



BA (Hons) Leadership and Management Skills for the Workplace

Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills (LCLM5006)

Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness in Contemporary Organisations:

An Analytical Report for the Senior Management Team

Component 2 : Individual Written Report

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1. Introduction

Following the recent organisational climate survey, senior leadership asked for a closer look at why things had improved, and in particular at the part emotional intelligence (EI) and mindfulness appear to have played. This report is the response to that request, prepared for the Senior Management Team (SMT) ahead of the strategic planning meeting in September 2026.

The aim here is not to sell EI. It is to work out, as honestly as the evidence allows, what can actually be claimed for it, so that decisions about training, leadership and recruitment rest on something firmer than the enthusiasm that usually surrounds the subject. The report has two parts. The first looks at how employees can use the core components of EI to improve performance, collaboration and wellbeing. The second turns to the multigenerational workforce, covering Generations X, Y and Z, and asks how far the familiar generational labels really hold, and where EI and mindfulness can help managers lead across them. A short set of recommendations closes the report. The tone throughout is deliberately cautious: EI deserves to be taken seriously, but its benefits are easy to overstate, and generational thinking turns out to be shakier than it first looks.

2. Emotional Intelligence in the Workplace

2.1 Three models, and why the differences matter

There is a temptation to treat emotional intelligence as one settled thing. It is not. Three models dominate the field, and they disagree in ways that matter for any organisation trying to act on them.

The term comes from Salovey and Mayer (1990), who described EI as the capacity to monitor one's own and other people's emotions and to use that information to guide thinking and behaviour. They later built this into a four-branch *ability model* (Mayer and Salovey, 1997): perceiving emotions, using them to assist thought, understanding them, and managing them, running from simpler to more complex mental processes. On this view EI is a kind of intelligence, and, like intelligence, it is measured through performance tasks such as the MSCEIT. Goleman (1995) took the idea somewhere different. His *mixed model* presents EI as a bundle of workplace competencies (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skill) that people can learn and develop. Bar-On (2006), meanwhile, treats EI as a set of emotional and social traits, captured through self-report on the EQ i

It is easy to skate over these differences, but they are really the whole point. The ability model asks what a person *can* do with emotion; the mixed and trait models describe what a person *tends* to do, and how they rate themselves. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2008) argue that this second group quietly folds personality into the definition, which makes EI look more powerful than it is while blurring what it actually means. For an employer the consequence is practical rather than philosophical. “Measuring EI” means something quite different depending on the tool: a self-report questionnaire is picking up something close to personality, whereas a performance test measures a narrower, more genuinely cognitive skill.

And that choice shapes strategy. If EI is a fixed trait, you screen for it when hiring; if it is a set of competencies, you build it through training. The two readings pull in opposite directions, so it is worth holding them in tension rather than committing too quickly to either.

2.2 What EI actually predicts

This is where EI’s reputation tends to run ahead of the evidence. Goleman’s claim that emotional intelligence matters more than IQ has stuck in the popular imagination, but the meta-analyses do not bear it out. What they show is a real and useful, though fairly modest, effect.

O’Boyle et al. (2011) separated three types of EI measure and found corrected correlations with job performance of roughly .24 for ability tests, .30 for self-report ability measures and .28 for mixed measures. Only the latter two added anything beyond personality and cognitive ability; the pure ability measure did not. Joseph and Newman (2010) arrived at much the same place by a different route. Their headline figure was .32, but they warned against leaning on it, because self-report mixed EI (.47) hugely outperformed performance-based ability EI (.18); the mixed measures, in their phrase, being empirically stronger but theoretically weaker. Doğru’s (2022) review, drawing on almost 80,000 participants, fits the same shape: EI tied to job performance at .30, to organisational citizenship behaviour at .36, and negatively to job stress at .43.

Two things follow that the SMT should keep in view. First, EI does not matter equally everywhere; Joseph and Newman (2010) found its predictive power climbing to .59 in emotionally demanding jobs, so its value is very much tied to the role. Second, the measurement issue is not a footnote. Gong and Jiao (2019), pooling more than 100,000 participants, found mixed-EI effects clearly larger than ability-EI effects (.272 against .160) and, tellingly, those mixed effects have been shrinking over time, which is exactly what you would expect if part of what they measure is personality in disguise.

