

**Emotional Intelligence:
The ability to assess and manage emotions
Is key to professional success**

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Most lawyers are “book” smart, which leads them to law school and helps them succeed in that traditional academic environment. The best lawyers, however, are also “people” smart – good at understanding and managing human emotions.

Some lawyers can have a hard time understanding and managing their own emotional status – and the emotional status of clients and colleagues at work as well as family and community members outside the office.

Why should this matter? Research indicates that an individual’s emotional intelligence (EQ) accounts for 60-80 percent of success in the workplace and in life, while cognitive intelligence (IQ) accounts for just 20-40 percent. In an environment like law, where everyone is cognitively smart, EQ is a significant differentiator.

At the leadership level of an organization, EQ becomes even more important. Research by the Center of Creative Leadership shows that almost half of all executives fail at their positions within two years. The reason they fail is not a lack of technical competence or cognitive ability, but a lack of emotional intelligence. Executives who fail lack sensitivity to the emotional status of others. In other words, they lack EQ.

“The good news is that lawyers (and other professional services providers) can learn to understand and use emotional intelligence to manage themselves and their relationships with others,” said Dr. Laura Belsten.

“Although IQ remains pretty much the same throughout our lives, EQ can be enhanced – and continues to develop throughout life as we acquire experience,” said Belsten. “Older people tend to have higher EQs than their younger counterparts.”

Belsten presented her findings on the relationship between EQ and professional success at the monthly educational program of the Rocky Mountain Chapter of the Legal Marketing Association (www.legalmarketing.org/rockymountain), which took place May 12 in Denver at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

Belsten is the founder and president of CEO Partnership (www.ceopartnership.com), a Denver-based executive coaching and leadership development firm with a national practice. She is a Master Certified Coach and author of *Coaching Emotional Intelligence*. She also developed the *Emotional Intelligence Profile* test. She has taught leadership and communication at the University of Denver for nearly 20 years.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to be aware of our own emotions and the emotions of others – and to use that information to manage ourselves and our relationships.

“Research shows that organizations that recognize and cultivate emotional intelligence are more productive and more successful at recruitment and retention,” said Belsten. “They are also more profitable. In law firms I have worked with, high-EQ partners are significantly more profitable than low-EQ partners.

“In the area of retention, common wisdom states that ‘employees join companies but leave supervisors,’” said Belsten. “Where supervisors are trained in the use of emotional intelligence, turnover rates go way down. People with ‘good’ bosses (defined as having high EQ) are four times less likely to leave than those with ‘poor’ bosses.

“In addition,” said Belsten, “there are proven health and medical benefits to working in an environment that values and rewards emotional intelligence – an environment that is the exact opposite of most law firms.”

Belsten developed the *Emotional Intelligence Profile* to measure individuals for 24 competencies that have been linked to emotional intelligence and success in the workplace and life. Those who score well in some areas but poorly in others can build upon their strengths to make improvements. Those who score in the “cautionary” or “vulnerable” range can enhance their careers with focused training and coaching.

The 24 competencies are grouped into four emotional quadrants: self awareness, self management, social awareness and social management.

“Self” awareness and management

The self-aware individual exhibits three competencies to understand self:

- *Emotional awareness* – Recognizes own emotions and the mental and physical effects of these emotions; uses feelings as a valuable source of insight and information about self, others and situations
- *Accurate self-assessment* – Knows strengths and limitations
- *Personal power* – Exhibits a strong sense of self-worth and capabilities; self confidence

The self-managed individual exhibits nine competencies to manage emotions:

- *Behavioral self-control* – Keeps disruptive emotions in check
- *Integrity* – Maintains high standards of honesty and ethics; chooses to “do the right thing”
- *Innovation and creativity* – Actively pursues new approaches and creative ideas
- *Initiative and bias for action* – Proactive; ready to act on opportunities
- *Resilience* – Perseveres in the face of adversity and setbacks; bounces back
- *Achievement drive* – Strives to continuously improve
- *Stress management* – Works calmly under stress and pressure; uses tactics like biofeedback, exercise and good diet to manage stress
- *Realistic optimism* – Expects success; sees setbacks as manageable
- *Intentionality* – Thinks and acts deliberately and “on purpose” to control outcomes

“Other” awareness and management

The socially aware individual exhibits three competencies to understand others:

- *Empathy* – Senses the feelings and perspectives of others; takes an active interest in their concerns; walks “a mile in their shoes”
- *Organizational awareness* – Reads the social and political currents in a group or organization
- *Service ethic* – Anticipates, recognizes and meets client needs

The socially aware individual exhibits nine competencies to manage others:

- *Develops others* – Identifies the developmental needs of others and helps them enhance their abilities
- *Influences others* – Uses effective tactics to persuade
- *Communicates* – Listens attentively and fosters open dialogue
- *Manages conflict* – Negotiates and resolves disagreements involving difficult individuals, groups and situations
- *Leads* – Inspires, guides and mobilizes individuals and groups; articulates a clear, compelling and motivating vision for the future
- *Catalyzes change* – Initiates, manages and leads change
- *Builds bonds* – Nurtures and maintains relationships and networks; connects with others on a deep level
- *Collaborates* – Works with others toward shared goals; creates group synergy in pursuit of collective goals
- *Builds trust* – Is trustworthy and ethical when working and relating to others; establishes a bond of trust

EQ assessment tools can be self-scoring instruments, where an individual rates him- or herself, or a 360 process, where an individual’s rankings of him- or herself are compared

with rankings of the individual prepared by supervisors, peers, direct reports – and even clients. “A reasonably smart person might try to ‘game’ the results in order to look good,” said Belsten. “A 360 approach helps prevent this from happening.

“Organizations that want to be competitive in today’s marketplace need the ‘EQ’ edge to set themselves apart,” said Belsten. “It is EQ that will solve retention and morale problems, improve creativity, create synergy from teamwork, enhance communication, drive purpose and ignite the best and most inspired performance from others.”