

*"I have been a supervisor for many years. One of the things I have learned, sometimes the hard way, is that it takes more than technical skill to effectively manage and motivate staff. It takes 'people skills.' I really want to be the kind of manager who engages and inspires employees. As I continue to develop my skills, what traits should I focus on? What skills should I try to cultivate?" These are great questions. Over the course of the next three Successful Supervisors, we will focus on three skills that effective managers need to have in their repertoire ... emotional and social intelligence, the ability to listen deeply and communicate authentically, and mindfulness. These are overlapping skills, but proficiency in these areas will go a long way toward moving you in the direction you want to go. Email EAP at [ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com](mailto:ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com) or contact your EAP account manager at 1-800-647-3327 with any questions or feedback.*

LifeSolutions Account Management Staff

Human relationships are complex in general and nowhere more so than in the workplace. Part of any manager's job is to be able to effectively communicate with employees, understand their needs, their competencies, and what motivates them, and inspire trust. Without taking the time to personally connect with and appreciate each employee, workday tasks and interpersonal interactions can become stressful and inefficient. The manager can end up spending valuable time putting out fires, struggling to motivate staff, and dealing with misunderstandings.

Two traits an inspiring leader will want to cultivate are:

- **Emotional Intelligence**
- **Social Intelligence**

#### **Emotional Intelligence**

First coined by Daniel Goleman in his book, "Emotional Intelligence ... Why it Can Matter More Than IQ," emotional intelligence or "EQ" describes a person's ability to be aware of and in greater control of his or her emotional reactions to others. It includes the following: (1) self-awareness or the ability to recognize one's own feelings and emotions *as they are occurring*, (2) the ability to express feelings in appropriate and helpful ways, (3) the ability to understand emotions in others and the capacity to respond with empathy, (4) resiliency and good stress management skills, (5) flexibility in response to changing circumstances, and (6) good judgment, particularly in regard to what to say when and to whom.

Emotional intelligence is not something we all just automatically have. It can be learned and sharpened, however, through intention and practice. EQ begins with the simple recognition that emotions matter both in you and in your response to others.

#### **Social Intelligence**

Introduced by Edward Thorndike in the 1920s, social intelligence has been described as the ability to connect with others in a way that facilitates cooperation and collaboration. The term gained wider recognition following the 2006 publication of "Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships," by Goleman. Goleman stated that social intelligence is a more important and basic skill than EQ. For managers, social intelligence is essential because their roles depend on a successful and genuine connection with those they lead.



According to Goleman, social intelligence competencies fall into two main categories:

- **social awareness**
- **social facility**

Social awareness describes those things that we sense about others — our intuition or “gut reaction.” Social facility describes how we use that information. For example, social facility refers to the concern or support we extend to others based on our awareness that the support is needed or would be helpful.

It would be a mistake to think that you either have this trait or you don't. As with emotional intelligence and even IQ, people tend to fall along a continuum. And we all possess the basic ability to develop or expand our skills to relate to others in positive ways.

#### **Why are these traits so important?**

As stated earlier, people in leadership positions need to be able to form a personal connection with the employees they are leading. This doesn't mean the manager should be “best friends” with supervisees. It does mean that in order to create an atmosphere of trust, confidence, and engagement, employees must believe that their manager genuinely cares about them not only as employees, but as individuals. Basically, relationships matter. If a manager lacks awareness or concern about his or her emotional impact on others, that manager will likely have a difficult time developing and maintaining the personal connection needed to genuinely lead employees. As the old saying goes, “I may forget what you said or what you did, but I will never forget how you made me feel.”

A manager's emotional impact on employees can be positive or negative. An unskilled supervisor may unwittingly upset or distress an employee and foster anxiety and disengagement. By the same token, an empathic and attentive supervisor can promote an atmosphere of calmness and creativity simply by virtue of her presence and relationship with the employee.

**Call LifeSolutions at 1.800.647.3327 if you would like to learn more about how to increase your emotional and social intelligence. Stay tuned for new fall workshops focused on coaching principles that you can apply to enhance employee engagement.**

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