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Developing Emotional Intelligence skills

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Submission Date	19/08/2026

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Introduction

In today's working environment, success of the organisation is not only measured by the targets achieved but also by the understanding, communication and responsiveness that people have towards each other. Managers and workers have come to expect different things from their jobs, and workplace diversity and evolving work relationships have increased the importance of interpersonal skills. In this context, emotional intelligence (EI) and mindfulness offer valuable strategies to comprehend emotions and foster positive interpersonal dynamics in the workplace.

This report has been developed based on findings from a recent organisational climate survey that identified improved employee morale, communication and conflict management. All these have raised people's awareness of the importance of emotional intelligence and mindfulness in good team management. The report is to be considered by the Senior Management Team (SMT) prior to the strategic planning meeting in September 2026, where the results of the report could be used to consider leadership development, recruitment and employee development.

The report focuses on two interrelated areas. Drawing on the existing models of emotional intelligence (EI) and related academic research, the first section critically examines the role of EI in the workplace performance, employee wellbeing, communication, leadership, decision-making and conflict management. The second section will explore the difficulties and opportunities in managing Generations X, Millennials and Generation Z in a single organisation. Specific focus is placed on the distinctiveness of workplace expectations, motivation, communication and technological experiences and that generational labels should not be used in the assumption of individual employees.

Lastly, managers should be aware of emotions, empathetic to others, and flexible and conscious of reactions to differences in the workplace, so that they can understand the needs of others and foster productive relationships. It is therefore necessary to take an evidence-based approach to ensure that employee differences are considered without resorting to stereotype, but that organisational goals, employee wellbeing, and inclusive leadership are upheld.

Task 1: Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

Understanding Emotional Intelligence: Three Key Models

The Three Key Models of Understanding Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Intelligence is understanding one's own emotions and being able to control them as well as recognizing others' emotions and acting appropriately. Goleman's model has five areas: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills (Goleman, 1995).

Self-awareness is the awareness of our own emotions and how they influence our thought and actions. Self-regulation is a process to manage emotional responses rather than reacting. Motivation is the drive to reach a desired objective. Empathy is an awareness of another person's feelings. Social skills are the ability to develop and maintain positive relationships with others (Goleman, 1995; Goleman, 1998).

A different approach is offered by Mayer and Salovey (1997). Their ability model is based on the four abilities to recognise emotions, to use emotions to support thinking, to understand emotions and to manage emotions. This is because EI is viewed as a skill that can be assessed and acquired. Bar-On (2006) also provides an important workplace perspective. His model includes interpersonal skills, intrapersonal skills, adaptability, stress management and general mood. These areas can help employees deal with pressure, change and relationships at work.

These models can be combined to demonstrate that emotional intelligence is the process of knowing, managing, comprehending individuals and building relationships. Significantly, these skills are not set but can be developed. Recent research supports the importance of EI in the workplace. In a meta-analysis of employee outcomes, Dođru (2022) found positive relationships between EI and job performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour. EI was also negatively related to job stress. Coronado-Maldonado and Benítez-Márquez (2023) analyzed 104 peer-reviewed articles related to EI and leadership and work teams. They found that EI has been an important domain of leadership and team effectiveness in various settings.

The three models are helpful because they provide slightly different explanations of EI. Goleman's model is especially helpful for managers because it highlights actions – those of empathy, motivation and relationship management. The most psychological explanation is Mayer and Salovey's model, which views emotional intelligence as an ability to process emotional information. Bar-On's model has the advantage in the workplace as it incorporates adaptability and stress management. The models are different, but the concept is the same: knowledge of emotions can impact behaviour and relationships. This is especially significant in the workplace where pressure situations, disagreements, uncertainty and changing job roles are common. EI may therefore be useful for helping employees be

more likely to react to these situations in a positive manner instead of falling prey to their emotions and letting those emotions adversely impact their job performance or relationships.

Communication, Conflict Management and Decision-Making

Emotional intelligence can improve communication because employees with good EI are more likely to notice emotional signals such as tone of voice, facial expressions and changes in behaviour. They can then adjust their communication accordingly.

A manager, for instance, might be aware that an employee suddenly is very quiet during a meeting. The manager could talk to the employee privately afterwards rather than make them speak in front of the group. This will make the employee feel valued and will keep a little issue from escalating into a bigger problem.

EI is also essential in conflict management in the workplace. When disagreeing, employees who are able to control their emotions are less likely to respond defensively or aggressively. This helps them to concentrate on resolving the issue instead of escalating the conflict. In 2013, a meta-analysis of 20 studies with 5175 participants was performed by Schlaerth, Ensari and Christian (2013). They discovered there was a positive correlation between emotional intelligence and constructive conflict management. This indicates that more emotionally intelligent workers and supervisors might be more inclined to handle conflict in a positive manner.

Other more recent studies support this. Zhou et al. (2025) investigated 363 school principals and explored the correlation between EI and conflict management. The study revealed differences in conflict-management behaviours of different types of principals. EI may also be used in decision making. This is because emotions are useful sources of information when they are understood, as Mayer and Salovey (1997) explain. For instance, if an employee has a concern about a supplier, this concern should not be dismissed out of hand. The employee may instead determine if there are legitimate concerns.

