

The Successful SUPERVISOR

2010

November

Tips from  LifeSolutions

The ability of managers and supervisors to connect with the people who work for them is an essential element in enhancing the work their employees do. In the next two issues of the Successful Supervisor, we'll look at the concept of social intelligence: what it is and how developing our social intelligence skills is well within the reach of everyone whose responsibilities include encouraging the work of others. In this issue, we will define social intelligence and talk about the neurobiology that makes it possible for each one of us to enhance this built-in ability. Because we are always interested in your questions and comments, please contact LifeSolutions at ask@lifesolutionsforyou.com, or call an EAP account manager at 1.800.647.3327.

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Everyone understands that human relationships are complex. A vital part of any manager's job is determining what is important, what motivates his or her employees, how best to communicate, and what are each employee's unique areas of interest and competence. Without taking the time to connect with and appreciate each employee, these essential managerial tasks cannot happen. "Social intelligence" refers to intentionally using good people skills with an understanding that the effective use of those skills will have a positive impact on others — an impact which is biologically based and observable. Technological advances in brain imaging in recent years coupled with related research findings have made it possible to see the human brain in action when we interact with others. We can literally see that our brains are affected by our relationships and interactions with others, and we can observe clearly that our responses to others are emotionally based.

What is Social Intelligence?

First coined in the 1920s by Edward Thorndike as "acting wisely in relationships," the term social intelligence was defined as "the ability to understand and manage men and women." Thorndike wrote, "The best mechanic in a factory may fail as a foreman for lack of social intelligence."

A simple definition of social intelligence is that it is the ability to connect with others in a way that facilitates cooperation and collaboration. The term has gained wider recognition since the publication in 2006 of "Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships," by Daniel Goleman.

Social intelligence competencies fall into two main groups: social awareness and social facility. Social awareness describes those things that we *sense* about others — our gut reactions. This ability includes empathy or experiencing the other person's emotional state. Social facility describes how we *use* that social awareness. For example, social facility refers to the concern or support we offer another team member based on our awareness that the support is needed or will promote group goals.

It would be a mistake to think that you either have or don't have social intelligence. As with intellectual intelligence, or IQ, people fall along a continuum of social intelligence, and no two people are alike. Unless one has had a disabling brain injury or has a genetic defect, we all possess the basic biological architecture to learn how to expand our innate abilities to relate positively to others.

What is important to know about leadership and social intelligence skills?

As stated earlier, people in leadership positions need to connect with the employees they are leading on a basic level. In essence, social intelligence is using an awareness of the substantial impact of relationships to help leaders enhance the performance of the people they are leading. Personal skills such as initiative, empathy, adaptability, and persuasiveness are vital for a leader's toolbox. Lacking awareness of his or her emotional impact on others can doom a leader to failure as a people manager, regardless of how competent in the subject matter or job skills he or she may be.

Emotional impact on employees can be positive or negative. An unskilled supervisor can upset and distress an employee and foster anxiety and disengagement in the workplace. By the same token, skilled and aware supervisors can create an atmosphere of calm and creativity simply by virtue of their relationships with their employees. Who would you rather have leading a team through a tough time or a crisis: someone who is nervous, indifferent, or emotionally disconnected or an individual who, while getting the job done, manages to convey empathy, warmth, and caring and who clearly seeks to spare others as much harm as possible? It's true that if you don't understand people, you can't manage them well.

LifeSolutions' manager consultations are available and easily accessible. Coaching can support your efforts to increase your social intelligence. Call LifeSolutions with any questions or if you wish to consult with our team. In the next Successful Supervisor, we will continue to explore the use of "social intelligence" for more effective leadership.



As leaders, what we do and say can have significant impact on those around us. *LifeSolutions* offers a series of self-guided online courses specifically developed to equip managers and supervisors with the appropriate tools to help make a positive impact in the workplace.

In keeping with the theme of this month's The Successful Supervisor, we offer the following Skill Builder course:

Applying Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

◆ How to think intelligently about emotions

- The purpose of emotion
- Techniques for interrupting your automatic responses
- Ways to rewrite your emotional script
- Methods for eliminating the causes of anxiety, rage, and depression
- Tips on becoming more optimistic
- How to motivate yourself
- Ideas for finding greater meaning in your work

◆ The keys to behaving wisely

- Skills for listening to and understanding the feelings of others
- A tool for expanding your emotional vocabulary
- How to adapt to the communication styles of others
- Guidelines on managing anger and stress
- A system for handling angry people
- Tips on relieving stress and recharging your emotional batteries
- How to leverage your strengths

◆ Techniques for fostering emotional intelligence in others:

- Methods for promoting organizational self-awareness
- Guidelines for giving feedback effectively and inoffensively
- Suggestions on receiving feedback non-defensively
- Ideas for fostering a climate of civility

Follow the steps below to learn more and to get started:

- ◆ Access www.lifesolutionsforyou.com.
- ◆ Click on the *WorkLife* Log In at the top right.
- ◆ Enter your company code. If you do not know your code, call 1.800.647.3327.
- ◆ Locate *Site Search* on the right-hand side of the page.
- ◆ Type in *emotional intelligence*.
- ◆ Scroll down to the *Skill Builders* section.
- ◆ Select *View All* and then select *Applying Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace*.

If you have questions, call **1.800.647.3327**.

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