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# The Emotional Intelligence Skills Managers Valued by Recruiters and How to Develop Them

Niina Majaniemi & Keijo Varis

The purpose of this paper is to explore and evaluate which emotional intelligence skills recruiters value the most when they recruit new managers in Finland and in the Western world, and to make suggestions on how these skills can be developed. On the basis of the research conducted with mixed-methods approach, the most valued emotional intelligence skills were interpersonal relationship skills, independence, self-awareness, social responsibility, assertiveness, flexibility, optimism, happiness, and stress tolerance.

This paper has two main objectives. Firstly, it provides guidance for recruiters regarding which emotional intelligence skills they should look more closely into when they hire new people for managerial positions. Secondly, the paper reveals which emotional intelligence skills the applicants for managerial positions should focus on in order to promote their careers. Another purpose of this paper is to raise awareness of how these emotional intelligence skills can be developed.

## Introduction

Emotional intelligence has gained increasing interest in today's business environment. In this paper, the main research question was: which emotional intelligence skills do recruiting managers value the most when they hire new people into managerial positions in Finland?

Intelligence, conceptualized as abstract thinking, has many times been demonstrated to predict success (Sternberg 2000, 399). According to David Wechsler (1991), "individuals with identical IQ's may differ very markedly regarding their effective ability to cope with the environment". A way to regard this limitation is to observe human life as naturally complex and subject to changing events (Sternberg 2000, 399). Daniel Goleman has claimed that emotional intelligence will account for success at home and at work. According to him, emotional intelligence will help in work life, both in teamwork and in cooperation, as it aids learning together how to work more effectively. (Sternberg 2000, 402.) Goleman also says that emotional intelligence will confer "an advantage in picking up the unspoken rules that govern success in organizational politics" (Goleman 1995, 36).

Claims such as Goleman's made us interested in the possibility that emotional intelligence skills may be just as important, if not even more important, than single IQ scores, when recruiters evaluate potential employees. Wechsler's statement implies that being able to work in different scenarios requires more from a person than merely a high intelligence score, since IQ alone does not tell anything about a person's ability to cope with other people. In this sense, emotional intelligence makes you look at the limitations of the IQ (Epstein 1998, xi).

The topic of emotional intelligence is important, because exploring and developing it helps us motivate ourselves, manage stress, and resolve conflict with others. We wanted to explore this topic in more detail, as emotional intelligence determines how effectively we express emotions within the cultural contexts of our workplaces, for example. (Hughes et al. 2005.)

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Section 2 of this paper includes a literature review, focusing on the history and the present theories of emotional intelligence. The literature review mainly focuses on Reuven Bar-On's fifteen competencies of emotional intelligence. The whole set of Bar-On's fifteen emotional intelligence skills are represented in Appendix 1. Section 3 describes the data and methodology of the study on which this paper is based.

The goal of this paper is to build options for HR professionals and managers, who would like to evaluate and develop the emotional intelligence skills of their employees, and to find out which skills are commonly valued among recruiting managers. They can also compare how their employees match these valued skills. In addition, this paper offers guidance for people applying for managerial positions by helping them understand and develop skills that are valued by recruiting managers. This way they can improve their employability and competitiveness in the job market. It is also important that recruiting managers take emotional intelligence skills into account in order to guarantee good relationships between managers and subordinates in their organizations. This will enhance the emotional functionality, efficiency, and competitiveness of their organizations. Nearly every job in today's business requires emotional intelligence skills. Thus, hiring managers should take these skills into consideration in the recruitment process. (Lynn 2008, 1.)

The results and discussion in Section 4 present the most valued emotional intelligence skills in the opinion of recruiting managers. Section 5 provides the conclusions and Section 6 introduces a suggestion for a professional development plan to develop emotional intelligence.

## **Literature review**

Emotional intelligence, as a psychological concept, was developed by Peter Salovey and John Mayer, according to whom "emotional intelligence is the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth" (1997, 10).

After Salovey and Mayer published their first model on emotional intelligence, Bar-On developed his own theoretical model (2000, 363–364). Bar-On's model was originally developed to evaluate the different aspects of emotional ability and to conceptualize it. Bar-On says that emotional intelligence means the combination of

personal, emotional, and social factors that affect an individual's ability to cope with the pressure and demands of the environment (Bar-On 1997, 3).

