

EI at the heart of performance

The implications of our 2010 ESCI research

A Hay Group research brief



Relentless change.
Increasing expectation.
Limited resources.

And the imperative to be effective, regardless.

It's never been more important to know who you are and what impact you have.

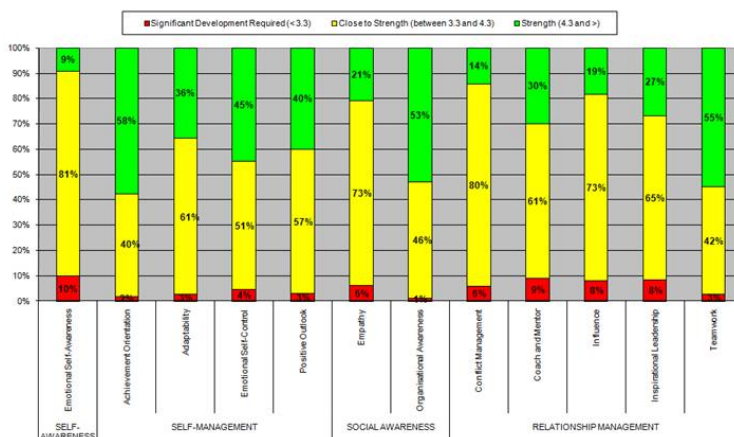
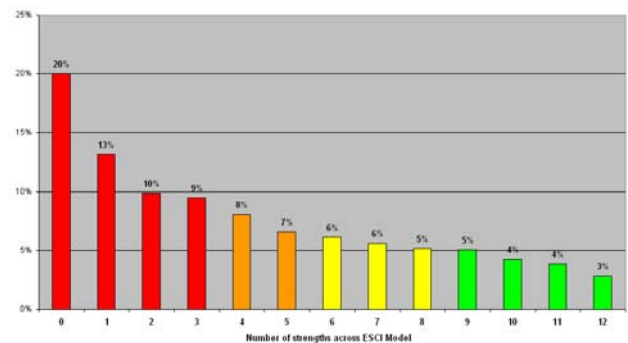
We've always known that the emotional and social intelligence competencies are more than just 'nice to have'. They underpin highly effective performance for individual contributors and leaders. Our recent analysis of 2009 ESCI data has revealed more about how EI drives performance.

What is the ESCI data showing us?

We recently interrogated the database, collated from people who completed the ESCI in 2009; 4,322 participants from 283 global clients spanning a range of organisations and sectors. We hoped that this valuable resource would reveal useful findings that would support the work of facilitators and coaches who provide EI feedback and development. We had not anticipated, however, that the research would reveal such stark messages about the relationship between EI and performance and, in particular, the extent to which emotional self-awareness is a cornerstone of emotionally and socially intelligent behaviour.

The first surprise was the breakdown across the 2009 data of the number of strengths that participants typically have. When we looked at the number of participants demonstrating strengths (at or close to 85 per cent of the scale) we discovered that:

- 20 per cent of participants have no strengths
- 52 per cent have 3 or fewer
- Only 16 per cent have 9 or more strengths



Digging deeper revealed the typical patterns within participants' ESCI scores:

- the competencies typically seen at strength include achievement orientation, teamwork and organisational awareness
- those that typically require most development include emotional self-awareness, conflict management, influence and inspirational leadership.

The implications are obvious for those working to help individuals develop their capability.

Does emotionally and socially intelligent behaviour really matter?

What part do ESCI behaviours play in outstanding performance?

And are they significant for leaders as well as for team members?

How does EI drive performance?

The findings show that the capabilities we take for granted in the workplace – those that are generally used to define baseline employability – are indeed common strengths in the 2009 data:

- achievement orientation
- teamwork
- organisational awareness.

The ones that we see more participants struggling with include the ‘soft skills’ – the more complex personal and interpersonal qualities:

- emotional self-awareness
- influence
- coach and mentor
- conflict management
- inspirational leadership.

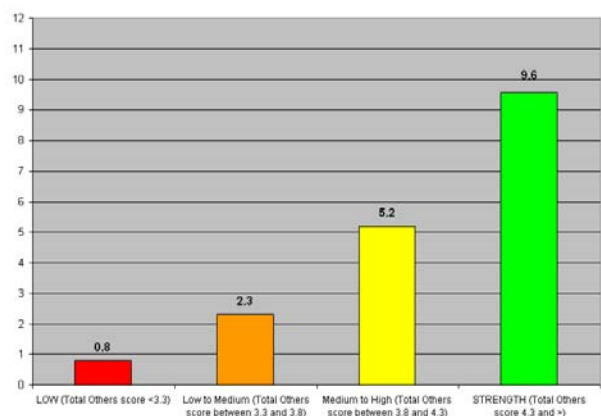
But does this matter? Are the core competencies of employability enough to deliver results in the workplace? Do the ‘soft skills’ make a noticeable difference?

We started by looking at the quality that participants and coaches have most questions about: emotional self-awareness. Deep-seated and difficult to observe, we wanted to know what part it plays in participants’ overall demonstration of EI.

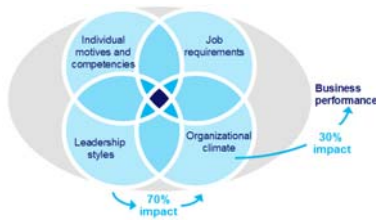
And we found that participants with high emotional self-awareness display more of all the other ESCI competencies at strength:

- a participant who never or only sometimes demonstrates emotional self-awareness is likely to show less than one competency at strength (often or consistently)
- a participant who demonstrates emotional self-awareness often or consistently is likely to display more than 9 ESCI competencies at strength.

