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Everything you wanted to know about implementing an EQ programme: 4 – Assuring the highest standards of implementation

In this, the last in their series on implementing emotional intelligence initiatives, Geetu Orme and Kate Cannon, two respected practitioners, provide insight and recommendations for evaluating emotional intelligence programmes.

Programme evaluation can be challenging in the area of emotional intelligence (EQ). Evaluation is a specialised and complex task, requiring general knowledge of business requirements as well as technical expertise in evaluation methods and analysis. Many stakeholders do not view programme evaluation as critical and necessary. Consequently, practitioners may not direct energy and time to evaluation and may not have the experience to conduct evaluation effectively.

To demonstrate the value of emotional intelligence programmes, practitioners have the opportunity to use evaluation to make the business case for EQ. Fortunately, there are a growing number of programmes around the world where evaluation has been successfully conducted. As a result, the body of knowledge regarding programme evaluation is increasing in scope and depth. This article provides examples from some of these programmes and details what works in different venues. As with the three previous articles in this series (see box 1 at right), it is important to review the information it contains and ascertain the "fit" with your own context.

This article provides guidance to help in the construction of your evaluation processes. Examples are included to show the application of the guidelines to specific situations. The first section covers the purpose of evaluation. The fundamental question to ask is: "Why are we evaluating?" The answer will provide direction for the evaluation efforts and suggest appropriate metrics. The second section reviews some guidelines for programme evaluation. These can be used as a framework for the design of an evaluation strategy. The final section brings together practical insights and key learning points gleaned from the experiences of practitioners around the world. These are identified as "pitfalls" and are accompanied by tips on how to avoid them.

THE PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

The first step is to ask: "Why evaluate?" Evaluation is most effective when it is focused on the critical questions that the organisation

1. OVERVIEW OF SERIES

1. Getting started (vol. 8 no.1, Autumn 2000)
Conducting the needs assessment; key issue: *How can emotional intelligence support the business?*

2. Design (vol. 8 no.2, Winter 2000/01)
Designing the programme; key issue: *What are the necessary elements for the programme?*

3. Taking the show on the road (vol. 8 no.3, Spring 2001)
Implementing the EQ programme; key issue: *How do we assure the highest quality of implementation?*

4. Assuring quality (this issue)
Evaluating the programme; key issue: *How will we measure quality and improve the programme?*

2. IDENTIFYING EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

To prove it	Evaluation methods/metrics	Kirkpatrick level[1]
■ To demonstrate that the trainer was competent and effective	■ Customer satisfaction data compared across different courses ■ Specific feedback from participants on content, skill of facilitator and learning methods ■ Cost/benefit comparisons of different providers	■ Reaction ■ Reaction ■ Results
■ To prove that the intervention (eg coaching) was the best method of development	■ Research method using experimental and control groups	■ Behaviour ■ Results
■ To illustrate that the change is sustained over time	■ Pre- and post-assessment comparison	■ Learning ■ Behaviour ■ Results
■ To prove that emotional intelligence can be developed through a training intervention	■ Pre- and post-assessments using validated EQ instruments	■ Results ■ Behaviour
■ To make the case that it delivered the intended business results	■ Cost/benefit comparison of inputs and outcomes ■ Measurement of selected business outcomes ■ Control-group comparison	■ Results ■ Results ■ Results

3. EVALUATING TO IMPROVE PROVISION

To improve it	Evaluation methods/metrics	Kirkpatrick level[1]
■ To increase the alignment of content to objectives and needs	■ Systematic review of each part of the programme against stated objectives ■ Evaluation form ■ Client interviews ■ Follow-up survey	■ Learning ■ Behaviour ■ Reaction ■ Reaction ■ Reaction
■ To improve the facilitation of the programme	■ Informal "check-ins" with participants during the event[2] ■ Customer satisfaction data from evaluation forms ■ Interviews with facilitators and participants	■ Reaction ■ Reaction ■ Reaction
■ To improve practical aspects of the programme (venue, materials)	■ End-of-programme evaluation of major factors and resultant changes	■ Reaction
■ To improve participant follow-through on action plans[3]	■ Follow-up study to identify how well individuals implement their plans	■ Behaviour ■ Results

wants answered. It involves asking fundamental questions about what success would look like. And, more importantly, deciding how the evaluation results will be used.

There are three primary reasons for evaluating emotional intelligence programmes. The task of practitioners is to identify how important they are to stakeholders.