The term "emotional intelligence" implies something having to do with the intersection of emotion and cognition (Sternberg 2000, 398). Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to recognize meanings of emotional patterns and to solve problems based on them (Salovey & Mayer 1990; Mayer & Salovey 1997; Sternberg 2000, 400). Emotional intelligence entails the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the knowledge that comes from those actions to guide one's thinking and functioning (Emmerling et al. 2008, vii).

The abbreviation EQ, often used of emotional intelligence, refers to "emotional quotient", a measure of EI, which is more known than EI itself (Henry 2011, xiv).

Philosopher Aristotle said that emotions "may be felt both too much and too little and in both cases, not well; but to feel them at the right times, regarding the right objects, towards the right people, with the right motive, and in the right way, is what is both intermediate and best, and this is characteristic of virtue" (Moshe et al. 2009, foreword). Emotional intelligence includes the competence in perceiving and communicating emotions, as well as in understanding emotions of self and others and regulating emotions (Moshe et al. 2009, preface).

Emotional intelligence refers to a generic competence in perceiving emotions and a competence that helps us regulate emotions and cope well with emotive situations (Moshe et al. 2009, 3). It is said that the concept of "intelligence" is poorly formulated and badly misunderstood, because enumerating a person's IQ does not inform us of how their intelligence plays out as an ongoing process in real life contexts (Sternberg 2000; Moshe et al. 2009, 22). This lets us understand emotional intelligence as a process: it too should be viewed through how it is expressed in handling everyday problems. Example of this is how a person adapts to the difficult situations in life. (Moshe et al. 2009, 22.)

Sternberg describes several competing models labelled as "emotional intelligence" (Sternberg 2000, 400). One model is developed by Mayer and Salovey (1997). It is about the domain of emotional intelligence and describes several discrete emotional abilities which can be divided into four classes (Sternberg 2000, 401). The most basic skill in this domain of emotional intelligence is the perception and appraisal of

emotion. The second area is assimilating emotion in thought. The third and fourth areas are understanding and analysing emotion, and reflective regulation of emotion (Sternberg 2000, 400).

Another model of emotional intelligence is Bar-On's model, which is introduced more in depth in Appendix 1. Bar-On's model was intended to answer the question "Why some individuals are more capable to succeed in life than others?" (Sternberg 2000, 402.) The model reviewed psychological literature for personality characteristics that seemed to be related to success in life, as well as identified five broad areas of functioning relevant to success. These five areas are (a) intrapersonal skills, (b) interpersonal skills, (c) adaptability, (d) stress management, and (e) general mood. (Sternberg 2000, 402.)

The third emotional intelligence model is by Goleman (1995). It has five areas: (a) knowing one's emotions, (b) managing emotions, (c) motivating oneself, (d) recognizing emotions in others, and (e) handling relationships (Sternberg 2000, 402). More than five million copies have been sold of Goleman's book "Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ", which tells a lot about the interest towards emotional intelligence.

Below is a description of how the concept of emotional intelligence has presented itself over the years (Mayer 2006, 5–6).

1900–1969: Intelligence and emotions as separate, narrow areas

- Testing of intelligence was developed, and during this time, modern psychological test methods were developed. Emotions were studied as their own subject, separated from intelligence. There was ongoing debate about which comes first, emotions or physical reaction. The goal of psychologists was also to identify social intelligence, but the concept of intelligence remained cognitive (Mayer 2005, 5–6).

1970–1989: The pioneers of emotional intelligence

- During this period, researchers started to be interested in how emotions and cognition affected each other. Through the theory of multiple intelligences, Gardner brought up the concept of intrapersonal intelligence. The field of artificial intelligence worked on discovering how a computer can take the emo-

tional aspect of stories into account. The concept of emotional intelligence was used during this time (Mayer 2006, 5–6).

#### 1990–1993: Emotional intelligence surfaces

- Salovey and Mayer (1990) came up with the concept of emotional intelligence. In a scientific article, it was claimed that emotional intelligence is real intelligence (Salovey & Mayer 1993). At the same time, brain research was being carried out, which for its part forwarded the research on emotional intelligence (Mayer 2005, 5–6).

#### 1994–1997: The popularization of emotional intelligence and expanding the concept

- The concept of emotional intelligence was popularized during this time. It spread all over the world (Goleman, 1995). Emotional intelligence tests started to surface (Mayer 2006, 5–6).

#### 1998–present: Research on emotional intelligence and its institutionalization

- Clarification of emotional intelligence and empirical research started and continues today. There has been a lot of effort to define the concept again by using new test methods. Numerous scientific articles have been written about emotional intelligence (Mayer 2006, 5–6). One of the latest examples of this is the article “A meta-analysis of emotional intelligence on job satisfaction mediated by job resources, and a test of moderators” (Miao et al., 2017, 116).