This is especially crucial when employees are under pressure or there are conflicting views. If a manager is not emotionally aware, he or she could see disagreement as disrespect or lack of commitment. The emotionally intelligent manager is better equipped to listen and try to understand the reasons behind the employee's response. This can help to foster a culture of valuing employees' opinions. EI can also be useful in negotiations as employees can be aware when emotions are influencing the process. But emotional intelligence does not preclude having tough conversations. Rather, it enables hard conversations to be conducted with respect and to look for solutions. This can minimize unwarranted friction and enable workers to keep their work relationships healthy despite any disagreement.

Leadership and Employee Wellbeing

Leadership isn't just about giving orders. Good leaders should also be able to establish trust, know their staff and ensure a safe space for issues and ideas to be raised. This kind of leadership can be aided by emotional intelligence, as the self-awareness can give the manager insight into his own behaviour, and the empathy can give him insight into the employees.

Employee wellbeing is also linked to EI. Mendonça, Santana and Bueno (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of 59 studies with over 16,000 participants, concluding that there was a relationship between higher EI and lower burnout. Studies that have directly included health care professionals have yielded similar results. Overall, a recent review of 31 studies revealed a consistent negative relationship between EI and burnout among healthcare professionals. In general, higher EI was correlated with lower emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation, and higher personal accomplishment.

Training is also a way to develop EI. In their literature review, Powell et al. (2024) identified 17 longitudinal studies of the impact of EI training on healthcare professionals, and while generally EI training was found to enhance EI, some methodological limitations may have led to an overestimation of the effect. Mindfulness can be used to support EI. Mindfulness is the practice of focusing on what is happening right here and now and is a way of increasing awareness of thoughts, feelings and responses. It can help keep employees calm and focused in stressful situations.

Michaelsen et al. (2023) systematically reviewed and analyzed workplace mindfulness interventions. They analysed 91 studies and identified positive results on employee wellbeing, mental health, stress, physical health and work-related outcomes. There were also some differences between studies and the need for better-quality research that the authors addressed. So, mindfulness training cannot be assumed to address issues in the workplace. The training must be appropriate to the organisation, employees and working environment.

Overall, EI and mindfulness can work together. EI helps employees understand and manage emotions, while mindfulness can help them remain aware, calm and less reactive during difficult situations.

The link between leadership and wellbeing is significant as poor management can contribute to the stress in the workplace. The feeling of "not feeling heard," of being treated unfairly or unable to communicate with managers can lead to a decline in engagement. Some of these issues can be mitigated by emotionally intelligent leaders who listen to employees' concerns, identify stressors and respond to them. But EI is not seen as a substitute for organisational support. Emotional skills cannot be used in isolation to overcome challenges like workload, staffing, responsibilities and resources. So managers must combine EI with actual changes in the organisation. This is especially significant for the SMT as the wellbeing of their employees is not only influenced by their own behaviour but by the overall environment that is established through organisational policies and leadership.

Task 2: Managing a Multigenerational Workforce

Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z

In modern organisations, there can be several generations of employees. The age group of the mid-1960s to early 1980s is generally associated with Generation X. The age range for millennials is typically from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, and for Generation Z, it's the mid-1990s and beyond.

These groups have had various social, economic and technological contexts. Therefore, it has been studied to see if they have different expectations and motivation in the workplace. Mahmoud et al. (2021) studied the workplace motivation of employees of Generation X, Generation Y and Generation Z. Their findings indicated that there were some differences in the factors that motivated the three groups. For instance, they found Generation Z had greater relationships between intrinsic motivation and overall motivation, and Generation X and Generation Y had varying relationships for other types of motivation. But the scientists also noted that some of the differences may be due to other factors such as age. Recent studies offer an important cautionary indication on generational stereotypes. Zahra, Handoyo and Fajrianthi (2025) reviewed research papers to see that the important themes in the workplace were employee expectations, technology, intergenerational challenges and leadership styles.

It is also important to recognise that the boundaries used to define generations are not completely universal. There are a few variations in the birth year ranges used by various researchers, therefore birth year categories should be viewed as a general guide and not scientific classifications. Those in the same generation can also have vastly different personalities, educational backgrounds, financial circumstances and career goals. For instance, two people of the same age in the same company might have very different preferences when it comes to communication, flexibility or career development. Thus, generational research should be used as a first step to understanding potential workplace trends and not as a way of determining individual behaviour. This will enable an organisation to acknowledge diversity without making assumptions that may have a negative impact on employee relationships.

Impact on Organisational Effectiveness

Allowing a multigenerational workforce to exist can be beneficial for an organisation. Older workers can offer experience and knowledge, younger workers can offer new ideas and familiarity with newer technologies. These strengths can work together, which can be beneficial for the team. However, managers should avoid assuming that every person from the same generation behaves in the same way.

Ravid, Costanza and Romero (2025) have performed a meta-analysis and qualitative study about generational differences at work. Some of the claims of significant intergenerational differences were challenged by their findings. They decided that a lot of the differences might actually be due to things

like life stage, age, personality or the workplace context and not just to the year someone was born in.