Reason 1: To prove it

Very often, the "proof" depends on having established goals at the outset. Box 2 above identifies objectives that may help demonstrate the programme's value. The objectives are accompanied by possible methods/metrics and the relevant level(s) of training evaluation.[1]

Reason 2: To improve it

This involves reviewing all the major inputs – content, delivery methods, programme design, facilities, training personnel and audiovisual aids (see box 3 above). In this section, when considering the evaluation methods, it is important to know in advance

4. WAYS OF ASSESSING CHANGE

To assess learning/change	Evaluation methods/metrics	Kirkpatrick level[1]
■ To assess changes and achievement against the original needs and objectives. This may include: – Accomplishment of the learning objectives – Measurement of changes in emotional intelligence – Assessment against stakeholders' originally stated needs	■ Initial assessment before the training using a questionnaire	■ Learning
	■ Structured interview	■ Learning
	■ Review of achievement against action plans	■ Results
	■ Repeat performance measurements	■ Results
■ To evaluate performance improvement on the job	■ Pre- and post-performance comparison (with control group where possible)	■ Behaviour ■ Results
■ To assess improvement in the well-being of participants, eg in the areas of health and relationships	■ Pre- and post- self-reports	■ Learning
	■ Health indicators (eg blood-pressure readings, amount of sleep)	■ Behaviour ■ Results

how you intend to use what you learn through the evaluation process.

Reason 3: To assess learning/change

This final purpose of evaluation brings together all of the specific changes that we would hope to see happen as evidence of the intervention being successful (see box 4 above). Of course, while it is often difficult to isolate training as the primary reason for change, *evidence* that some change has occurred is often enough to demonstrate a programme's effectiveness.

EVALUATION GUIDELINES

Cherniss & Adler (2000) offer the following guidance for the practitioner. These guidelines provide a useful framework for determining how to conduct an effective assessment of programme effectiveness.

A. Evaluation should be a process that focuses on continuous improvement, not a "pass-fail" test in which individuals associated with a programme win or lose credibility. When an evaluation suggests that a programme fell short of its goals, it should not be used to punish a group or an individual, but, rather, to improve programme effectiveness.

B. Evaluation should focus on job improvement and business results, wherever possible. Ultimately, what concerns organisations the most is: "*What is the return on our investment?*"

C. Pre- and post-training assessments should be used, as well as follow-up assessments in order to track change. Measure change after three months and regularly thereafter for up to one year, where possible.

D. The selection of participants for the test and control groups should be based on a random sample. The experimental method can produce the most objective, compelling results.

E. There are two acceptable alternatives where it is not feasible to include a control group:

■ administer several measurement tools before the training begins (to have multiple baseline assessments); and

■ compare change on targeted competencies with change on competencies that were not targeted for training.

F. The evaluation design should include both outcome measures for the targeted competencies as well as relevant performance measures.

G. It is worth remembering that the individuals who are closest to the programme may not be the appropriate people to measure the programme's effectiveness. This may be particularly true if their jobs and/or performance depend on the results; fear of failure may create some skew in the data and a desire to show easy "proof" of the programme's success. For example, all programme evaluation activities at American Express were conducted by external resources to avoid this potential "contamination".