Nowadays, there is an increase in studies on how to develop emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence toolkits have been developed to help increase emotional intelligence in people, for instance in employees. Emotional intelligence toolkits are advertised to help people get in touch with difficult emotions and help in self-regulating emotions. The emotional intelligence toolkit is a progressive process, including five steps and skill-building tips (HelpGuide.org 2016). Also professional plans for development are increasing in number. A professional development plan determines the goals and the needed skillset for an employee to support their personal and career development. A professional development plan is created by the first level manager of an employee, or an HR representative (Duke University 2016).

In this paper, the findings are based on Bar-On’s overall definition of emotional intelligence, which means that “emotional intelligence is an array of non-cognitive ca-

pabilities, competencies, and skills that influence one's ability to succeed in coping with environmental demands and pressures" (Bar-On 1997, 14). The fifteen traits by Bar-On, which were compared in this study, are emotional self-awareness, self-regard, assertiveness, independence, self-actualization, empathy, social responsibility, interpersonal relationships skills, stress tolerance, impulse control, reality testing, flexibility, problem solving, optimism, and happiness.

Emotional intelligence at work has been explored globally. Wong et al. (2010) did research on leading teachers in Hong Kong, comparing emotional intelligence to work satisfaction of the teachers. The research covered 3 866 teachers and the results showed that emotional intelligence skills correlated significantly with teachers' work satisfaction. This research also showed that not only leading teachers but also regular teachers needed emotional intelligence skills in their work. Wong et al. (2010) highlighted that emotional intelligence should be at the centre stage when choosing who gets to study to become a teacher.

One study in emotional intelligence had a sample of 358 leaders from the international Johnson & Johnson group (Cavallo & Brienza 2001). The gender distribution in the study was 55 percent men and 45 percent women. Demographically, they came from all continents. The purpose of this study was to find out which leadership competences can have an impact on making a leader as high potential leader, meaning that they get the best possible performance in organizations in comparison with leaders having an average performance and capacity. The 360-degree evaluation indicator included 183 claims and was based on the own competence model of the consortium and the emotional intelligence competencies of the ECI-meter (Simström 2009).

The results indicated that leaders with high emotional intelligence skills were more successful than other leaders. Managers, colleagues, and subordinates of these leaders were unanimous about the fact that the competences that differentiate top level performers from others were confidence, performance level, ability to make initiatives, ability to influence others, leadership skills, and ability to initiate change. When thinking about adaptation skills and helpfulness, female leaders scored higher in the eyes of their own managers than the opposite gender. The colleagues of leaders thought that women as leaders possessed a lot of emotional self-consciousness, and they thought that they were service-oriented and helpful as well as had good com-



munication skills and the ability to help other people in developing themselves. In this study, the geographical and cultural differences were minor (Simström 2009).

## Data and methodology

Two different kinds of methods were used for the empirical part of this study: a case study of selected Finnish job ads from a period of approximately one month, and qualitative interviews of recruiting managers to achieve deeper knowledge and collect data concerning the subject of this research.

The sampling of the ads was selected from Aamulehti and Helsingin Sanomat Sunday editions from 6 December 2015 to 24 January 2016. Helsingin Sanomat and Aamulehti were chosen because they are significant newspapers in Finland; Helsingin Sanomat was the second most read newspaper in Finland in 2015, while Aamulehti was the seventh on the same list. The selected ads needed to be ads for a managerial, leadership, director, or top specialist positions. The 71 positions (in Appendix 2) that qualified for this study are listed as below:

- Managing directors or equivalent (13)
- Functional directors/executives (17)
- Sales managers (11)
- Other managers (11)
- Foremen (10)
- Project managers (3)
- Other professionals (6)

A content analysis of ads was conducted, since we wanted to interpret how Bar-On's emotional intelligence factors (Appendix 1) were visible in job ads. Content analysis is a good option for doing this, since it is a research option that is used for summarizing large amounts of unstructured textual data into interpretable data relevant to the research topic and questions (Hakim 2000, 1; Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Saunders et al. 2009, 266–284).

