

Managing

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What's Your EQ?

Through my work coaching supervisory lawyers, I've met many who possess extraordinary technical and cognitive skills. They have clearly focused on developing these abilities. When it comes to supervising, however, these same lawyers have not developed the essential emotional abilities that would allow them to be effective leaders. So, just what are those emotional skills, and why is it so essential to cultivate them?

Emotional Competencies and the Six Leadership Styles

According to Daniel Goleman, author of *Emotional Intelligence* and *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, a leader's effectiveness is more than a matter of IQ. A highly important factor is emotional intelligence, or EQ. That is, the best leaders—including those in law firms—employ emotional intelligence competencies. They recognize and positively manage their own emotions as well as the emotions of others through a variety of developed abilities, including self-control, adaptability, optimism, political awareness, ability to develop others, collaboration and cooperation.

In fact, Goleman found through his research on leadership and EQ that of the skills the most successful leaders

employ in their supervisory roles, one-third are cognitive or technical competencies and *two-thirds* are emotional competencies. In other words, to be an effective supervisor, you need to develop your emotional intelligence.

Begin by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of your current supervisory style. You can then adapt it to fit the unique conditions and personality styles of those you supervise. Using emotional intelligence as a basis, Goleman has identified six leadership styles that can serve as your guideline. Each style has unique impacts on the working environment, some positive and some negative. Note that studies show that the best leaders do not rely on one style for every occasion. Rather, they use most of the styles depending on particular situations.

■ **The visionary style.** The visionary leader motivates others by sharing his or her vision, and it is the most effective of the leadership styles. The emotional intelligence competencies of people with this style include self-confidence, empathy and the ability to serve as a change catalyst. This style works best when a new vision or clear direction is needed. A visionary leader states a mission, sets standards and lets people know their work is furthering the group's goals. That means articulating where the group is going, but not how to get there—setting people free to innovate, experiment and take calculated risks. This is an excellent way to retain most valued employees.

■ **The coaching style.** The coaching leader's emotional competencies include empathy, self-awareness and developing others. This style is particularly effective in helping employees improve performance and cultivate professional strengths. Coaching involves in-depth conversations with employees that allow for exploration of their dreams and life goals. The focus is on personal development for the future, rather than simply accomplishing tasks. These leaders encourage employees to establish long-term development goals and help them create a plan to reach those goals. Linking daily work to long-term goals helps keep employees motivated.

■ **The affiliative style.** Affiliative leaders create harmony, build emotional bonds and put people first. Competencies include empathy, relationship building and communication. This type of leader focuses on keeping people happy, creating harmony and building team connections. Although the overall impact of this style is positive, when used alone, it can be detrimental. That's because affiliative leaders often fail to provide constructive advice on how to improve a product or situation—thus, employees are often left to figure things out on their own. In addition, poor performers can go on without correction, since affiliative leaders tend to focus solely on praise.

■ **The democratic style.** Democratic leaders are consensus builders. They are adept at collaboration, team leadership and communication. They lead by get-



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ting buy-in or input from employees, asking for ideas and listening to suggestions. Again, the overall impact is positive, but when used alone, this style can lead to important decisions being put off by endless consensus building.

■ **The pacesetter style.** Pacesetter leaders set high standards for performance. They expect excellence and they exemplify it. This type of leader can be focused on goals to the exclusion of interpersonal relationships and team harmony. This style is often viewed as highly negative because the leader can become obsessive about doing things better and faster, leaving employees left feeling pushed too hard by the demands. Moderate pressure, such as the challenge of meeting a deadline, can energize people. But relentless and continued high pressure can be debilitating. In these situations, innovative and creative thinking often disappear. True performance cannot be sustained. Pacesetters often lack empathy, self-awareness, emotional self-management, collaboration or the ability to communicate effectively. They are particularly poor at giving helpful performance feedback. This style works best when quick results are needed from a highly motivated and competent team.

■ **The commanding style.** These leaders demand immediate compliance. Competencies include achievement orientation, initiative and self-control. This "takeover" style works best in a crisis or with problem employees, and it can soothe fears in an emergency. In other situations, however, a leader with this style comes across as cold and intimidating. People feel disrespected, creativity disappears, motivation is depleted. Pride and satisfaction in work—which are big motivators for most high performers—erode. Performance feedback,

if given at all, focuses on what people did wrong. Too often, commanding leaders lack self-awareness, emotional self-control and empathy. They may display disgust and contempt for individuals, which makes this style's negative impact particularly devastating.

Putting EQ to Work

Emotional intelligence *can* be developed. So once you've identified your EQ supervisory style, consider its particular strengths and weaknesses. Decide how you can hone the strengths and overcome the negatives. In addition, identify other styles you would like to incorporate with your own to improve your effectiveness. Set clear goals for how you will develop the competencies associated with those styles.

Then take opportunities to practice your new competencies—remember, lasting change requires sustained practice. The effort, though, is worth it. As a result of developing your EQ, your success as a supervisor will be greatly enhanced, to the benefit of all. ▀

ACTION PLAN Learn more about EQ and leadership styles from these resources:

Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ by Daniel Goleman. Bantam Books, 1997.

Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee. Harvard Business School Press, 2002.

Working with Emotional Intelligence by Daniel Goleman. Bantam Books, 1998.