V. Employee Development



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5.1. Emotional Intelligence Training

In a constantly evolving professional environment, technical skills alone are no longer sufficient to ensure managerial effectiveness. Changes in the workplace, combined with the expectations of new generations, place relational skills at the heart of the managerial role.

Generation Z, in particular, places considerable importance on authenticity, being listened to, and the quality of workplace relationships. Young employees expect managers not only to provide direction but also to understand their needs, offer support, and adapt their approach to different situations and individuals.

In this context, emotional intelligence is an important managerial competency. It enables managers to better understand themselves, regulate their reactions, recognize the emotions and perspectives of others, and create an environment that supports engagement and constructive relationships.

This chapter introduces the foundations of emotional intelligence, explains its relevance to management, and explores how managers can develop and apply these skills in everyday workplace situations.

What Is Emotional Intelligence and Why Does It Matter for Managers?

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to recognize, understand, express, and regulate one's own emotions while also recognizing and responding appropriately to the emotions of others.

Although emotional intelligence was once given less attention than technical expertise in professional settings, it is increasingly recognized as an important skill for effective management.

Emotional intelligence is commonly described through five complementary dimensions in Goleman's model:

Self-awareness

The ability to recognise one's emotions, understand their influence on behavior, and reflect on personal reactions. A manager who understands their emotional responses is better equipped to avoid impulsive or inappropriate behavior.

Self-regulation

The ability to manage emotional responses, particularly in situations involving tension, uncertainty, or stress. Self-regulation helps managers replace instinctive reactions with thoughtful and constructive responses.

Motivation

The ability to channel emotions towards achieving goals, maintain perseverance, and remain committed, even in demanding or uncertain circumstances.

Empathy

The ability to understand other people's emotions and perspectives without judgement and adapt one's approach accordingly. In management, empathy helps build trust, improve communication, and support constructive relationships.

Social skills

The ability to communicate effectively, manage relationships, resolve disagreements, and bring people together around shared objectives.

Why Is Emotional Intelligence Particularly Relevant Today?

These five dimensions are increasingly important in workplaces characterized by complexity, hybrid working arrangements, and changing employee expectations. Employees value being listened to, recognized, and treated with respect.

For Generation Z, authenticity, open communication, and consistency between what managers say and what they do are particularly relevant. Young employees may be especially attentive to the quality of workplace relationships and how managers respond to their concerns.

Emotionally intelligent managers are better equipped to build trust, recognise early signs of tension or disengagement, understand individual expectations, and adapt their management approach to different people and situations.

The Benefits of Emotionally Intelligent Management

Developing emotional intelligence is not only a matter of individual managerial development. It can also contribute to better organizational performance, stronger workplace relationships, and improved quality of working life.

1. Building Trust and Stronger Workplace Relationships

One of the most important benefits of emotional intelligence is the quality of professional relationships. Managers who understand and take employees' emotions into account are better equipped to establish trust.

Communication becomes more open and authentic, misunderstandings can be reduced, and employees are more likely to feel heard and valued.

2. Strengthening Motivation and Engagement

The quality of workplace relationships can influence employee motivation. When employees feel understood and recognized, they are more likely to engage actively in their work.

This can be particularly relevant for Generation Z employees, who often value recognition, meaningful communication, and supportive relationships with their managers.

3. Managing Conflicts Constructively

Disagreements are inevitable within teams, but the way they are handled makes a significant difference.

Emotionally intelligent managers can recognise early signs of tension, understand different perspectives, and intervene constructively. Rather than allowing disagreements to escalate, they encourage dialogue and help turn tensions into opportunities for clarification and problem-solving.

4. Improving Decision-Making

Emotional intelligence helps managers consider the human dimension of their decisions alongside operational requirements.

By recognising their own emotional reactions and understanding how decisions may affect employees, managers can avoid impulsive responses and make more balanced, thoughtful choices.

5. Supporting Team Performance and Collaboration

A workplace built on trust, mutual understanding, and respectful communication provides favourable conditions for collaboration, creativity, and efficiency.

Emotionally intelligent management can help teams work through challenges, maintain constructive relationships, and respond more effectively to change.

6. Contributing to a Healthier Work Environment

Emotional intelligence also contributes to a healthier working environment by helping managers recognise signs of stress, frustration, or disengagement and respond appropriately.

A management approach based on empathy, respect, and open communication can support employee wellbeing and help address workplace difficulties before they escalate.

For Generation Z, as for other employees, these practices can strengthen the sense of being understood, respected, and supported at work.