In a study based on the data of 584,217 individuals from 113 countries, Schröder (2024) came to a similar conclusion. The study revealed that work motivation was more related to age and historical period than generational labels. This is critical to managers. While the information from generational research can be valuable, workers should not be judged by their generation.

Knowledge sharing can be supported by a well-managed multigenerational workforce. Senior staff can transfer organisational knowledge and skills to younger staff, or younger staff can bring new technological skills or new ways of working. Both mentoring and reverse-mentoring programmes can stimulate the exchange in both directions. These benefits are not automatic, however. Managers should make opportunities for older and younger staff to learn from each other. Organisations should also be aware of whether there are any effects on recruitment, promotion or training opportunities because of stereotypes. Managers may think that older workers will not be able to handle technology, or younger workers will not be committed to the job, and may make unfair decisions based on that. Thus, it is important to make decisions based on evidence and focus on individual capability.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness

Emotional intelligence can assist managers in handling the differences between employees. Self-awareness enables managers to understand their own assumptions and potential biases. Empathy enables managers to comprehend the needs of various employees. One employee might prefer formal communication and regular meetings, for instance, while another might prefer rapid digital communication. An emotionally intelligent manager doesn't take one for granted, but knows what the individual employee needs. Bar-On's (2006) emphasis on interpersonal skills and adaptability is applicable to this, as managers have to develop interpersonal skills and they also must adapt to various situations.

Mindfulness can also be used to prevent automatic reactions by managers. A mindful manager is more apt to stop, listen and think before they make a judgment. This can minimize stereotype-related differential treatment of employees.

EI and mindfulness may be particularly valuable when managers have to deal with disagreements between employees from different age groups. For instance, if employees feel that their preferred style of communication is the right one, and another is wrong, the debate may escalate to a generational issue. An emotionally intelligent manager can shift the conversation from age to the need in the workplace. Mindfulness is a tool that can help with this process, as it allows for pausing before reacting and viewing the situation objectively. All of these strategies can promote respectful conversation and minimize emotional responses. They can also assist managers to identify their own implicit assumptions. This is crucial because inclusive leadership starts with looking at the managers' behaviour and their employees' behaviour.

Practical Recommendations

There are some practical steps that organisations can take to effectively manage a multigenerational workforce. To begin with, organisations must offer alternatives for communication as far as possible. Some may prefer to communicate formally in meetings, others may prefer digital communication. Second, managers should feedback in a manner that is appropriate to each employee, not assuming that all employees desire the same amount of feedback. Third, organisations should offer technology training where required to ensure that employees are confident using technology in the workplace. Fourth, EI and Mindfulness training should be provided to managers and employees in organisations. But they should be based on the needs of the organisation, and not as a standard solution. Lastly, managers need to be educated to not have generational stereotypes. Generational differences can be more nuanced and less significant than what is commonly believed in the workplace. Therefore, the individual's personality, experience, career stage and personal preferences should be taken into consideration by the managers.

Organisations should also consider whether these recommendations are having a beneficial impact. Communication, psychological safety, satisfaction and perceptions of management can be measured with employee surveys. Organisations might also track indicators like employee turnover, absenteeism, grievances and engagement in development programs. These can be used to inform the SMT about the impact of EI and mindfulness initiatives. Training should also provide real-life scenarios from the workplace, and not just theoretical information. Managers can learn how to deal with conflict, how to provide feedback and how to deal with difficult conversations. The managers would be able to review and reflect on the learning and highlight areas for further development through regular follow-up sessions. This would allow EI and mindfulness to be an integral part of continuing professional development and not just a single training session.

Conclusion

As evidenced in this report, EI can play an important role in the modern workplace. EI can enhance communication, employee conflict management, leadership and employee wellbeing. Evidence also suggests a strong link between EI and work outcomes. Meta-analytical evidence has been found for the relationship between EI and job performance, job satisfaction, organisational commitment and reduced job stress. The links between EI and constructive conflict management are also found to be positive. Mindfulness can be an added support to EI, which enables employees to be more aware of their thoughts and emotions, and stay calm under pressure.

While there are a number of positive results from recent workplace studies on the impact of mindfulness interventions on wellbeing, mental health, stress and work-related outcomes, organisations should also take into account the quality and suitability of the program before implementing it. The second section of the report reveals organisations have a need to manage a workforce composed of various age groups. The difference between the motivation of Generation X and Millennials and Generation Z has been identified in some studies. But recent meta-analysis and large-scale studies indicate that managers should be wary of assuming that these differences are fixed generational traits.

So, it is best to pay attention to the person and not the label. The concept of emotional intelligence, empathy, adaptability and mindfulness can assist the manager in knowing the employees as a person and make the workplace more inclusive. Investment in EI and mindfulness should therefore be regarded as part of leadership and employee-development strategy, rather than as a wellbeing activity, for the SMT. These skills can help facilitate communication, relationships, employee wellbeing and organisational effectiveness, when coupled with flexible management practices and evidence-based approach to generational diversity.

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