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Building emotional intelligence in your workplace

The term “emotional intelligence” was coined by Peter Salovey of Yale University and Jack Mayer of the University of New Hampshire as they were researching factors that enable people to function well in society. But Daniel P. Goldman’s 1995 book, “Emotional Intelligence,” brought the idea to the general public and the workplace. Today, an excellent website to gather additional information is www.talentsmart.com.

Based on Goldman’s book, emotional intelligence is usually defined by five “emotional quotient” (EQ) skill dimensions:

1. Self-awareness of feelings. Knowing how you are feeling, why you are feeling that way and using the self-awareness to make better personal and professional decisions.
2. Emotional self-regulation. Reining in strong negative emotions — like anger and anxiety — then mobilizing positive personal and organizational support to enhance that control.
3. Self-monitoring and goal setting. Having short- and long-term goals. Making specific, measurable plans to achieve them with a spirit of hope and optimism.
4. Empathy and perspective taking. Showing sensitivity and genuine appreciation for the feelings and opinions of others.
5. Social and communication skills. The ability to work as part of a team effectively using skills such as leadership, problem solving and decision making, careful listening, the spirit of give and take, and clear

verbal and nonverbal communication.

According to Goldman, strategies for building the EQ of your workplace should encompass these guidelines:

- Communicate respect for people at all levels for their ideas and the contributions they make to the organization.
- Give feedback designed to improve performance, help solve workplace problems and enhance people and their capabilities, not criticize and diminish.
- Ensure all employees have the tools, training and resources needed to succeed.
- Celebrate achievements of individuals, teams and the overall company.
- Recognize significant life events and milestones of everyone within the organization.
- Solve problems by encouraging a wide range of thinking and reacting to benefit from a variety of perspectives.
- Create a sense of shared mission and a vision for the future.

In order to provide somewhat of a better understanding of how the dimensions of EQ and customer service would work together, here are steps an employee with a high EQ would generally take to handle a frustrated customer:

- Consider their reactions to the customer’s anger before acting.
- Avoid letting their tension and anger add to the anxiety level of the situation.
- Determine specifically what the

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customer is upset about.

- Focus on satisfying the customer, trying to understand the situation from the customer’s point of view.
- Speak calmly and clearly, listen actively, look to address the emotions of the customer, as well as the situation, in a positive and professional manner while resolving the issue.

Goldman goes on to point out when staff members within the work setting have a high overall level of emotional intelligence, it perpetuates better teamwork, more sharing, greater energy and enthusiasm for being in the workplace, as well as a feeling among employees they are “part of something,” not just collecting a paycheck.

Over the years, research has suggested that in the emotionally intelligent workplace, employees know their ideas and their feelings matter. This power of caring and collaboration is released, ultimately resulting in reduced employee turnover, greater innovation and productivity, and an improved bottom line.

While there is no precise blueprint for creating the benefits of emotional intelligence, many companies today are using training focused on team building, communication skills, problem solving, diversity training and goal setting strategies to enhance their workplace’s emotional intelligence.

For more information on Dr. White’s programs and publications, visit www.successimages.com or call (225) 769-2307. ●