

9 The right skills

A Hard and soft skills

For a long time, **hard skills**, for example skills in technical subjects, were considered the most important thing in business. But more and more, people are realizing the importance of **soft skills** – the skills you need to work with other people, and in the case of managers, to manage people in tactful and non-authoritarian, non-dictatorial ways.



B Emotional intelligence

You've got the brains but have you got the touch?

While IQ has traditionally been the means by which we judge someone's abilities and potential, **EQ** – the E stands for emotional – is the new benchmark for a new world. If you've got it, you're more likely to be powerful, successful and have fulfilling relationships than if you haven't. **Emotional intelligence** – the ability to understand and control your emotions, and recognize and respond to those of others – is emerging as the single most important and effective business and personal skill of the new century. At American Express, financial advisers who'd been through emotional intelligence training

improved sales by up to 20 per cent, significantly more than the company average. A ten-year study by Sheffield University of over 100 small- and medium-sized UK businesses found that **people management** was three times as important as research and development in improving productivity and profitability and six times as important as business strategy. Daniel Goleman, a US science journalist-turned-consultant with a background in psychology, first popularized the notion of emotional intelligence in the mid-nineties. Goleman defines

five elements of emotional intelligence: **self-awareness**, **self-regulation**, **motivation**, **empathy** and **social skills**. Sceptics argue that this sounds suspiciously like the old **soft skills**, in management-course speak, dressed up in new clothing. But Tim Sparrow, of human performance consultants Buckholdt Associates, points out a crucial difference. 'Soft skills training was only about **interpersonal intelligence** – relating to others. Emotional intelligence involves intrapersonal skills – knowing yourself – as well. You can't be **interpersonally** intelligent if you don't recognise feelings in yourself.'

The Observer

- 9.1 Look at A opposite. Were (a) hard skills or (b) soft skills mainly required at each of the following stages of a project to design insurance products? The project manager ...
- employed someone with a doctorate in mathematics to work on risk probabilities.
 - gave three days off to a team member who said they had family problems at home.
 - analyzed her own feelings of frustration that the project was going too slowly.
 - dealt politely but firmly with a request by her boss to finish the project a month early.
 - did market testing of the product with a number of potential consumers of the product and analyzed the results on computer.
 - did careful research on the Internet to find the best advertising agency to launch the product.
- 9.2 Complete the sentences with appropriate forms of expressions from B opposite.
- If someone is good at persuading employees to do things without making them annoyed, they are good at
 - More generally, getting along with people and avoiding tactless remarks are examples of
 - Knowing your own emotions and feelings is : this is an skill. Contrast this with the ability to get along with other people: skills.
 - If you are able to control your own emotions, you have good
 - If you are able to understand how other people feel, you have with them.
 - The whole area is referred to by Daniel Goleman as The abbreviation for the way this is measured is
- 9.3 Find the words and phrases (1–6) in the article in B opposite and match them to their meanings (a–f).
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|------------------------------|--|
| 1 benchmark | a (gradually) becoming |
| 2 fulfilling | b a reference point by which you judge something |
| 3 emerging as | c terminology from a management course |
| 4 sceptics | d given a new image |
| 5 management-course speak | e making you feel happy and satisfied |
| 6 dressed up in new clothing | f people who doubt the truth of an idea |

Over to you



Write a description of the soft skills required for your job or one you would like.