What Should Managers Do? Developing Emotional Intelligence in Practice

Developing emotional intelligence is not purely a theoretical exercise. It requires continuous reflection on one's behavior, emotional responses, and interactions with others. For managers, this means developing several complementary skills and applying them consistently in everyday situations.

Developing Self-Awareness

The first step is to understand oneself better. Identifying emotions, recognizing what triggers them, and observing how they influence behavior can help managers respond more thoughtfully.

In a professional context, managers are never entirely neutral: their emotions can influence decisions, interactions, and team dynamics.

For example, a manager who recognizes that they become more directive under stress can adjust their behavior before it affects team relationships. Similarly, acknowledging irritation or frustration can help prevent inappropriate reactions.

Self-awareness provides the foundation for developing the other dimensions of emotional intelligence.

Learning to Regulate Emotions

Once emotions are recognized, the next challenge is to regulate them. This does not mean suppressing emotions but managing them in ways that support appropriate and constructive responses.

Managers frequently face challenging situations, including tight deadlines, disagreements, mistakes, and performance pressure. The ability to maintain perspective is therefore essential.

For example, when faced with a significant mistake, a manager may feel tempted to react immediately. An emotionally intelligent manager takes time to understand the context before responding, avoiding excessive or counterproductive reactions.

This approach helps create a sense of stability and predictability within the team.

Developing Empathy

Empathy involves understanding other people's emotions and perspectives without judgement. In management, it helps leaders adapt their approach and build stronger professional relationships.

This can be especially relevant when working with Generation Z employees, who may place considerable importance on feeling understood and respected. Empathy does not mean agreeing with everything, but acknowledging other people's feelings and perspectives.

For example, an employee expressing frustration or fatigue with an organizational arrangement may initially appear disengaged. An empathetic manager seeks to understand the reasons behind these feelings before drawing conclusions.

This encourages trust and creates opportunities for constructive dialogue.

Strengthening Relational Skills

Emotional intelligence is also reflected in the quality of everyday interactions. It involves communicating clearly and respectfully while adapting to different individuals and situations.

Important relational skills include active listening, communicating clear messages, and managing disagreements constructively.

For example, during a difficult conversation, focusing on facts rather than personal judgements can help reduce defensive reactions. Similarly, paraphrasing what an employee has said helps confirm mutual understanding and demonstrates attentive listening.

These practices can prevent misunderstandings and support healthier team relationships.

Supporting Employees' Emotions

Managers also need to recognize and respond appropriately to the emotions of their team members. This involves acknowledging employees' experiences without minimizing or exaggerating them.

In the workplace, emotions such as frustration, disappointment, stress, or a sense of unfairness may not always be expressed directly, but they can influence behavior and engagement.

For example, gradual disengagement may become visible through reduced participation or initiative. An attentive manager can recognize these changes and open a supportive conversation rather than immediately making assumptions.

For Generation Z employees, who may particularly value authentic communication and recognition, this approach can help maintain trust and constructive relationships.

Supporting employees' emotions does not mean overprotecting them or taking responsibility for resolving every personal difficulty. It means creating conditions for open dialogue, understanding workplace concerns, and identifying appropriate ways forward.

Good Practices: Emotional Intelligence in Action

Good Practice 1. Microsoft – Satya Nadella and Empathy in Leadership

In 2025, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella highlighted the growing importance of emotional intelligence in the workplace, particularly as artificial intelligence increasingly supports technical tasks.

In an interview, he emphasized that intellectual ability alone is not sufficient for effective leadership, using the expression “IQ without EQ, it's just a waste.”

His perspective presents empathy not simply as a personal quality, but as an important leadership and business skill. Managers need to understand different perspectives, build constructive relationships, and recognize the human dimension of collaboration.

What can managers learn?

Technical expertise and sound business judgement remain essential, but they should be complemented by empathy, attentive listening, and an awareness of how managerial behavior affects others.

Source: Business Insider (2025), “Microsoft CEO says empathy is a workplace superpower in the age of AI”.

Good Practice 2. Google – Project Aristotle and Psychological Safety

Google's Project Aristotle, launched in 2012, examined more than 180 teams to understand what makes teams effective.

The research showed that team effectiveness was associated not simply with the individual talents of team members, but with the quality of their interactions.

Google identified five important team dynamics:

- **Psychological safety:** Feeling able to ask questions, express ideas, and acknowledge mistakes without fear of embarrassment or negative judgement.
- **Dependability:** Being able to rely on colleagues to complete quality work.
- **Structure and clarity:** Understanding responsibilities, goals, and expectations.
- **Meaning:** Finding personal significance in one's work.
- **Impact:** Believing that one's work makes a difference.

