

It's the 'People' Person Who Goes Places

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ONE RELATIVELY untapped but effective way to advance your career is by developing your emotional intelligence. This is the ability to identify and "read" emotions - your own and other people's - and use this awareness to handle situations better and build strong relationships.

There has been much research on the subject in the past 10 years, and one common conclusion is that managers with a high level of emotional intelligence had a better chance of making it to the top in the business world.

Increasingly, companies are using 360-degree assessments for their executives, with bosses, peers and subordinates providing feedback on personality and behaviour.

Some employers also require managers above a certain grade to take in-depth personal development courses, lasting six to 12 days. These explore emotional patterns, inner motivation, values and personal vision.

The rationale is that managers who know themselves and have developed their emotional intelligence tend to be better leaders. In general, they are more centred and stable, minimise sources of conflict in their teams, inspire their staff and create a high level of engagement.

There are three basic ways to develop greater emotional intelligence in the workplace. You can "do it yourself" with the help of the many books now available on the subject.

The books can vary in quality, but most will provide useful points to consider and ideas to apply.

However, it is in writing about yourself that you can learn the most. It requires an effort, but recording and analysing your own impressions about difficult situations does create a greater self-awareness.

The problem with the solo approach is that you do not get the benefit of other people's perspectives. Besides, the day-to-day workload and various urgent matters often mean that you end up doing things sporadically or without real dedication.

Alternatively, you can ask your company to provide a professional coach who can point out problem areas and blind spots and come up with an action plan for improvement. The benefit of this approach is that each session is well prepared, thoroughly conducted and clearly interpreted.

Finally, you can join a personal development programme where you work in a group and get feedback from different people. Some of this may challenge your preconceptions and compel you to find new ways to relate to people.

Ask around about the various programmes available and choose one that suits you. Also, ask former participants to give you an idea of what they learned about themselves and how these programmes helped them to change.

The most compelling argument for exploring your emotional intelligence is the feeling of personal growth that comes from discovering something new about yourself. This can be a unique, deeply rewarding experience.

Contributed by Sebastien Henry, certified NLP trainer and emotional intelligence (EI) expert at Progress-U Limited, an innovative training and coaching company whose mission is to develop first-class leaders in the Asia-Pacific region.



Sebastien Henry is Progress-U's expert for Emotional Intelligence. Developing his Emotional Intelligence in his previous corporate career was a real priority (regional position in Asia at a multinational company). Now he focuses on helping business leaders to become more inspiring leaders, motivate their people and retain the best by developing their EQ.

Sebastien firmly believes in action, and the tools he is using and sharing are derived from 4 areas of his life:

- His business experience as a corporate executive
- Intensive mountaineering and rock climbing (7a onsight and more than 50 alpine routes)
- Teaching and coaching prisoners
- Daily meditations for more than 5 years