



Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills

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Module Code: LCLM5006

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INTRODUCTION

This report aims to detail the understanding acquired regarding the concepts of mindfulness and emotional intelligence, following positive feedback received from direct supervision in relation to a recent presentation. The operational context of reference is a restaurant establishment, an environment characterised by high-intensity emotional interactions with both customers and peers. In this setting, emotional intelligence constitutes a critical competency for effective performance. The report is structured into three main sections: a critical evaluation of how employees may use emotional intelligence components in the workplace, an analysis of generational gaps relevant to recruitment, and conclusions with recommendations for senior management.

1. CRITICAL EVALUATION OF HOW EMPLOYEES MAY USE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

The emotional intelligence model proposed by Daniel Goleman constitutes the theoretical framework of reference for this analysis. This model is articulated around five fundamental dimensions: self-awareness, self-regulation, internal motivation, empathy, and social skills. For the purposes of this report, emphasis will be placed on the components of self-regulation and empathy, as these are the most operationally applicable in direct customer service environments. Self-regulation is defined as the ability to manage impulses, modulate disruptive emotions, and adopt reflective behaviour prior to action. Empathy, for its part, is the ability to recognise and understand the affective state of others. Additionally, the component of social skills will be addressed, as it is particularly relevant in leadership and team management situations.

Below are three real cases drawn from daily operational experience that illustrate different applications of emotional intelligence in the workplace.

First case: managing a hostile complaint from a customer.

A customer received a dish containing animal protein when they had explicitly requested a vegan alternative, due to an error by service staff. In reaction to this situation, the customer considerably raised their voice and uttered offensive expressions in the dining area. The procedure adopted consisted of maintaining equanimity, refraining from reciprocating the verbal aggression, and allowing the customer to conclude their emotional discharge. This strategy is based on empirical knowledge acquired through experience: in hostile complaint contexts, the customer often seeks a defensive or confrontational reaction that they might exploit to escalate the incident in their own favour. By not obtaining such a reaction, their emotional activation tends to dissipate progressively.

Once the customer had calmed down, the situation was evaluated objectively and it was recognised that their complaint was fully justified, given that the operational error was real. Consequently, an immediate corrective solution was implemented, consisting of replacing the dish according to the original request, as well as refunding the amount paid. It should be noted that no explicit apology was formulated, as this could have been interpreted as an admission of systemic failure. Instead, the error was acknowledged as an isolated incident. This experience demonstrates how self-regulation allows conflicts to be de-escalated without escalation, protecting both employee wellbeing and the establishment's reputation.

Second case: error in emotional reading of a work colleague.

A female colleague usually came to work with an open and cordial attitude. On one occasion, the same colloquial interaction style as on previous days was maintained. However, on that specific date, the colleague was not in a favourable emotional disposition, and consequently responded aggressively. Subsequent analysis identified two deficits in emotional intelligence competencies. Firstly, there was an empathy deficit, as it was incorrectly assumed that the colleague's emotional state was consistent with that of previous days, without observing the non-verbal indicators of her present state. Secondly, a self-awareness deficit was evidenced, as one's own positive disposition was projected without verifying the receptiveness of the interlocutor.

Following this incident, a professional interaction protocol was established and has been incorporated into daily practice: every colleague must be treated with a uniform standard of respect and consistency, avoiding unjustified familiarity. This maxim does not imply coldness, but rather a professional treatment that does not presuppose prior trust. Mindfulness precisely teaches the importance of observing the present state of the other person before interacting. This case demonstrates that lack of empathy and self-awareness can generate unnecessary internal conflicts, and that standardising professional treatment significantly reduces this type of incident.

Third case: managing insubordination within the work team.

On one occasion, an employee was instructed to carry out a specific task within their usual responsibilities. Faced with their refusal to execute it, the instruction was reiterated on two additional occasions, without obtaining compliance. Upon verifying that the previous requests had not been attended to, it was decided to adopt a firmer and more serious tone, appropriate to the gravity of the situation. The employee responded in a challenging manner and with an equally elevated tone.

