

# The importance of EQ and SQ in the workplace

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Firstly, what is EQ and what is SQ?



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Emotional quotient (EQ) is the capability of individuals to recognise their own emotions and those of others, to be able to discern between different feelings and label them appropriately, use emotional information to guide thinking and behaviour, and regulate emotions to adapt to environments. EQ is widely recognised as a valuable skill in the workplace that helps improve communication, management, problem-solving, and relationships. It is also a skill that can be improved with training and practice.

Social quotient (SQ) is the capacity to know oneself and to know others. SQ develops from a person's experience with other people and learning from success and failures in social settings. It is more commonly referred to as 'tact', 'common sense', or street smarts.

SQ is an extension or a superset of EQ. It is a broader concept than EQ. So, in a way, where EQ leaves, SQ picks up and makes it a tangible applicable skill. SQ is essential for unlocking the skills of effective communication, dialogue, and teamwork to create an optimal and productive work environment. According to Daniel Goleman, sometimes referred to as the Father of EQ:

 *Empathy and social skills are SQ, the interpersonal part of EQ. That's why they look alike.* 

## How EQ and SQ can affect your work life and career

Workplaces, in the main, are relational environments. All actions take place via conversation and the interplay between one or more relationships. If there is no conversation, there is no relationship, no action, no success. Furthermore, most people will tell you they want to feel satisfaction, belonging and happiness at work (and in their personal lives). The key to this is always healthy relationships - with self and others.



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The workplace is typically a melting pot of different personalities, skills, strengths, and emotions all mixed up with the mandate and focus of the business. Inevitably therefore, EQ is blended into almost every communication, decision and action within the workplace. Social skills are essential to effective communication, and no leader can be efficient and effective if they cannot communicate well with those who they lead.

A lack of EQ can negatively impact the effectiveness of communication in various ways:

- Less understanding of one's own emotions and the impact of the ensuing behaviours on self and others.
- Less understanding of the emotions of others.
- Less effective communication of ideas and emotions to others.
- Inappropriate communication-related behaviour, such as outbursts of emotion, oversharing or failing to communicate important information.

It's easy to see how this impacts overall communication and in turn, increases the risk of lower productivity and efficiency in the workplace.

Research suggests that SQ is essential for effective leadership and helps teams work better together. In other words, SQ is important to keep things running smoothly when work relationships are established plus those with higher EQ typically successfully navigate the workplace more effectively as EQ enables an individual to build and drive successful teams and to be agile and responsive as needed.

Similarly, EQ can have a significant impact on decision-making in the workplace. When EQ is high, organisation members can understand the cause and effect relationship between emotions and events and plan effectively (Côté & Yip, 2013).



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Similarly, a lower level of EQ can be detrimental to the workplace. At its worst, it can be seen in bullying, harassment, and demotivated staff. It can present as insensitivity, arrogance, or even aggression and volatility. Whereas a high EQ will facilitate flexibility, low EQ will typically present as inflexibility and rigidity – a dangerous development for any team or

business.

When EQ is low, organisation members may experience ‘incidental collective emotions’ surrounding decision-making. For example, anxiety is a common emotion involved in decision-making, especially for big decisions that will have a significant impact. Those low in EQ may not understand the source of their anxiety or how to effectively manage it, leading to too much risk-taking, not enough risk-taking, or judgment clouded by bias (Côté & Yip, 2013).

### **Why is it important that your leaders and workforce are equipped with EQ and SQ skills?**

1. Better team-work as better quality conversations and professional relationships are formed
2. Better atmosphere and office environment
3. More agile as decision making, course correction and non-planned adjustments can be made more easily
4. More self-awareness, self-control and focus
5. Greater compassion, shared trust and authentic leadership across and in spite of hierarchical levels
6. Better time management
7. There's more accountability and motivation implying you're more responsive to customer and market needs which might lead you to be one step ahead of competitors

### **When leaders have high EQ**

Leaders with high EQ create more connected and motivated teams and are more effective managers. Some of the skills that leaders with high EQ possess include the ability to inspire others, personal integrity, good communication skills and comfort with building relationships, to name a few. To be effective, leaders must have a solid understanding of how their emotions and actions affect the people around them. They need to build the skills to listen effectively, show respect for others, make a good first impression, encourage a social environment, be prepared and be enthusiastic and positive. The better a leader relates to, and works with others, the more successful he or she will be. Effective leaders will take the time to work on self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

EQ and SQ can be improved with daily self-awareness, coaching, training and mindful practices.

### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Julia Kerr Henkel is an Executive Coach and MD of Lumminos. Julia runs Lumminos, a full-service coaching and culture change consultancy which dares its clients to lead, learn, live, love and parent with awareness, skills, compassion and humour. She is an ICF PCC-level coach, seasoned change and organisational development consultant and speaker. In March 2019, Julia Kerr Henkel studied with Brené Brown in Texas and is now one of a handful Certified Dare to Lead? facilitators in Africa, commissioned to deliver work on her behalf. In January 2020, she also launched Dare to Lead #daringclassrooms - an extension of this work tailored for educators - our most important leaders. She runs a program at GIBS aimed at supporting newly certified coaches called Kickstart your Coaching Business. Prior to starting Lumminos, Julia spent 4 years at Goldman Sachs London and was a director for 8 years at College Hill Investor Relations and Magna Carta, comms and reputation management agencies. For more information, visit [www.lumminos.co.za](http://www.lumminos.co.za)

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