We looked for skills based on Bar-On's model of emotional intelligence. The keywords found in the ads were compared with Bar-On's emotional intelligence list (Appendix 1) and interpretation of their meanings. After this, all the mentioned factors were collected into an Excel file and later analysed to find out which factors were most commonly used. Altogether, 71 positions were found and fitted for this study. Related to these positions, 62 personality skills were found, which can be thought of as emotional intelligence skills. Each of those 62 skills were investigated to see which emotional intelligence skills they were related to regarding Bar-On's emotional intelligence factors. After that, it was counted how many times each skill was mentioned in the 71 advertisements.

After counting the number of times the skills were mentioned in the job ads, a simple conversion chart (Appendix 2) was formulated to demonstrate the most often mentioned intelligence skills and how they compared to items on Bar-On's list of emotional intelligence. This list (Appendix 2) includes six of the most frequently mentioned emotional intelligence skills, which were then combined with those emotional intelligence factors from Bar-On's list with which they were thought to correspond.

After this, the qualitative interviews of recruiting managers were conducted. To increase the validity of the interviews and to compare the results from the analysis of the Finnish ads to the opinions of Western recruiters, members of a LinkedIn group called "The emotional intelligence network" were chosen. This group defines themselves as follows: "Emotional intelligence is the capacity to integrate feeling and thinking to make optimal decisions. Being 'smart with feelings' is essential to effectively leading – building engagement, navigating challenge, and accelerating change. The skills of emotional intelligence have practical application in numerous areas of organizational and professional performance."

The group discusses the challenges and opportunities of increasing emotional intelligence in the workplace, shares practices, and learns together. The group is hosted by Six Seconds, The Emotional Intelligence Network, a global not-for-profit corporation that supports change agents in making a positive difference (The Emotional Intelligence Network, 2016).

This group represented emotional intelligence experts in our research, mainly from Western countries outside Scandinavia. None of the interviewees were Finnish.

Only two interviewees represented Denmark, others came from the USA, the UK, Canada, and elsewhere. Because of this, the LinkedIn Emotional Intelligence network group acts in the research as a Western benchmark group against which the emotional intelligence requirements of the Finnish managers are compared. At the same time, the results of these interviews represent the Western world's emotional intelligence requirements for managerial positions in our research. Therefore the header of our article was chosen to be "The Emotional Intelligence Skills Managers Valued by Recruiters and How to Develop Them".

By conducting interviews within this group, it was ensured that the interviewees were already familiar with the concept of emotional intelligence and therefore qualified to answer the given question. Any answers that did not directly answer the research question were left out, and in the end, 20 valid responses were received for this research. Asking the question on LinkedIn instead of personal interviews means that there is no possibility of interviewer bias, which increases the reliability of the research. The main disadvantage is the inability to acquire more detailed information from respondents.

29 people from the LinkedIn Emotional intelligence group were selected as the target group of the interviews as they had recruited persons to managerial positions. The interview question was: "What are the emotional intelligence skills you value the most in a candidate when you hire someone for a managerial (or specialist) position?" The interviewees were informed that they will remain anonymous in the research, although their names and job titles could be seen on LinkedIn. This was done to provide them with an opportunity to safely reveal their honest opinions and enhance the reliability and quality of the information in the research.

After doing this, the qualities mentioned in these answers were compared to Baron's fifteen emotional intelligence factors. The interview results were also compared to the results of the content analysis conducted on the ads.

In addition, both qualitative and quantitative analysis were used to analyse the interviews. Quotations of interviews and handling them by themes represents qualitative analysis. Counting the frequencies of themes represents quantitative analysis of the same interviews.

Using qualitative and quantitative content analysis of ads and interviews at the same time represents a so called mixed research method, which is a good way to confront

a given research question from more than one angle, resulting in a more than one type of investigative perspective.

## Results and discussion

In this chapter, the research material from the content study of the ads and interviews is compared to emotional intelligence factors introduced by Reuven Bar-On. The Bar-On model describes EI as an array of interrelated emotional and social competencies, skills, and behaviours that impact emotionally intelligent behaviour (Bar-On 1997).

Based on the content analysis of the job ads, the most frequently mentioned personality skills were:

- interpersonal relationship skills and empathy: cooperation and interaction skills,
- optimism/positive attitude and creativity,
- open mindedness/flexibility and self-actualization,
- assertiveness and independence,
- self-awareness and social responsibility, and
- happiness and stress tolerance.

Based on the analysis of interviews, the most valued skills were:

- interpersonal relationship skills,
- self-awareness,
- empathy,
- optimism,
- assertiveness/self-confidence, and
- happiness.

