

The Twelve Learnable Competencies of Emotional Intelligence

By William A Moylan, Ph.D., PMP, FESD, DTM
Professor Emeritus, Eastern Michigan University

“When dealing with people, let us remember we are not dealing with creatures of logic. We are dealing with creatures of emotion.”

Dale Carnegie, How to Win Friends and Influence People

My “PM Musings” article published in the April 2023 issue of the PMIGLC Baseline newsletter outlined the basic elements of Emotional Intelligence [EQ], discussed the four dimensions of EQ -- self-awareness, social awareness, self-management, and relationship management, and, touched on the competencies of EQ. This article will suggest ways to learn and practice these EQ competencies to become an emotionally intelligent leader.

To recap, the four domains or dimensions that form the basis of Emotional Intelligence [EQ] balance Self with Others and Awareness with Management. The four EQ domains are: Self Awareness, Social Awareness, Self-Management, and Relationship Management. However, these four domains are often too narrow in defining the true scope of Emotional Intelligence. They focus on the sociability, sensitivity, and likability of individuals, but often miss crucial elements such as the ability to deliver difficult feedback, ruffle feathers, drive change, and think creatively outside of the box. These are all key attributes that must be found within our creative leaders.

The good news is that these competencies are all learnable capabilities. Each requires engagement with emotions and should be part of any aspiring project leader’s development. In fact, all leaders should develop a balance of these skills to excel in their role.

The twelve EQ competencies, organized by the 4 EQ domains, are as follows:

Self-Awareness

- Self-confidence.
- Realistic self-assessment.
- Self-deprecating sense of humor.

Social Awareness

- Expertise in building and retaining talent.
- Cross-cultural sensitivity.
- Service to clients and customers.

Self-Management

- Trustworthiness and integrity.
- Comfort with ambiguity.
- Openness to change.

Relationship Management

- Effectiveness in leading change.
- Persuasiveness.
- Expertise in building and leading teams.

Learning these twelve EQ competencies takes determination, persistence, and grit – the essence of being a Project Manager. Herein are my suggestions to become an emotionally intelligent learning leader.

Know Thy Self – Aristotle

Being cognizant of both one's own behavior [self-awareness] and understanding how their behavior affects others [social awareness] is crucial for the PM to become an astute leader.

A realistic self-assessment is the first step in gaining an awareness of one's self. My suggestion is to take this Are You Emotionally Intelligent? test at:

<https://mind.help/assessments/emotional-intelligent-test-ei/> This FREE online self-assessment will help with gauging one's EQ and own estimation of their self-confidence.

“Confidence is 10% work and 90% delusion.” Tina Fey

An interesting and insightful way to assess one's own self-awareness and social awareness is to compare one's self-assessment results with others' evaluation of your leadership effectiveness. A 360° Leadership Assessment exposes traits and behaviors the PM is likely unaware that they exhibit. If nothing else, one will get quite a kick from reviewing others' feedback. Might as well learn to laugh at yourself since everyone else does.

Having a relatively firm grip on how one's behavior, mannerisms, and personality impact others is crucial in building the necessary personal bridges and cultivating cross-cultural sensitivity, which are all essential to lead a high-performing global team. Everyone at one time in their life was 2 years old, and hence, was adept at managing up. The terrible 2s child outgrows their precociousness; the malingering manager likewise must mature or be dismissed. Learning to lead up, the essence of Servant Leadership, is the necessary transition. Servant Leadership requires focusing on serving customers and clients, developing talent from within, and cross-cultural sensitivity. All learnable skills.

Control Thy Self – Cicero

If the essence of management is control, then self-control is the DNA of a manager. Why would anyone follow, let alone listen to, someone who cannot manage themselves? Effective self-management requires personal and professional integrity [trustworthiness], an astute sense of one's strengths and weaknesses, and a self-deprecating sense of humor.

If the single constant in life is change, then leading change is the sole leadership constant. Change leadership learning imperatives include developing an openness to change, accepting life's ambiguities, and learning to become comfortable with being uncomfortable.

To Err is Human; to Blame It on Somewhat Else is Really Human.

No one likes crybabies. If managing a project was easy, they would let executives do it. The project manager, the single throat to choke, must be the eternal optimist – finding the opportunity in every problem [as opposed to being the pessimist who finds the problem in every opportunity]. How to fuel the fire to excel? Make the pursuit of excellence your mantra.

Where can the aspiring PM find the opportunity to learn and refine these EQ competencies? Check out the PMIGLC volunteer opportunities at: <https://pmiglc.org/volunteer-opportunities>

As always, your questions, comments, and criticisms are welcome. Feel free to contact me in care of email: William.moylan@emich.edu

Best regards,

Dr. Bill

William A Moylan, Ph.D., PMP, FESD, DTM

Professor Emeritus, Eastern Michigan University / Principal, WA Moylan & Associates