BUSINESS EXAMPLES	
To assess performance improvement on the job	In its initial pilot programme, American Express used pre- and post-assessments to demonstrate the results of the intervention. The training programme, called FOCUS, was provided to financial advisers across the USA. A control group was selected against which to measure results. Participants in both groups (experimental and control) completed two emotional intelligence instruments both before and after training. Business results were also collected. The results showed that those who completed the training *did* increase their emotional intelligence, and their business results were greater than those of both the control group and the company overall at the time of the study.
To prove that it was worth it	Columbus Regional Hospital believes that EQ drives leadership effectiveness and that the effectiveness of leadership has a direct impact on organisational results. To demonstrate the effectiveness of the EQ interventions (coaching plus training), the organisation is conducting a two-year study. Pre- and post-assessments using the EQi have shown overall improvement in EQ. Those who initially scored the lowest on the EQi showed over 30% increase. The correlation of organisational impact and EQ improvement will be analysed in 2002.
To improve the alignment of content to objectives and needs	After several years of programme implementation, American Express wanted to conduct an evaluation to find out which parts of the programme had the most impact over time. A follow-up survey was conducted with every participant up to that time. Survey respondents indicated the degree to which they used the skills taught in the programme. They also evaluated the everyday importance of key concepts. The results were used to realign the programme design with the relative value of each programme element.
To assess performance improvement on the job	After 10 years of emotional intelligence programming, American Express wanted to understand what kind of performance impact the interventions had had. An outside firm, TSI, which specialises in the evaluation of programme effectiveness, conducted the study. Its approach was to interview, in depth, randomly selected programme participants. TSI elicited specific examples of the application of emotional intelligence learning. The results showed consistent and significant use of EQ in multiple contexts, eg in teams, leadership and customer relationships.
To prove that EQ can be developed in a group setting	Motorola includes emotional intelligence training as part of its leadership development programme for high-potential global leaders. The EQi was administered to participants at the beginning and at the end of the EQ programme: an interval of one year. The results showed overall improvement in EQ with the most dramatic improvement in the scores of those whose EQi scores were initially the lowest.
To assess change in the team's emotional intelligence	Fourteen team leaders of a policy unit in the UK's Department for Education and Employment participated in a five-day emotional intelligence intervention over four months. Their emotional intelligence was assessed at the beginning and three months after completion, using the Multi-Factor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS). The results showed that all team leaders increased their emotional intelligence with the most dramatic increase being in their ability to "manage emotions".

EXPERIENCES, INSIGHTS AND KEY LEARNINGS

Below is a checklist of what we have found to be the key pitfalls and our recommendations of ways of avoiding them.

1. You and/or your stakeholders are not clear about what to evaluate.

Suggestion: Use the first section ("Purpose of evaluation") to clarify why you are evaluating and what specifically you are assessing.

2. Evaluation is not perceived as a priority, so there is insufficient time dedicated to it.

Suggestion: Make the case for evaluation by quantifying the potential benefits to your stakeholders. It may help to assess, for example:

- the amount of time or financial resources that should be dedicated to emotional intelligence work; and

BUSINESS EXAMPLES	
To prove improvements in team effectiveness	At the end of each module of a team development programme in this company, action plans were set. Over a three-month period, achievement against action plans was tracked. Achievement against stated action plans was an average of 92%, with many achieving their actions 100%.
To assess the business impact of change programme	Merck Eurolab, a major laboratory supplies distributor, used EQ profiling within a change programme. There were key indicators for inventory and supplier management and for service issues following the implementation of a new IT system, that formed the backdrop to the EQ programme. A new structure and new roles were identified and a training and coaching programme was developed to support this, based on the EQ profile of 22 people. Results have shown that morale is up and there is more effective teamworking. On hard business measures, inventory reduced by 20% over seven months and on-time delivery from suppliers was up to 71% (from 65%). The savings from various cost-reduction initiatives was quantified at approximately £200,000.
To assess change in emotional intelligence components	The Hay Group has been conducting evaluation on its Mastering Emotional Intelligence Programme, a one-year programme that is designed to identify and address workplace emotional intelligence issues and provide support for managers to increase their emotional intelligence competencies. Two samples of participants were compared. The results showed that, in the case of the first sample (Brazilian managers and consultants of a global HR consulting firm), managers increased their emotional intelligence by approximately 11% and this improvement was in eight out of 20 competencies. In the second sample, managers increased their emotional intelligence on 19 of 20 components and the increase was quantified at 24%.
To improve aspects of the intervention to create more impact	The follow-up evaluation on the Hay study of its Mastering Emotional Intelligence Programme included reviewing the success of the evaluation study. The following were identified as areas for ongoing improvement: ■ larger samples of individuals; ■ inclusion of a control group; ■ demographic data (to control for other confounding variables); and ■ accurate records of action plans.
To assess the impact of an MBA programme: a longitudinal study	As part of a 50-year, longitudinal study of the development and careers of a management school's MBA graduates, seven cohorts of students are being assessed as they graduate from the programme (ie four samples of graduating full-time and three samples of graduating part-time students), and every five to seven years until they retire. This work started in 1990 when the MBA programme was redesigned to reflect changing business requirements. These longitudinal studies have shown that people can change their emotional intelligence competencies over two to five years. MBA students, averaging 27 years old at entry into the programme, showed dramatic changes on videotaped and audiotaped behavioural samples and questionnaire measures of emotional intelligence competencies, as a result of the competency-based, outcome-oriented MBA programme that was implemented in 1990.

■ major pay-offs from the training, so that they can be replicated on a wider scale.