At that critical moment, a conscious decision was made not to escalate the verbal confrontation. Rather than replying with an even higher tone or with comments that could exacerbate the emotions present, an active pause was taken. Eye contact was made with the employee, and the instruction was issued for the third time with a tone of calm but firm authority: the employee was required to execute the assigned task, adding a polite but unequivocal closing. The employee perceived in the facial expression the discontent and firmness of the position adopted, and proceeded to carry out the task without further argument.

At the end of the working day, a private conversation was held with the employee. In that meeting, it was communicated clearly and directly that insubordinate attitudes would not be tolerated within the team. It was explained that every team member must adapt to the established standards of conduct and performance, and that their continuity in the organisation depended on their ability to align with those standards. This conversation was conducted without raising one's voice or resorting to personal disqualification, focusing exclusively on the observed behaviour and institutional expectations.

Critical analysis of the third case from Goleman's model.

This third case is particularly illustrative for several reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates the use of self-regulation in a context of high interpersonal tension. Despite the implicit provocation in the employee's challenging attitude, the supervisor consciously chose not to escalate emotionally. This decision prevented a functional conflict from transforming into a destructive personal conflict.

Secondly, the case shows the strategic use of non-verbal signals as part of emotional intelligence. The fixed gaze and facial expression of discontent communicated the seriousness of the situation more effectively than any additional words could have. Goleman notes that much of emotional communication occurs through non-verbal channels, and this example confirms that a properly employed facial expression can convey authority without needing to resort to verbal aggression.

Thirdly, the subsequent conversation reflects an adequate application of social skills in the field of team management. By addressing the problem privately, once emotions had been regulated, conditions were created for constructive communication. The message was clear, direct, and focused on behaviour, not on the person. Explicit limits were established and consequences were communicated transparently.

Limitations and risks of this approach.

It must be recognised that this management style, based on controlled firmness, is not without risks. If not executed with precision, it may be perceived as authoritarianism or intimidation. The key is that firmness is proportionate to the situation and is accompanied by constructive follow-up, as occurred in this case with the private conversation at the end of the day. A common error would be to apply the same firm tone in all situations, which would erode team trust. Emotional intelligence also involves knowing when to be flexible and when to set inflexible boundaries.

Systematisation of emotional intelligence in daily operations.

In the establishment, weekly meetings are held dedicated to the analysis of critical incidents from an emotional perspective. This mechanism institutionalises emotional intelligence in two ways. On one hand, each real conflict is broken down with the team, identifying effective behaviours and behaviours that could be improved. The three cases presented in this report have been discussed in these meetings, allowing the entire team to learn from concrete experiences. On the other hand, strategies that demonstrate effectiveness are incorporated as explicit protocols, which generates consistency in the institutional response to conflicts.

The main limitation of this approach is its predominantly reactive nature, as learning occurs only after an incident has taken place. A potential improvement would be to incorporate simulation exercises during the induction period for new staff, which would allow self-regulation to be practised in simulated scenarios before facing real incidents. For example, role-playing based on the three cases documented here could be designed.

Conclusion of point 1.

Employees can use emotional intelligence as a tactical tool for conflict de-escalation, both in customer relations and in internal team management. Goleman's model, particularly the components of self-regulation, empathy, and social skills, should be taught using real cases and practised periodically, transcending mere theoretical transmission. The three cases presented demonstrate that emotional intelligence is not an abstract competency, but rather a capacity exercised in concrete situations of high emotional pressure.

2. UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS FOR EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT ACCORDING TO GENERATIONAL GAP

Based on direct observation in the establishment, the generational distribution of the workforce has been estimated. Generation X, approximately between 1965 and 1980, represents around ten per cent of staff and predominantly occupies supervision and middle management roles. Generation Y or Millennials, approximately between 1981 and 1996, represents around forty per cent of staff and primarily works in floor

supervision and experienced kitchen positions. Generation Z, approximately between 1997 and 2012, represents around fifty per cent of staff and predominantly occupies front-of-house service and support staff roles.

Each generation presents a differential profile that managers must know when recruiting. Generation X members mainly value operational autonomy and loyalty based on tangible results. The associated risk with this cohort is their resistance to accelerated technological changes, and they prefer direct communication without micromanagement. Generation Y members value organisational purpose and continuous feedback. The associated risk is the perception of rigid hierarchies as a toxic environment, and they demand flexible hours as well as professional development opportunities. Generation Z members value digital efficiency and process simplicity. The associated risk is their low tolerance for legacy processes they perceive as inefficient, and they require instructional clarity together with the use of digital tools in daily operations.

