

Are emotions or intelligence more important for being a successful leader? For most of modern human history, we believed the smarter a person was, the more successful they would be. However, that may not be the case.

John Meyer and Peter Salovey coined the term emotional intelligence (also referred to as EI or EQ) in 1990. It concerns acknowledging and recognizing emotions in oneself and others and is a crucial component of a successful leader.

What Is Emotional Intelligence?

Emotional intelligence is a person's ability to understand their emotions and the emotions of others and then to use this knowledge to influence behavior. Understanding and influencing the emotions of team members and staff makes reaching goals easier.

Emotional intelligence has four major components.

1. Self-awareness - the ability to accurately perceive your own emotions.

2. Self-management - (self-regulation) using awareness of your emotions to influence your behavior positively.

3. Social awareness - being able to understand and feel the emotions of others and why they may be occurring (empathy).

4. Relationship management - using the knowledge of your emotions and the emotions of others for successful personal interactions.

Is EQ More Important than IQ for Leaders?

Travis Bradberry is coauthor of "Emotional Intelligence 2.0". He points to research that tells us people with an average IQ will outperform those with the highest range of IQs an incredible 70% of the time. Does it mean a person with a middle-of-the-road intelligence quotient can be a successful leader if they strengthen their emotional intelligence? The answer seems to be yes.

Plenty of EQ studies have been conducted since the middle 1990s. They support the idea that if a person can recognize and understand their emotions and the emotions of others, they can make informed decisions that more readily lead to a positive experience. That's true in personal and professional endeavors.

Many employees only deal with a limited number of people. That's not true with most leaders. They interact with several people who will influence the success or failure of an endeavor. The more people you deal with, the more emotions you will experience. It follows that leaders who continually work on improving their emotional intelligence are going to enjoy more success.