3. Other priorities divert attention, so a follow-up evaluation is put aside and not completed within the original time frame, or it is completed to a lower standard.

Suggestion: Plan carefully the timing of your evaluation efforts. Use a combination of business and other measures. Use existing metrics (eg sales). This reduces the incremental effort required by the organisation.

4. Inappropriate or sloppy evaluation methodology.

Suggestion: Make it a priority to learn about evaluation and pilot new and better processes. Although it is always possible to borrow processes from other venues, it is impossible to borrow the results of an evaluation.

5. The difficulty of isolating training as the key variable in determining results.

Suggestion: Use pre- and post-measurement as much as possible, and a control group where feasible. However, do not underestimate the importance of anecdotal feedback. Both the authors have heard many programme participants and their managers describe an emotional intelligence intervention as "life-changing" and/or "career-saving".

CONCLUSION

If you care enough about emotional intelligence to implement it, please go the next step and evaluate it!

Evaluating emotional intelligence programmes requires a rigorous, systematic, disciplined effort. Our advice is to make this the core of your design. Focus on evaluation early in the intervention, rather than as an after-thought. At the same time, try not to lose sight of the journey of your emotional intelligence programme.

It is good to have an end
to journey towards,
but, it is the journey that matters,
in the end.
Ursula le Guin, *The left hand of darkness.*

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To learn more about the programmes referenced in the article, please contact Geetu or Kate, and we can put you in touch with the appropriate programme manager. The authors would welcome contact with any individuals or organisations that are collecting data on the impact of their emotional intelligence programme. Please e-mail Geetu Orme if you have interesting experiences, results or data that you would like to share.

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Notes

[1] Donald Kirkpatrick in his seminal work (Kirkpatrick, 1998) outlined four levels of evaluation (reaction – level 1, learning – level 2, behaviour – level 3, results – level 4).

[2] A word of caution here – while it is likely to create a positive learning environment when participants experience the facilitator asking for feedback, research suggests a zero correlation between trainees' reports of satisfaction and their learning or demonstrated improvement on the job. Liking does not imply learning (Tannenbaum and Yukl, 1992, quoted in Cherniss and Adler, 2000, p.144).

[3] Wheeler analysed the extent to which MBA graduates worked on their goals in multiple "life spheres" (work, family, recreational groups, etc). In a two-year follow-up study of two graduating classes of part-time MBA students, she found those who worked on their goals and plans in multiple sets of relationships improved the most *and* did so more than those working on goals in only one setting, such as work or within one relationship.

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Results of emotionally intelligent actions at Kaiser Permanente

Charles Wolfe describes how he used emotional intelligence concepts to help smooth the transition of IT from a regional to a national department within Kaiser Permanente, a leading US healthcare organisation.

Kaiser Permanente is America's leading non-profit integrated healthcare organisation. Founded in 1945, it is a group-practice prepayment programme, with headquarters in Oakland, California. Kaiser Permanente serves the healthcare needs of eight million members in nine states and the District of Columbia. It includes around 90,000 technical, administrative and clerical employees, and about 11,000 physicians from all specialities. Its information technology (IT) department includes some 4,000 employees.

I worked with a division of the IT department, Financial and Administrative Systems Development (FASD), which represents almost a quarter of these employees. I introduced emotional intelligence to the senior managers in this division to help smooth the transition of IT from a regional to a national department.

Garry Hurlbut is Vice-President of Application Systems Management for Kaiser Permanente Information Technology, which oversees FASD, and he and I began working together five years ago. Over the past two years, I have introduced emotional intelligence to his senior leadership team and their direct reports. Mohamed Abdelghani, who is one of Garry's senior managers, has recently been given increased operational responsibility for the FASD group within Application Systems Management. Mohamed and I began the coaching process more than a year ago. Mohamed has indicated by his comments and actions that he is impressed with the approach taken for emotional intelligence coaching. He liked the fact that the assessment was just the beginning and that the coaching that followed was targeted to address real organisational needs. An example of our work together follows.