Cooperation and interaction skills were the most wanted skills in the job ads. They can be associated with interpersonal relationship skills of the Bar-On's model. Interaction skills are also likely to be related to empathy, thus empathy can be valued as a popular emotional intelligence skill among recruiters who are looking for skilled managers.

Other important emotional intelligence skills valued by recruiting managers were optimism, positive attitude, creativity, assertiveness, independence, flexibility and self-actualization, self-awareness, happiness, and stress tolerance. These competences can be strongly associated with the motivation level of an employee, which may be one reason why recruiters look for these skills.

Assertiveness is needed, for example, in the important task of communicating company's values to the staff. Values determine the short-term goals that direct an individual's thoughts and actions in a current situation (Feather 1980; Pervin 1983). Independence was mentioned both directly and indirectly, which adds to its importance. According to Bass (1985, 33), a leader who can best guide transformation in a work environment is a person the staff can identify with. A transformational leader is a person who can make sure that the process of change is implemented (Bass 1985, 33). This is related to having good interpersonal relationship skills, which is an important quality in managerial work, as confirmed by this study.

To sum it up, interpersonal relationship skills was most frequently mentioned both in the job ads and the LinkedIn interviews and hence appear to be the single most important skill. Therefore, according to the research, this is the most sought after skill to which employees wishing to succeed in business should pay attention. This skill is important because we live in this world interacting with other people. This trait is also related to social responsibility; since we live in the world with others, we need to invest resources and concern in social responsibility. (Hughes et al. 2005, 78.) This skill also helps in our stress tolerance which again is an important emotional intelligence trait according to previous studies (Hughes et al. 2005, 79) as well as to this research.

We encourage people in work communities to pay more attention to emotional intelligence qualities of the staff and to develop those qualities. In the next section, we will present one option on how the HR department and managers can execute this task in workplaces.

## Conclusions

The growing interest towards emotional intelligence is a part of the zeitgeist of the modern Western society, which increasingly recognizes the importance of emotions (Matthews et al. 2003, 8). The goal of this research was to shed light on the question of which emotional intelligence skills the recruiting managers in Finland and in the Western world value the most when hiring new people into managerial positions. The topic was viewed through the perspective of our research question: “What are the most valued emotional intelligence skills for managers from a recruiting manager’s perspective?”

In this research, the list of the most important emotional intelligence skills for managers was compiled on the basis of recruiting ads in Finland and interviews of recruiting managers selected from a LinkedIn group. These results were compared to established emotional intelligence theories, especially to Bar-On’s model, to see if there were similarities.

An analysis of this research revealed that the most popular skills according to the content analysis of ads and interviews can be associated with six out of the fifteen skills of emotional intelligence introduced by Bar-On. When combining the results of the content analysis and interviews, the most popular emotional intelligence skills were:

- interpersonal relationships skills,
- self-awareness,
- optimism,
- assertiveness/self-confidence, and
- happiness.

The sampling of this study was different in content analysis and in interviews, as the sampling of the content analysis was wider than that of the interviews. However, using mixed methods added reliability to the results, and it also enables the adaptation of these research results into managers’ everyday life. This makes the research also practically oriented and beneficial. The list of the most wanted skills may give guidance on which emotional intelligence competences people who apply for a manager position should focus on. On the other hand, recruiting managers can

consider which traits they should look more closely for when they hire new people into managerial positions. In conclusion, we want to raise awareness of the most valued skills and the fact that emotional intelligence can be developed at least to some extent. This paper helps readers to think about emotional intelligence more closely and gain knowledge of how it can be used and developed in real life recruitment and work situations.

## **Professional development plan**

At the end of the paper, we wish to explain how HR managers can develop the emotional intelligence skills of their employees.

In the LinkedIn interviews conducted for this paper, there seemed to be doubts if emotional intelligence can be developed.

I have hired many people who did not have the desired technical skill set, only because they had the other, more important, E.I. based skills that cannot be easily taught, if at all. (Reply No. 10).

EI is often something that is just within a person's skill set and cannot be as easily taught and developed as technical skills so a very important topic! (Reply No. 17).

Studies have, however, shown that emotional intelligence qualities can be developed. Nelis et al. (2011) studied through intervention by training whether emotional intelligence could be improved among young adults and whether these changes lasted. The goal of their intervention was to increase the participants' skills in emotional intelligence areas. Each session included different approaches and techniques such as lectures, role playing exercises, group talks, and readings (Nelis et al. 2011, 356). They found that members of the group that received the training showed a significant improvement in their intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. These improvements were not short term but were visible also six months after training (Nelis et al. 2011, 358).