Average number of ESCI strengths based on a low, low-medium, medium-high or high emotional self-awareness score



These findings lend a sharp significance to the assertion that self-awareness lies at the heart of emotional intelligence. Without it, an individual’s chance of demonstrating strength in other areas is low. With it, he or she is likely to shine.



Can you be a great leader without EI?

Hay Group’s leadership styles and organisational climate assessments enable us to investigate the links between individual qualities, leadership behaviours and impact. And within the 2009 database we found 436 participants who had ESCI, leadership styles and climate feedback, providing a valuable opportunity to explore the part EI behaviours play in delivering outstanding leadership performance.

How does EI inform leadership behaviour?

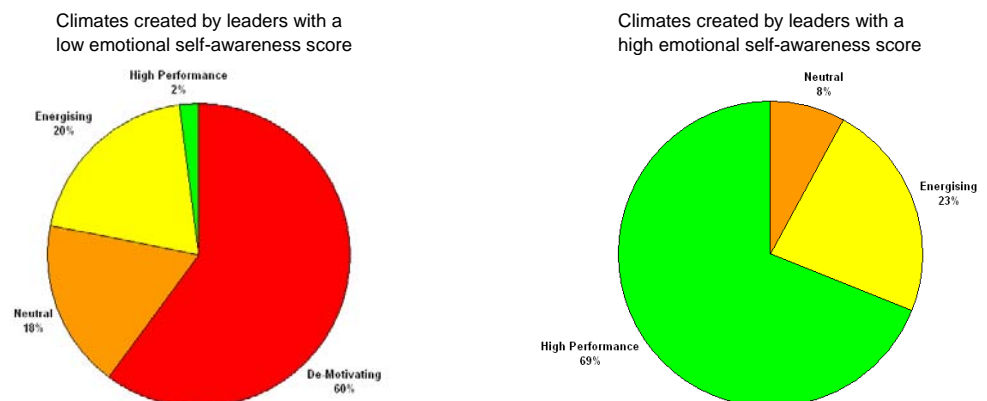
Leaders who demonstrate more ESCI strengths also demonstrate a wider range of leadership behaviours. Those with fewer than 3 ESCI strengths had a much more limited range of leadership styles to draw upon and they tended to rely primarily on a coercive approach; issuing orders and expecting immediate compliance from their team members. Very few of these leaders used an approach which kept their teams involved in decision making. Neither did they incorporate coaching and developing others into their repertoire.

In contrast, leaders with 10 or more ESCI strengths in their portfolio used a much wider range of leadership styles. Their typical behaviours included those that were more likely to engage their team members; providing long term direction and vision, creating harmony, encouraging new ideas and investing in their team members' long term professional development.

And how does EI influence leadership impact?

Great leaders bring out the best in their team members. They do it by creating a positive team climate, one which encourages motivation and extra effort. So what part does a leader’s EI play in their capacity to do this?

When we divided the 436 participants into groups, according to their emotional self-awareness score, we discovered an astonishing relationship with climate. Of those leaders demonstrating high emotional self-awareness 92 per cent created positive climates (energising and high performance). Only 8 per cent had a neutral impact and none were creating de-motivating climates. In sharp contrast 78 per cent of leaders demonstrating low emotional self-awareness created negative climates and only 22 per cent had a positive impact.



This final figure leaves one wondering about the experience, and personal cost, for those 2 per cent of leaders creating high performance climates with a low reserve of emotional self-awareness upon which to draw.

In the absence of feedback from others, people develop blind spots that hinder their effectiveness as leaders.

A Hay Group study of 1,214 leaders showed that the higher you rise in an organisation, the more likely you are to over-rate yourself, compared with how others rate your behaviour.

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What does this mean for ESCI practitioners?

The research showed that participants with low emotional self-awareness are much more likely to require development across a range of other competencies, particularly in relationship management.

Impact of emotional self-awareness (ESA) score on other ESCI competencies		Percentage of participants needing significant development:	
		in the low scoring ESA group	in the high scoring ESA group
Self-management	Achievement orientation	10	0
	Adaptability	14	1
	Emotional self-control	17	1
	Positive outlook	15	1
Social awareness	Empathy	34	0
	Organisational awareness	9	0
Relationship management	Conflict management	36	4
	Coach and mentor	32	0
	Influence	33	6
	Inspirational leadership	41	1
	Teamwork	12	0

Working with participants to develop the relationship management competencies makes sense. Organisations can see the point, buy in and justify their investment. Coaches can draw upon a wealth of tools and resources to design developmental activities. And most participants can see the value in terms of their day-to-day demands.

But coaches who take on the challenge of helping participants to develop their emotional self-awareness are using a unique aspect of their role and, at the same time, underpinning a range of other EI behaviours. They are taking the time to discuss the possible messages that feedback offers, to hypothesise on its meaning and to explore different ways in which an individual can keep working towards being the person they want to be. They are sharing their own perceptions of, and reactions to, the behaviour of those they coach. And they are helping individuals to develop the ongoing habit of seeking feedback from others; formally and informally.

This is the territory within which emotional self-awareness thrives.

About Hay Group

Hay Group is a global management consulting firm that works with leaders to transform strategy into reality. We develop talent, organise people to be more effective and motivate them to perform at their best. Our focus is on making change happen and helping people and organisations realise their potential.

We have over 2600 employees working in 85 offices in 49 countries. Our clients are from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, across every major industry. For more information please contact your local office through www.haygroup.com.