

Improving Team Relationships Using an Emotional Intelligence Lens



EQ-i^{2.0}
assess. predict. perform.

Mary Marvin Walter

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In this case study, learn how Emotional Intelligence awareness and coaching would have prevented profit and productivity loss resulting from an organization’s poor team pairing decision.

The Situation:

CiCi and Daisy are in the customer service department. They need to work together in order for the department to be successful and to perform their own jobs optimally. The manager assigned CiCi the responsibility of teaching Daisy a new process. This was a great opportunity for CiCi to step up to a leadership role and for Daisy to become a more valuable member of the team.

This was a win-win situation. What could possibly go wrong?

The Reality:

CiCi, the “go-to person” in the department, is pleased to be tapped to teach Daisy the new process. She digs right in to figure out how to tell Daisy all the details of the new process and even creates several exercises for Daisy.

Daisy is a person who always wants to do her best and is pleased to be selected to learn this new process. Daisy puts herself under a lot of pressure to excel but has some concerns about training with CiCi based on previous experiences.

Things start out smoothly while CiCi explains the new process. Daisy listens and takes notes but is soon overwhelmed by the amount of information she is getting. Daisy asks questions about how the details relate to one another in order to make connections, but CiCi isn’t interested in making those connections. CiCi explains again, this time a little slower

and a little louder. Detecting undertones of impatience, Daisy becomes even more confused. She is concerned that CiCi thinks she is stupid, and Daisy is reluctant to ask more questions.

CiCi can’t understand why Daisy isn’t getting it. She has broken down the concepts to their most elementary levels so Daisy should be able to grasp them. She thinks Daisy’s questions show that she is not able to understand even these simple parts of the process.

CiCi goes back to the beginning again and tells Daisy about the new process, this time very slowly and even more loudly.

Daisy is overwhelmed and doubts her ability to understand the concepts being presented—now for a third time. Her brain is spinning with thoughts about her inability to learn, about word of her failure being the source of gossip throughout the company and about ultimately being fired from the company.

These thoughts take over Daisy’s ability to pay attention to CiCi’s detailed explanations. From her perspective, Daisy sees herself as a failure, and she is terrified by the situation. She tries to keep calm but can’t stop the run-away thoughts of uselessness and stupidity that are overwhelming her. She bolts out of the room, not stopping until she gets to her car where she sobs uncontrollably. Daisy calls her supervisor from her car and tells her she has left work and won’t be back today and maybe not tomorrow.

CiCi has no idea what has happened. She was just doing her job. She was just teaching the details of the process when Daisy jumped up and ran out of the room. CiCi shrugs and goes to lunch with some friends and is still puzzled when she returns to work.

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The Result:

Daisy was out of work for two weeks. She wanted to resign but was convinced to return after she saw a counselor. She and CiCi do not talk or communicate with one another. CiCi was put on a Performance Improvement Plan for her poor performance in this and other situations where she interacted with others in the company.

Expense:

- Loss of work from Daisy and CiCi.
- Potential loss of two knowledgeable and valued employees.
- Potential hiring activities for these two positions such as interviewing, on-boarding and training.
- Distraction, disruption and distress caused in the department as a result of the situation.
- Time lost in bringing the new process to more department members.
- Reduction of customer service quality due to fewer available resources.
- Erosion of the bystander attitude and motivation throughout the department.

What Happened Next:

I worked with CiCi and Daisy using the EQ-i 2.0—a scientifically-validated assessment of Emotional Intelligence (EI)—and through individual coaching sessions with both CiCi and Daisy.

The HR professional involved in this situation wanted to speak with me before I conducted each debrief session. She told me that CiCi

tended not to take other people’s feelings into consideration in her communications or actions. CiCi was known for being loud when she was challenged, easily frustrated and to treat others abruptly and with contempt.

The HR professional told me that Daisy wore her heart on her sleeve and was very concerned with what was happening to others. Daisy was known to fight other employees’ battles when she thought they had been wronged. Daisy was perceived as being too sensitive, even by her colleagues.

As the certified consultant, I found the EQ-i 2.0 report astonishing in light of the briefing information. Table 1 shows a very high level summary of high and low Subscales for CiCi and Daisy. Note that the EQ-i 2.0 Subscale results indicate that Stress Tolerance and Problem Solving are high for CiCi but low for Daisy. Empathy is high for Daisy but low for CiCi.

Even without the sophisticated analysis provided by someone certified in the EQ-i 2.0, there are significant Subscale scores indicating that there might be challenges around how these two individuals would relate to one another. EQ-i 2.0 adds many critical layers of understanding about Emotional Intelligence and the implications of Subscale scores and how they relate to one another in terms of balance.

If the manager had known about EI and the EQ-i 2.0 results, these two never would have been paired in such a one-on-one situation, or at least not without more supervision.

CiCi - EQ-i = 103	Daisy - EQ-i = 81
Highest Subscales Problem Solving Impulse Control Stress Tolerance	Highest Subscales Empathy Social Responsibility Emotional Self-Awareness
Lowest Subscales Empathy Self-Actualization Interpersonal Relationships	Lowest Subscales Independence Stress Tolerance Problem Solving

Table 1 EQ-i 2.0 Subscale Results



“If the manager had known about EI and the EQ-i 2.0 results, these two never would have been paired in such a one-on-one situation . . .”

If the manager had known about the EQ-i 2.0 results:

- Individuals would have been involved in development work focused on their respective out-of-balance EQ-i 2.0 scores.
- Individuals would have had more awareness and understanding of themselves and others from an EI perspective.
- Team relationships would have been looked at through the EI filter.

Using EI as a cultural strategy based on the EQ-i 2.0 assessment along with coaching from a certified practitioner can save organizations time, money, energy, turnover and, most importantly, can provide a clear path for development of individuals, teams and organizations wishing to leverage their success. It certainly would have helped CiCi and Daisy relate to each other more productively.

In More Depth

HPS Director of Operations Debra Cannarella examines the EQ-i 2.0 Subscale scores in more detail.

To better understand the case study scenario through the analysis of data provided by the EQ-i 2.0 instrument, we need to delve into the relative highs and lows of both women’s EI Subscales.

Daisy’s high Emotional Self-Awareness indicates that she is in tune with her emotions and, in fact, can be “too sensitive.” In addition, her higher Social Responsibility and lower Independence suggest that she prefers to follow rather than lead. Her lower Problem Solving indicates that she allows her emotions to interfere with her ability to solve problems, and her lower Stress Tolerance means that she is easily “stressed out.”

CiCi, on the other hand, rarely allows emotions to interfere with her ability to solve problems and has a high tolerance for stress, while her lower Empathy and Interpersonal Relationships indicate that she may miss emotional cues and struggle to build relationships with colleagues.

In the scenario described above, Daisy’s knowing that she has to learn a new task probably increases her stress, and her subsequent struggle to learn the information then drives it even higher. Unfortunately, CiCi’s lower Empathy prevents her from sensing Daisy’s lack of confidence and higher stress levels. Otherwise, she could have made an effort to help Daisy feel more comfortable. Instead, she focuses on the details of the job, missing all of the emotional signals.

Daisy’s low Problem Solving induces her to make a rash decision: she runs out of the building and has to seek counseling before returning. Meanwhile, CiCi struggles to understand what happened because, from her perspective, she did what she was supposed to do: explain a process.



EQ-i 2.0 Model

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