

Emotional Intelligence for Professional Services

Programme Overview

A key determinant of the success of a professional services firm is the ability of their technical experts to start, nurture, influence and manage relationships both externally with clients and internally with colleagues. The critical element for developing these relationships is emotional intelligence (EQ).

Emotional intelligence is an ability to manage yourself and your relationships effectively by recognising, understanding and managing your emotions, moods and feelings, as well as their effect on others and using this information to guide your thinking and actions. It is also the ability to correctly recognise and manage others' emotions and to change your behaviour accordingly.

Learning and developing emotional intelligence enables you to remain calm and resilient under pressure, to think before you act, to build empathy, to listen, to find common ground, to build rapport, to make clients (and colleagues) actively seek you out to solve their problems and to become a trustworthy partner. Within the professional services firm it enables you to navigate the unique cultural and political dynamics of the firm in order influence, persuade and build consensus among colleagues who are used to having extensive individual autonomy and authority.

Unfortunately, EQ is often under-developed in professional services firms due to a focus on technical knowledge, career paths that promote technical expertise and a lack of understanding that EQ is a skill that can be learned, practised and refined. In an industry where 84% of new business comes from referrals, emotional intelligence is more important than ever.

Why is this programme specific to professional services firms?

The emotional intelligence programme has been designed specifically for the type of interactions and situations those working in professional services have to face on a daily basis, both with clients and between colleagues.

In addition to managing their own emotions, to succeed in professional services, individuals need to know how to manage critical client interactions but they also need the emotional competence and political nous to navigate the unique cultural dynamics often found within professional services firms. As such, the emotional intelligence programme is in three parts:

Part 1: Managing Yourself: Developing your own self-awareness, adaptability and resilience

Part 2: Managing Your Colleagues and Peers: Using social skill and awareness to build loyalty, collegiality, collaboration and consensus in the firm

Part 3: Managing Your Clients: Building empathy, trust and reciprocity with clients

PART 1 - Managing Yourself: Developing your own self-awareness, adaptability, resilience and motivation

Self-Awareness is a key part of emotional intelligence. It enables you to recognise and understand your moods, emotions and drives and the effect they will have on others. Self-awareness also means you are acutely aware of your strengths and weaknesses.

Being able to recognise and label your different emotions and being aware of your strengths and weaknesses means you can adapt your thinking and behaviours for different situations. 'Self-Regulation' or 'Self-Management' enables you to stay calm under pressure, suspend judgement, remain resilient in the face of problems and redirect disruptive thoughts and instincts.

Sample Agenda:

- Introduction to emotional intelligence, understanding emotions and how they are formed
- An ability to recognise your own emotions and how they affect your thoughts and behaviours
- Understanding how your emotions might affect others
- Honest assessment and understanding of your strengths and weaknesses
- How to act with and display trustworthiness and integrity
- How to be open to new ideas, new people and new projects
- Knowing how to stay optimistic in the face of difficulty

PART 2 - Managing Your Colleagues & Peers: *Using social skill and social awareness to build loyalty, collegiality and consensus even when individuals have extensive autonomy and authority*

Research has found there are unique leadership, cultural and political dynamics specific to professional services firms. Developing EQ to navigate these dynamics through social skill and high levels of social awareness is vital for progressing within and leading professional services firms.

Social skill means you are proficient in cultivating and maintaining complex relationships, finding common ground, building rapport, influencing and persuading others, communicating clearly, managing conflict, building teams and leading change.

Sample Agenda:

- How to influence and persuade colleagues who are used to having extensive individual autonomy and authority
- How to build your level of 'social capital' within the firm
- How to build consensus and find common ground, even with complex partnership dynamics
- Political awareness and political skill - to know when to intervene, when to stay silent, when to push, how hard to push and who to include in decisions
- How to read and navigate the intricate politics of professional services firms to preserve harmony, gain cooperation and take decisions
- How to manage difficult conversations, solve conflict and de-escalate disagreements
- How to develop others through feedback and guidance
- How to build your network both within the firm and externally with key clients, contacts and partners
- How to understand and respect others' abilities and perspectives
- Able to listen to colleagues and communicate clear and convincing messages
- Learn how to challenge and critique others' ideas and approaches effectively
- Develop ability to build teams, foster networks and extend influence across departments who might prefer to work autonomously
- *Non fee-earners*: learn the vital social and political skills needed to influence more senior fee-earners/partners

PART 3 - Managing Your Clients: *Building empathy, trust and reciprocity with clients*

One of the key drivers of success for a professional services firm is the ability to start, nurture and manage client relationships. In professional services, being able to recognise client needs and then to build trust and reciprocity is vital to the success of the firm.

Fundamental to building client relationships based on trust is empathy. The most successful individuals working in professional services know how to sense other people's emotions, understand each of their clients' emotional makeup, appreciate different perspectives, are sensitive to individual client needs and take an active interest in their client's concerns.

Sample Agenda:

- Sensing and understanding other people's emotions
- Knowing the difference between listening to understand and listening to impart expertise
- How to recognise client needs and take an active interest in their concerns
- How to get clients to share their problems with you – not your competitors
- The key drivers of trust and client reciprocity and how to adapt your behaviour accordingly
- How to inspire loyal and committed client relationships