A major reorganisation took place in Kaiser Permanente Information Technology when I began coaching Mohamed. After we had discussed the results of Mohamed's assessment, we explored different possibilities regarding how the learning and coaching process could be applied. Together, we determined that we would address the feelings of regional staff affected by the change in organisational structure. These staff members were told they no longer reported to the regional level. Instead, they would become part of a national organisation with reporting relationships away from their offices. My guidance and counsel was to use the emotional intelligence model* to:

- Help determine the morale in the regional office:
Branch one of the model – Identify emotions.
- Determine what emotions we wanted people to experience during and after the transition to the new reporting structure:
Branch two of the model – Use emotions.
- Understand what problems and doubts were developing as a result of the structural change, and what could be done to minimise any workflow disruptions:
Branch three of the model – Understand emotions.
- Construct and implement a plan based on the above that would be politically sensitive, raise morale, identify and deal with problems and, most importantly, retain key staff:
Branch four of the model – Manage emotions.

Although the general change-management issues associated with a reorganisation are well known in the management literature, it was through the emotional intelligence coaching process that we conceived the need to understand what feelings regional staff were experiencing. Once we discovered that a number of staff, as we expected, were upset not to be reporting to local regional management, we began planning in earnest how to ensure that there would be no loss in either short-term productivity or members of staff. We felt it was important to address these tactical issues so that the more long-term goals of increasing organisational efficiency and effectiveness through the reorganisation would not be affected by any negative fallout because of the change in reporting relationships.

Since, at that time, Mohamed was one of five managers who shared responsibility for the newly assigned regional staff, the idea to partner with another senior manager emerged. The other manager was Mike Fedor, Senior Manager for Medical Billing and Revenue Applications, who I was also coaching. Garry encourages his senior managers to work as a team and this project offered the opportunity to Mohamed and Mike to partner on solving a potentially difficult organisational problem. Together, Mohamed, Mike and I conceived a plan:

■ Identify how the regional staff were feeling: *Branch one – Identify emotions*.
■ Determine ahead of time how we wanted them to feel: *Branch two – Use emotions*.
■ Think through with the regional staff why they were feeling as they were and, if a problem existed, work with them to determine how to improve the situation: *Branch three – Understand emotions*.

This led to interviews with key regional staff members that resulted in: a summary of how people were feeling; how they wanted to feel; and what it would take for the more positive changes to happen.

Mohamed, Mike and I recommended to Garry that we bring his senior leadership team together with all the regional managers affected for an open discussion to share what we had learned and what we might do about it. Garry approved the expenditure to bring people together and, at that meeting, the senior leaders and regional leaders determined that it would be important for the following to take place:

■ The existing organisational vision would need to be explained to regional staff, who would have the opportunity to comment on how the vision would need to change to be inspirational to them.
■ Professional growth opportunities would be made available and at least some core-competency centres should be established in regional offices away from headquarters. (People need to believe that they do not necessarily need to move to headquarters for career opportunities.)
■ Senior leaders from headquarters would need to visit the regions to cement the positive aspects of the change in organisational structure.
■ These plans would need to be implemented, monitored and modified as required to maintain high levels of performance in regional offices.

All of these activities have happened and are ongoing. They have eased the difficult transition from reporting regionally to reporting nationally within the FASD group of Kaiser Permanente Information Technology. While turnover in many organisations is notoriously high, turnover within FASD has been lower than the industry average during a period of restructuring. Furthermore, in discussions with regional staff members, I have been told that people have been surprisingly pleased with the reorganisation. Although it is hard to quantify what role the emotional intelligence work has had in all this, it was certainly one of the factors contributing to improved morale.

When asked to comment on the emotional intelligence coaching application to this IT reorganisation, Garry Hurlbut and Mohamed Abdelghani said:
"Emotional intelligence coaching for the ASM [Application Systems Management] senior leaders and staff had a significant positive impact on their effectiveness. It has improved our relationships with our business customers and our interactions with other internal IT divisions. By understanding the emotional 'landscape', we are much better equipped to understand and manage our own reaction to events in the workplace and to more effectively understand our business and IT partners' frame of reference. As a result, we are more able to use our training in analytical and design skills to produce more effective solutions with our business and IT partners."
– Garry Hurlbut, Vice-President of Application Systems Management for Kaiser Permanente Information Technology
"When it came to working with staff during reorganisation, I wondered if there was a tool that could help – then I found the emotional intelligence model. It was helpful in understanding and using emotions to make a difficult task successful."
– Mohamed Abdelghani, Director of Operations, Financial and Administrative Systems Development, Kaiser Permanente Information Technology

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* Editor's note: Charles Wolfe used the emotional ability intelligence model developed by John Mayer and Peter Salovey. His colleague David Caruso helped Mayer and Salovey develop an ability test to measure the four branches of their model, called the Multifactor Emotional Intelligence Scale (MEIS).