

# A sharper EQ equals greater success

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1 Sep 2015

Marketing companies are always looking for ways in which to gain a competitive advantage. For many years, it was believed that bright, intelligent people were the key to superior performance...

Modern marketers have however discovered that 'book smarts' in the form of high IQ's, do not always translate into exemplary job performance. As such, job interviews are no longer just about intelligence and technical skills. While the hard skills are fundamentally important, to be a truly valuable asset, employees need to have more than just the technical knowledge. There's much more to employment than simply knowing 'how' to do a job and this is particularly true in the activations environment where candidates need interpersonal skills to give them the edge.



Lauren Durant & Brendan Powell

To remain relevant marketing agencies have to diversify and employees need to have the applicable soft skills to function within their ever-changing work environments. At Isilumko Activate we are approached by clients every week who are looking for a mix of adaptable people who can help activate their brands in a communications setting. The expectation is for these people to adjust quickly to the flexible nature of the campaigns they'll be assigned to - and with different brands constantly being represented, a high degree of adaptability is a fundamental soft skill set. Our clients understand that while employees may look good on paper, they might not necessarily have the emotional maturity to handle the stresses that come with executing a successful brand activation campaign for the companies we represent.

Subsequently, less emphasis is being placed on how many qualifications a new hire has behind their name. Instead, clients want to understand the challenges a potential employee has experienced and how those difficult encounters were handled. It's these answers that will give the potential appointee more clout when the final cut is made.

Furthermore, some businesses no longer use the traditional technical competency tests of yesteryear when interviewing a potential new employee. Instead, a series of questions are asked which reveal a candidates ability to handle pressure and offer a glimpse of their EQ (emotional quotient). These carefully selected questions aimed at giving an employer a glimpse into the emotional maturity of the prospective employee. It lets the employer see how the employee will manage behaviour, navigate social complexities and make personal decisions that achieve positive results. Employers want to understand how candidates handle day-to-day conflict and pressure and the promotional space is by no means exempt from this requirement.



Image via Fotolia

Despite the advancement in technology and increase in the availability of new productivity tools in recent years, employees are working longer hours and are experiencing greater stress in the workplace than ever before. Often neglected, EQ is proving to be a crucial survival tool for workplace environments. Employees with a high EQ have the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions to facilitate stress management. In turn, this enables high levels of collaboration and productivity within work teams. Not something that can be taught in a classroom or learnt from a textbook, employees would do well to hone their inherent EQ to build robust EQ talent that includes the ability to identify, use, understand, and manage emotions in positive ways to relieve stress, communicate more effectively, empathise with others, overcome challenges, think laterally and diffuse conflict.

EQ forms the foundation for a host of critical skills and is quite possibly the biggest predictor of performance in the workplace. When an employee does a good job, they feel positive about their efforts and this in turn fuels the energy to accomplish more. A high level of EQ also directly correlates to a positive attitude and a happier outlook on life. Happier employees are generally physically and mentally healthier - since they are better quipped at managing pressure and stress levels. Healthy employees tend to work smarter and elevate the overall value of an organisation. EQ is without a doubt applicable to every human interaction within business - from staff motivation to customer service.

Whether handing out flyers at a traffic light, or promoting a product in-store, our clients want the people representing their brand to feel and put their best foot forward. When these brand ambassadors feel good, target audiences are going to get the very best experience and that will in turn facilitate positive consumer interaction. Matching the right employee to the culture of each client and their brand philosophy is ultimately what drives a successful campaign.

This approach to recruitment of our talent lies at the very core of our thinking. When asked what we value most at Isilumko, I always say "I value our culture the most". With more than two decades already under the belt, we believe we have created an environment that supports EQ development and see this as a key differentiator for our activations agency model of operating.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brendan Powell is a Director at Isilumko Activate and has been with the company since 2008. With extensive managerial experience, Powell leads from the front and is known for his natural ability to motivate large teams of people to consistently reach goals and implement an organisational vision. He has a deep-seated passion for people and has a strong desire to see them flourish. Powell believes that "effortless magic" happens when the right person is placed in the right position. He is widely regarded and acknowledged as an expert on the subject of experiential activations.

Lauren Durant is Director at Isilumko Activate. She's been with the company since its inception over two decades ago, and has contributed significantly to the evolution of the business to one of the market leaders in the activations space. Durant spends much of her time with clients, understanding their needs and assisting in the development of cutting edge activations strategies. Parallel to this, she mentors members of the team to do the same, often lauding the value of co-operation and communication - all of which contributes customer-centric culture of the organisation which is built from the heart and soul of its people.

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