Generational coexistence generates two complementary flows of value. The first flow is knowledge transfer from older to younger generations. Employees with longer trajectories, belonging to Generation X and Millennials, fulfil a training function in operational responsibility and mastery of the fundamentals of the trade. For example, they instruct new members in maintaining workstations, handling customers in complex situations without technological mediation, and adhering to safety protocols. This process builds operational discipline that Generation Z members do not typically incorporate by default.

The second flow is incremental innovation from younger to older generations. Generation Z members manifest a natural tendency towards process simplification, seeking more efficient routes and questioning established routines. This disposition, when properly channelled, generates organisational development and continuous improvement. By way of example, a front-of-house staff member belonging to Generation Z proposed implementing a QR code system for managing special orders, including vegan options and food allergies, which resulted in a significant reduction in operational errors.

Managers must take into account specific considerations for each cohort. For Generation Z, they should not assume emotional reading skills without explicit training, since many have developed their communicative competence in asynchronous text-based environments. For Millennials, they should provide periodic weekly feedback and connect daily tasks with a higher-order organisational purpose. For Generation X, they should recognise their tacit knowledge before imposing changes and assign them mentoring functions over younger members.

A critical error to avoid is treating all employees as if they shared identical motivations. For example, flexible hours motivate a Millennial but are irrelevant for a Generation X member who values job stability. Likewise, public recognition on social media may be embarrassing for a Generation X employee, but constitutes a desired incentive for a Generation Z member.

In conclusion, an effective work environment does not require homogenisation of different generations, but rather understanding of their differential characteristics both in recruitment processes and in daily management. Generational heterogeneity constitutes a strategic asset: older employees transmit responsibility and mastery of operational fundamentals, while younger employees drive process simplification and continuous improvement.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions.

Regarding emotional intelligence, employees may employ components such as self-regulation for conflict de-escalation, as demonstrated through the analysis of the vegan customer case. The lesson derived from the incident with the colleague reinforces the importance of treating all colleagues with a uniform standard of professional respect, avoiding unjustified familiarity. The case of the insubordinate employee demonstrates that emotional intelligence is equally relevant in the exercise of leadership and team management, allowing firm boundaries to be set without emotional escalation and constructive private follow-up to be conducted.

The weekly incident analysis meetings constitute a good practice for institutionalising emotional intelligence. However, they may be complemented with proactive mindfulness training during the induction period to overcome their predominantly reactive nature.

Regarding generational gaps, the organisation has a workforce composed of ten per cent Generation X, forty per cent Millennials, and fifty per cent Generation Z. Managers must adapt their recruitment and management strategies to the specific characteristics of each cohort. Generational mixing generates dual advantages: experience teaches operational responsibility, while youth promotes process simplification. No active problems of relevance have been identified in the organisation, which constitutes a positive indicator.

Recommendations.

Below are the following recommendations for consideration by senior management.

First, maintain the current training cycle for new staff, without incorporating additional complexities, given that the existing intergenerational mentoring system has demonstrated its effectiveness.

Second, incorporate into the induction programme a specific module on mindfulness applied to customer service and team management, with a suggested duration of two hours and including simulation exercises of hostile complaint scenarios and insubordination situations, based on the real cases documented in this report.

Third, document successful de-escalation and internal conflict management cases in an emotional incident management handbook accessible to all staff, converting tacit knowledge into a formalised institutional asset. The three cases presented in this report should constitute the initial core of said handbook.

Fourth, preserve the weekly periodicity of case analysis meetings, rotating facilitation between generations so that Generation Z members also lead sessions focused on process simplification.

Fifth, establish a clear protocol for managing insubordination that combines firmness at the moment with constructive private follow-up afterwards, as exemplified in the third case. This protocol must be explicitly communicated to the entire team so that there is predictability regarding the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

Finally, when an organisational team understands its own emotions and those of others, and additionally knows how to interpret generational differences without prejudiced biases, the result is not only a healthier work environment, but also more efficient operations and customers with higher levels of satisfaction. The establishment is on a favourable trajectory, and the recommendations set out here seek to consolidate that trajectory ahead of the presentation to senior management in July 2026.

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