Psychological safety emerged as the most important of these dynamics.

What can managers learn?

Although Project Aristotle was not an emotional intelligence training program, its findings demonstrate why emotionally intelligent behavior matters in team management.

Managers who listen without judgement, respond constructively to mistakes, recognize different perspectives, and manage disagreements respectfully can help create conditions for psychological safety.

Source: Google re:Work, "Understand team effectiveness".
https://rework.withgoogle.com/intl/en/guides/understanding-team-effectiveness/

Practical Guide for Managers: Five Daily Habits

Emotional intelligence develops through regular practice, not only through formal training. Small changes in everyday managerial behavior can improve communication, strengthen trust, and help teams respond more constructively to challenges.

The following five habits can be integrated into daily management practice.

1. Take a Step Back Before Reacting

When faced with a mistake, disagreement, or stressful situation, pause before responding. Recognise your immediate emotional reaction and consider the facts before deciding what to say or do.

Try this: Before responding to a difficult situation, ask yourself: "Am I reacting to the facts or to my frustration?"

2. Consider the Human Dimension of Every Interaction

Pay attention not only to tasks and results but also to how employees experience workplace situations. Show genuine interest in their perspectives and acknowledge their concerns.

Try this: During a regular team conversation, ask: "What is helping you in your work, and what is making things more difficult?"

3. Rephrase to Ensure Understanding

Active listening involves more than allowing someone to speak. Summarising what you have heard helps confirm understanding and shows that the employee's perspective matters.

Try this: Use a simple phrase such as: "If I understand correctly, your main concern is…" and invite the employee to clarify.

4. Acknowledge Emotions When They Arise

When an employee expresses frustration, disappointment, or concern, acknowledge the emotion without making assumptions or immediately offering solutions.

Try this: Say: “I can see that this situation is frustrating. Would you like to explain what has been most difficult?”

5. Regularly Ask for Feedback on Your Management Style

Emotional intelligence also involves understanding how your own behavior affects others. Invite constructive feedback and demonstrate that you are willing to adjust your approach.

Try this: During a one-to-one meeting, ask: “Is there anything I could do differently to support you more effectively?”

Remember: Developing emotional intelligence does not require perfect responses in every situation. What matters is the willingness to reflect, listen, learn, and make small improvements consistently.

Quick Tool: Emotional Intelligence Self-Assessment

Purpose: To help managers reflect on their emotional intelligence, recognize their strengths, and identify areas for personal development.

Time needed: 5–10 minutes

Step 1. Reflect on Your Emotional Intelligence

Read the questions below and consider how consistently you demonstrate each behavior in your everyday management practice.

You can use a simple scale:

1 – Rarely | 2 – Sometimes | 3 – Often | 4 – Consistently

Area	Self-Assessment Questions	Rating (1–4)
Self-Awareness	Do I identify my emotions in key situations?	
	Do I understand what triggers my reactions?	
	Do I take time to step back before acting?	
Emotional Regulation	Do I respond constructively under pressure?	
	Are my responses appropriate to the situation?	
	Do I remain emotionally consistent?	
Empathy	Do I seek to understand before judging?	
	Do my team members feel heard?	
	Do I consider emotions in my decisions?	

Relationships	Do I create a climate of trust?	
	Do I adapt my communication?	
	Am I comfortable managing difficult conversations?	
Managerial Impact	Does my behaviour encourage employees to express themselves openly or hold back?	
	Do I recognise early warning signs of tension or disengagement?	
	Do team members feel comfortable approaching me?	

Step 2. Identify Your Priorities

Review your responses and select **two or three questions** that highlight opportunities for improvement.

My priorities:

1.

2.

3.

Step 3. Choose One Practical Action

Identify one small action you can take during the coming month.

What will I do differently?

When will I start?

How will I recognise progress?

Step 4. Review Your Progress

After one month, return to your selected questions and reflect on any changes.

Ask yourself:

- Have I become more aware of my emotional reactions?
- Have I changed how I respond to challenging situations?
- Have I noticed improvements in communication or relationships with my team?
- What should I continue practising?

Remember: Emotional intelligence develops gradually. The aim is not to achieve a perfect score, but to become more aware of your behaviour and make consistent improvements.

This is a reflective development tool, not a psychological assessment or diagnostic test.

5.2. Supporting Employee Development and Growth

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