and the meaning of what they do and say; and
- *relationship management cluster*, which includes using awareness of one's own emotions and the emotions of others to manage relationships to a successful outcome. It refers to an individual proficiency in managing relationships and building networks.

### **Emotional intelligence and competence and knowledge citizens**

Jubert (2006) presents a refreshing viewpoint that knowledge is the equivalent of information plus judgement. Knowledge provides context for people, ideas and experience and, therefore, transferred knowledge must be internalized before it can be used. In addition, knowledge management will have different meanings in different contexts. For example, knowledge management provides social capital for a knowledge worker community with social networks that encourage leadership, membership, trust, value and a knowledge-sharing attitude and behaviour. Knowledge management is about creative capital when it refers to our diversity of skills, emotional intelligence, knowledge creation and innovation.

In a knowledge environment, a knowledge citizen is focused on personal development, motivation and connectedness and has a high degree of self-commitment, work–life integration, individual competence building, is open to transfer of tacit knowledge and is generally an empowered individual. Goleman's definition of motivation applies to a person's own inner fire or drive as opposed to the inspirational effect a person has on others – a passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status and the propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. Clearly, he is describing what we know as knowledge citizens (Emmerling and Goleman 2003).

The basic tenants of knowledge management are around building relationships, sharing information, creating new ideas and increasing personal and group learning awareness to make sense of the world:

- Knowledge citizens build relationships by getting involved, meeting people, learning from each

other and sharing ideas, doing meaningful activities together, building trust and celebrating successes.

- Knowledge citizens create new ideas from learning from each other and they build on their experience, creating space for experiments, working in multidisciplinary, multicultural teams and establishing innovation and idea management processes.
- Knowledge citizens derive meaning from what they do by stimulating their creativity and building new competences, being motivated and being recognized by peers.

## Conclusion

Emotional intelligence expands our possibilities for personal impact. Its effect is contagious, creating inspiration and energy. Emotional intelligence is not new, but there is a growing body of research that suggests that these abilities are important for success. As the pace of change increases and the world of work makes even greater demands on a person's cognitive, emotional and physical resources, this particular set of abilities will become increasingly important. Emotional intelligence and competence is part of the intrinsic toolkit.

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