

IT'S NOT HOW SMART YOU ARE BUT HOW YOU ARE SMART

There has been a growing academic and popular interest in the concept of emotional intelligence. Today's most common definitions include monitoring your feelings and others', understanding them and using this information to affect how you think and behave. Research suggests that it appears to be a moderate predictor of job performance.

Although intuitively appealing, the measurement of emotional intelligence is both controversial and problematic because its definition and conceptualization often do not seem to measure the same thing.

It's a bit like the \$125 million loss of the Mars Climate Orbiter (an unmanned spacecraft that was intended to orbit Mars and collect observations of the planet's weather) — NASA said it had been caused by scientists' failure to convert an engine-thrust specification to metric units of measurement.

It's hard to know whether the diverse definitions and understanding of emotional intelligence will cause this young field to be lost like the Mars Orbiter, or whether the field will successfully realize its promise of selecting and developing talent with emotional competence.

What we agree about emotional intelligence to date is:

- Employees have different abilities to perceive, understand and manage their emotions and behaviors.
- These emotional intelligence abilities are very important in job roles and positions that demand and require high degrees of self-management and relationship management.
- These abilities are likely to be somewhat resistant to change

and short-term coaching, and training and education might not have a large effect on increasing emotional intelligence.

- These abilities very likely overlap with other concepts such as social skills, personality and general intelligence.
- The current approaches and tools used to measure emotional intelligence overlap with one another only modestly.

Today, there are several different approaches to assess emotional intelligence in talent. Different approaches include:

- **Ability-Based Measures:** An "abilities" approach emphasizes perceiving, using, understanding and managing emotions as the foundation. The most popular ability-based measure is the Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test, which meas-

sonality factors, making them hard to discern from newer-generation personality measures already being used to assess talent. The extent to which employees can modify personality is an important practical question for training, coaching and developing talent.

- **Mixed-Model Measures:** Researchers and vendors have combined assessments measuring emotional intelligence competencies, abilities and personality characteristics in one tool. These "mixed-model" measures are often based on the emotional intelligence models popularized by

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ures emotional intelligence's direct demonstration rather than relying on self-report and perceptions. These ability-based measures show promise but have some methodological and scoring challenges.

- **Personality-Based Measures:** Most popular among these types of assessments is the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory. Although appealing, they tend to overlap with the "Big Five" per-

Daniel Goleman and can be self-assessments or multiraters. Because they are often a mixture of personality (e.g., conscientiousness) and emotionality (e.g., optimism), it might be difficult to know what low or high emotional intelligence really means, or what intervention is best to modify it.

Practitioners trying to assess employees' emotional intelligence should carefully define what they are trying to measure (e.g., social skills, self-management, emotional control, etc.) and select the most validated assessment available for their purpose. Just like NASA, we have to make sure we are speaking the same language and measuring this thing called emotional intelligence correctly. **TM**



About the author

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