HR managers and also other managers can study emotional intelligence skills and see which skills they feel are most important for their organization. Those skills can then be enhanced by using a personal development plan designed individually for everyone in the organization. As stated in the previous paragraph, research has shown that emotional intelligence qualities can be moulded and improved. Also

majority of recruiting managers in our research believed that they can develop the emotional intelligence skills of their employees.

To increase the use of emotional intelligence skills in an organization, Human Resource departments can conduct a development plan for employee/employees with focus on emotional intelligence qualities. There are several options available for doing this. The increasing emphasis on an employee's personal development has resulted in Human Resources developing and implementing tools that promote employees' learning and preferred mindset. Popular techniques are multi-source or 360-degree feedback, career growth and development discussions with managers, and personal development plans (PDPs). However, as McDowall and Fletcher (2004) highlight, most studies have focused on performance or rewards rather than development, therefore mirroring the traditional practice of retrospective assessment (Nathan et al. 1991, 34).

A professional development plan documents the goals, the needed skillset, competency aspect, and objectives that an employee needs to accomplish to support their personal improvement and career development. A professional development plan is facilitated or coached by the immediate manager or a manager higher in the command and control chain. They work closely with the staff member to identify the necessary skills and to support the staff member's professional growth as well as organization's business requirements (Duke University 2016).

In many of today's organizations, personal development discussions occur regularly. The development plan of emotional intelligence skills could be easily incorporated into those discussions. Planning should not take place only after a staff member has been identified as needing improvement in the emotional intelligence area. Instead, it would be good to talk about emotional intelligence development needs regularly throughout the year, for example in personal development discussions (Duke University 2016).

## **Professional development planning steps**

This is an example of a professional development plan for an employee. Here is introduced some rough guidelines which can be adjusted according to employee's and employer's needs.



- Step One: Request a self-assessment from a staff member.
- Step Two: Develop your assessment of the individual's skill level.
- Step Three: Assess the department and organization's needs.
- Step Four: Explore development opportunities with the staff member.
- Step Five: Record and analyse the staff member's progress. (Duke University 2016)

### **Step One: Request a self-assessment from a staff member**

Have a staff member complete a certified emotional intelligence test to see what his/her current level is. There are several tests available, for instance, on the Internet. One example is EQ-i tool which was developed based on Bar-On's studies. Updated versions were released in 2011 (EQ Competence Europe 2016), for example EQ-i 2.0 and EQ360.

EQ-i measures emotional intelligence in the environment of international comparison material and in the context of millions of individual results. This tool is being used in over 60 countries and in many recruitment development programmes (EQ Europe 2016). EQ-I 2.0 consists of five main areas and 15 more specific emotional intelligence skills. It describes strengths and the areas that need improvement for the individual who responds to the test. This is only one example of a test. HR and managers should consider which test best serves their purposes and continue with the chosen method.

### **Step Two: Develop your assessment of an individual's skill level**

Based on the staff member's results of the emotional intelligence test, and considering their work contribution and manager's observations, determine their skill level in emotional intelligence (Duke University 2016).

### **Step Three: Assess the department and organization's needs**

For professional growth to be successful, employees' needs and interests must meet the organizational objectives. A staff member's professional development must be aligned with the organization's workforce needs (Duke University 2016). Manager should study emotional intelligence traits and see which traits to estimate to be the most important for their organization. The results of this research can be used as a reference, for example, seven most frequently mentioned traits in the content study, or the most frequently mentioned traits in the LinkedIn interviews; or take all 15 traits by Bar-On and try to find and build all those 15 qualities in an employee.

Managers should also consider that the skills they wish to promote within the company do not have to be from any list, since every organization is different and perhaps needs their own specific values to be highlighted. In the LinkedIn interviews for this paper, some respondents replied that the most important emotional intelligence skill depends on different variants.

The short answer: it depends. The longer answer: it depends on the industry, company culture, the position, etc. (Reply No. 15)

The answer is: it depends. On the position, on the culture, etc. Also, note that someone needs to be balanced. (Reply No. 18)

### **Step Four: Build a development plan for the missing skills**

Next, the manager should study the results of the employee's emotional intelligence test and see how the results match up to the requirements of the company. The next steps should then be created.

An example: empathy is determined to be one of the most important emotional intelligence qualities for a company. Employee seems to lack empathy according to emotional intelligence tests.

