



learn fast. work smart. get results.

TRENDS

Social Intelligence

By Jennifer J. Salopek

New tools to improve your workplace performance

The Versatility Report and Improvement Guide includes specific, actionable recommendations to participants on how to improve their workplace performance.

We all know one: a person with a “toxic personality.” Someone who, after you interact with him or her, leaves you feeling devalued, inadequate, angry, frustrated, or guilty. According to Karl Albrecht, management consultant and author, these are people with low social intelligence. Their opposites are people with magnetic or “nourishing” personalities—people who make you feel good and want to go back for more.

Ever since Harvard’s Howard Gardner put forth his theory of multiple intelligences, social scientists have been exploring each one. Managers and HRD professionals, in their eternal quest to measure, manage, predict, and change the mercurial beings that make up the workforce, look to these tools and models for answers. Daniel Goleman, with the publication of his 1995 book *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ*, brought emotional intelligence to top of mind and top of marketplace.

“Gardner’s [theory] was a cannon shot fired at the academic establishment,” says Albrecht. “He set the stage; Goleman explored the first concept. However, social intelligence has never been brought together into a single, cohesive concept.”

Albrecht has been on a mission to do just that for the past 20 years. He defines social intelligence as “the ability to get along well with others and to get them to cooperate with you.” His model uses a self-assessment to measure social intelligence as a combination of social skills, self-awareness, and inter-

action style, then helps participants select key areas for improvement.

Albrecht was motivated by his work as a consultant and lecturer. “I always saw people wrestling with the insight issue. People who have high social intelligence don’t understand why everyone doesn’t,” he says. “However, many people haven’t had the occasion to be guided and developed. They lack insight into what their behavior really is and its impact on other people. They are preoccupied with themselves.” As Albrecht developed his first questionnaire and tried it out on seminar groups, participants “found it very enlightening. For some, the transformation was like a religious conversion.

“They received a strong insight like a thunderbolt: Toxic people just don’t understand, and heretofore there’s been nothing to meet their needs,” Albrecht says. The assessment and a leader’s guide are to be published by Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer and Company next spring.

What’s your Social Style?

The TRACOM Group’s new product, the Versatility Report and Improvement Guide, is based on the company’s foundational model of Social Style and versatility that has been in use since its development in the 1960s. The two concepts look in opposite directions to increase interpersonal effectiveness: Social Style is how others see you; versatility is how you understand and work with others’ social styles to gain what the company terms “social endorsement.”

A strong consensus exists among leaders that three of the top five leadership levers are emotional intelligence attributes.

Social Style. “Social Style is fundamentally who you are; it isn’t going to change much,” says Casey Mulqueen, director of research. “Versatility is very changeable, and emotional intelligence comes into play as well. Further, versatility is a choice.”

In TRACOM Group’s model, Social Style is derived by plotting tendencies along two axes: assertiveness and responsiveness. Assertiveness concerns the tendency to “ask” versus “tell,” while responsiveness is a person’s tendency to control or reveal emotion. Points plotted on the four quadrants determine Social Style:

- Analytical—ask assertive, control responsive. This person tends to ask questions, gather facts, and consider data seriously.
- Driving—tell assertive, control responsive. This person is results oriented and gives limited attention to relationships.
- Expressive—tell assertive, emote responsive. This person is imaginative, creative, and can generate enthusiasm, but tends to rely on hunches and intuition.
- Amiable—ask assertive, emote responsive. This person is relationship oriented and looks for personal motives in the actions of others.

Versatility. The complementary dimension of versatility is measured by tendencies in four areas (as identified by a rater group) that together represent a person’s ability to gain social endorsement from others:

- Image—physical appearance and style that are appealing and appropriate
- Presentation—ability to communicate effectively

- Competence—skills that gain the respect and confidence of others, as well as such traits as a willingness to take responsibility
- Feedback—ability to maximize understanding and minimize tension, and make adjustments accordingly.

While an assessment will reveal a person as one Social Style, versatility is measured on a scale from low to high. The Versatility Report doesn’t require classroom time and can be measured through an online assessment. Once completed, the assessment generates a report that includes specific, actionable recommendations to participants on how to improve their workplace performance. For example, a person with an Amiable Social Style who rates low in Presentation might receive recommendations to state her position more directly, take more risks, and ask more questions to seek clarification.

“The excitement about Social Style and versatility is contagious,” says Sean Essex, director of marketing for the TRACOM Group. “People attend our courses and want to apply the concepts right away, but those fade over time. Our customers asked us for ways to refresh the ideas and keep them moving forward without having to retake the class.” Essex notes that in the past two years especially, the company has seen an increasing tendency among clients to tie the assessments and tools to specific business initiatives.

The leadership role of EI

Emotional intelligence is also back in the news and enjoying renewed credibility. A new study shows that business leaders rank emotional intelligence

competencies as more important than traditional leadership attributes to leadership success. The study, “What Makes a Successful Leader,” was co-authored by Julie M. Brown, Sharon L. Richmond, and Pam Fox Rollin.

Participants in the study were asked to evaluate a set of standard leadership attributes, including emotional intelligence attributes (such as relationship building and self-awareness) and traditional leadership attributes (such as execution and financial acumen). Significant findings:

- Vision topped the list of critical leadership competencies across nearly all levels, experience, and personality types. Also ranked in the top five are strategic thinking, relationship building, execution, and people development.
- Emotional intelligence attributes are viewed as essential to successful leadership, especially the complex capabilities of vision, relationship building, and people development.
- Of the remaining attributes, leaders rated all of the EI competencies—including adaptability, optimism, empathy, and self-awareness—as more important than all other general leadership attributes presented.

“Emotional intelligence plays a huge role in how I manage my group of more than 40 software engineers,” says Dan Bernstein, director of software development for the Scientific Instruments Division of Thermo Electron Corp. “I was fascinated by the strong consensus among leaders that three of the top five leadership levers are emotional intelligence attributes. These studies validate my own views of what works well as a manager and leader in an organization, and I can see this research data being very useful across a wide variety of organizations.”

Jennifer J. Salopek is a contributing editor to T+D; jsalopek@covad.net.



For more information on Social Style and TRACOM products visit
www.Tracomcorp.com or call 800-221-2321 or 303-470-4900