Action plan: ask the employee to come up with a plan with five different ways on how they can contribute to others' work or help someone else in the company. Those ways can be e.g. being a mentor to someone, giving expert advice to another project, participating in a volunteering event on behalf of the company, etc.

Another example could be lack of interpersonal skills. To build these skills, managers should focus on thinking how the staff member would be better equipped to work with other people. This can be done by e.g. giving the employee more projects that involve intensive group work, or organizing more group events for free time to build the team spirit in the company.

### **Step Five: Record and analyse the staff member's progress**

Collecting feedback from the employee about their development progress assists in identifying how they are progressing, whether they are building their skills, and if the approach to the problem needs to be changed. This can be done, for instance, during personal development discussions (Duke University 2016).

Improvement projects should normally begin with an assessment of the gap between the current situation and the desired future situation. Having an accurate sense of who you are helps you decide what you should do to improve. Often the assessment reveals a skills gap that you want to work on. We hope that after reading this study, people who are applying for managerial positions can now more carefully consider which emotional intelligence qualities they should develop in themselves and in that way, improve their chances of getting a job.

*Having an accurate sense of who you are helps you decide what you should do to improve.*

### **Theoretical and practical contributions of this research**

This research revealed which emotional intelligence traits are the most valued among recruiting managers when they hire people for managerial positions in Finland. The findings of this research were compared to and interpreted by using existing Bar-On's emotional intelligence model and its factors. This way, the most valued emotional intelligence traits for managers were found and "translated" into Bar-On's "language". Job applicants can benefit from this information and apply the knowledge when presenting themselves in job interviews. This increases their chances of getting a new managerial job.

On the other hand, HR managers can also use this information when they evaluate job applicant's emotional intelligence capabilities. They can also use this information when they evaluate people in their own organization and try to help them to develop their own capabilities in emotional intelligence. By doing this, both parties, HR managers and employees, can use the development steps suggested in this paper.

Finally, HR managers can increase the effectiveness of their organization and the happiness of the people working in the organization if they utilize the information and put into practice the processes suggested in this paper.

## **Limitations of this research**

The scope and results of this research are valid mainly for Finland and, to some extent, in the Western world. Its results cannot be generalized to the whole world.

## **Suggestion for further research**

The most sought after emotional intelligence skills can also be studied outside the Western world, for example in Asia and Africa. The results would likely differ not only between continents but also between countries, like for example S. Schwartz (1992; 1994) has verified in relation to values.

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## Appendix 1: Bar-On's Model of Emotional Intelligence

### 1. Self-regard

- a. Skill of liking ourselves the way we are, including strength of our self-confidence. This factor is related e.g. to self-actualization (Hughes et al. 2005, 38).
- b. It is a critical competence because without a self-integrated identity that allows you to know and respect yourself, you cannot participate authentically in life or be truly reliable e.g. in work (Hughes et al. 2005, 41–42).

### 2. Emotional self-awareness

- a. This factor reflects how familiar we are with our emotional response patterns. Do we know what we feel and why, and how strong the feeling is? (Hughes et al. 2005, 38)
- b. This factor allows us to know how we respond to our environment and what we feel. This provides the stepping stone for the other emotional intelligence skills (Hughes et al. 2005, 46).

### 3. Assertiveness

- a. This factor is the emotional strength that enables us to confidently tell others what we like and dislike or will not accept.
- b. Assertiveness is an important skill especially in business world, since it enables us to make our voices heard and stand up for ourselves. This skill feeds our sense of self-regard since we are announcing our feelings and setting up boundaries (Hughes et al. 2005, 50).

### 4. Independence

- a. Independence means the ability to make decisions based on your own assessment and comprehending a situation without having to satisfy the perceived emotional needs of everyone who has an opinion about the issue (Hughes et al. 2005, 38).



b. This skill describes the ability to stand on your own feet and trust your own opinion. This is a key leadership skill that can enhance effectiveness regardless the size of the company (Hughes et al. 2005, 56).

## 5. Self-actualization

a. Ability to set and meet own goals (Hughes et al. 2005, 38).

b. This is critical for companies because it is expensive to help grow employee's motivation. Stein and Book conducted research using EQ-i on nearly five thousand working people, and found out that the first of the top five factors is self-actualization (Hughes et al. 2005, 61).

## 6. Empathy

a. This means being able to listen and pay attention so that we understand how other people are feeling and why (Hughes et al. 2005, 38).

b. Being empathetic leads to more accurate communications and enhanced productivity (Hughes et al. 2005, 66). This skill is increasingly important in today's business. The World Economic Forum WEF states that "the empathy index" is one of the company's key factors in success (Sulander 2015).

## 7. Social responsibility

a. The ability of being able to care and discipline our work efforts to serve the interests of individuals and groups that lie outside the field of our personal needs (Hughes et al. 2005, 38).

b. Social responsibility holds societies and communities together (Hughes et al. 2005, 72). It is the reciprocal relationship between the single people and the whole group allowing them to achieve collective goals (Hughes et al. 2005, 66). This should be an important trait in a company, since the work in many companies involves at least some degree of teamwork.

## 8. Interpersonal relationship skills

a. The competency of initiating and sustaining lasting human relationships.

b. This skill is important because no one lives in the world alone. This is related to social responsibility. Since we live in the world with others we need to invest resources and concern into social responsibility. (Hughes et al. 2005, 78.) This trait also helps in our stress tolerance (Hughes et al. 2005, 79).

#### 9. Stress tolerance

a. This is the skill that helps us cope with everyday struggles so that the threats do not weaken our physical and emotional state (Hughes et al. 2005, 39).

b. If a person is stressed, it leads to physical and emotional damage and negatively impacts their effectiveness. People who have trouble dealing with stress can easily resort to negative self-medication. (Hughes et al. 2005, 82.) Hence, people in a demanding and fast work environment need to have good stress management ability.

#### 10. Impulse control

a. The ability to control the build-up of nervous energy that comes often with stress without projecting it into anger (Hughes et al. 2005, 39).

b. The ability to control urges is essential to working at a high level of effectiveness. In the workplace, a person needs to be able to control one's feelings so that they will not end up e.g. hurting client relationships (Hughes et al. 2005, 88).

#### 11. Reality testing

a. This skill enables us to correctly evaluate the nature of our current situation according to objective criteria (Hughes et al. 2005, 39).

b. We use only three of our five senses to construct the majority of our experience of reality, so it is helpful to verify that what we see, hear, and feel or sense around us is accurately perceived. Also, particularly in business world we should be able to confirm that our conclusions follow logically all the information that is available for us. (Hughes et al. 2005, 92.)

#### 12. Flexibility

a. This skill allows us to change direction rapidly without resistance and without needing to be convinced when our reality changes (Hughes et al. 2005, 39).

b. This skill is important because our world changes constantly. Flexible people often keep the deeper goal in mind in business, and this helps in building up a team. (Hughes et al. 2005, 97.)

### 13. Problem solving

a. This is the process through which we solve problems and thus are able to change the situation to better correspond with our needs (Hughes et al. 2005, 39).

b. In work life, we are expected to solve problems quickly and economically (Hughes et al. 2005, 102). This is naturally an important trait for anyone working in business world.

### 14. Optimism

a. The skill of positive expectancy holds the vision for improvement in the future (Hughes et al. 2005, 39).

b. Seligman (2002, 128) wrote: “Being optimistic brings about less depression, better physical health, and higher achievement, at a cost perhaps of less realism”. The features listed by Seligman are ones that most people would like to see more in their lives, thus optimism is an important factor (Hughes et al. 2005, 106). Optimism is linked to better physical strength, as demonstrated by a report by the American Psychological Association on a study conducted in 1995 and 1996 by Martin Seligman and Gregory Buchanan (Hughes et al. 2005, 107).

### 15. Happiness

a. This is the factor of being more or less consistently content and satisfied in the current moment (Hughes et al. 2005, 39).

b. Growth in productivity helps in achieving our goals and fulfilling our desires. For many people, fulfilling our desires and achieving our goals are closely related to happiness and so become their only meaningful criteria. A person’s level of happiness affects the development and exercise of one’s skills and relies on factors of persons’ emotional intelligence. (Hughes et al. 2005, 112.)

**Appendix 2: The conversion Table:  
The Summary of Adjectives in Ads and Bar-On's EI Factors**

<b>IN ADDS</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>INTERPRETATION BY USING BAR-ON'S TERMINOLOGY</b>
<b>Negotiation skills</b>	28	Co-operation skills Interpersonal / Social skills
<b>Positive attitude</b>	30	Positive attitude Interaction skills
<b>Open minded</b>	11	Self-actualization Flexibility
<b>Ability to execute</b>	10	Independent Assertiveness
<b>Creative</b>	7	Self-aware Flexible
<b>Inspiring</b>	7	Optimism Happiness