There is a quieter implication here. Self-report tools are cheaper to run, so organisations reach for precisely the measures most tangled up with personality, then credit “emotional intelligence” with results that stable traits would have produced anyway. Two claims need keeping apart: that the competencies we label EI are worth developing (well supported), and that a given EI test tells you something new about a candidate (true only sometimes).

2.3 Putting the components to work

None of this makes EI useless, far from it. Once you look at specific behaviours, the practical value is obvious.

Take communication. Reading emotional cues, keeping your own reactions in check and adjusting how you say something to the person in front of you are everyday EI skills, and they are almost certainly part of why this organisation’s communication scores improved. Conflict is where the evidence is strongest. Winardi, Prentice and Weaven’s (2022) systematic review found that people higher in EI reliably lean towards collaborative, problem-solving responses to conflict rather than avoiding it or trying to win; they defuse disputes instead of feeding them. On decisions, Alharbi and Alnoor (2024) showed that EI and a constructive style of handling disagreement together shaped the quality of strategic choices, which is the “using emotions” branch of the ability model in action, with emotion directing attention rather than hijacking it.

Leadership is the area the SMT will care about most, and here Miao, Humphrey and Qian (2018) found that a leader’s EI predicts their team’s task performance and citizenship behaviour even after personality and cognitive ability are taken into account. Leader EI also tracks with transformational leadership and follower satisfaction, though the effects are moderate (around .25 in the available synthesis, part of which rests on doctoral rather than published work and should be weighted accordingly). The lesson is fairly specific. EI works best not as a magic recruitment filter but as a set of habits, listening properly, staying regulated under pressure, taking the other person’s view, that leaders and staff can practise, especially in the charged moments of feedback, negotiation and change.

It also helps to be realistic about how EI improves performance, because it rarely does so directly. What it changes is the climate: the trust, the coordination, the willingness to share what you know. Joseph and Newman’s (2010) cascading model puts it neatly, with perceiving emotion feeding understanding, which supports regulation, which underpins the cooperative behaviour that eventually shows up as performance. EI is a lever on collaboration, then, not a productivity dial. No one should expect an EI course to lift individual output on its own; the gains are relational, and they land at the level of the team.

2.4 Mindfulness, wellbeing and whether EI can be taught

A large part of EI's appeal for development is simple: it can be taught. Hodzic et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis of EI training found moderate improvements from before to after that held up at follow-up, and later workplace studies report similar effects lasting beyond three months. Mindfulness pulls in the same direction. Jiménez-Picón et al.'s (2021) systematic review found mindfulness and EI reinforce one another and jointly buffer people against stress and burnout, which is the flip side of the negative EI–stress link in Doğru's (2022) data. One honest caveat is worth flagging: much of this evidence comes from healthcare and education, so its transfer to every part of the business should be treated as likely rather than guaranteed, and any programme ought to measure its own results instead of assuming them.

2.5 A declining backdrop, and why psychological safety ties it together

There is a further reason EI feels timely. Freedman et al.'s (2025) large peer-reviewed study reports that global EQ fell by nearly six per cent between 2019 and 2024, across every competency measured, with higher-EQ individuals far more likely to report positive life outcomes. It is a striking finding, but it rests on one organisation's proprietary instrument and has not been independently replicated, so it is best read as credible but provisional rather than settled.

The thread pulling all of this together is psychological safety. Edmondson's (1999) classic study showed that teams which feel safe are teams that learn, and that learning is what drives their performance; Frazier et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis of more than 22,000 people confirmed the link and picked out emotional stability as one of its roots. The behaviours that build a safe team, empathy, self-regulation, listening without getting defensive, are EI behaviours. That gives a plausible account of what happened here: emotionally intelligent leadership created the safety in which morale, communication and conflict handling could all improve at once.

3. Managing a Multigenerational Workforce

3.1 A shifting workforce

The make-up of the workforce is changing quickly. In the United States, Generation Z overtook the Baby Boomers during 2023 and is on course to make up somewhere between a quarter and a third of workers by 2030 (McKinsey puts the global figure near 26 per cent, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics closer to 30), though these are projections rather than facts on the ground. At the same time, the World Economic Forum (2025) expects nearly two in five core job skills to change by 2030, and lists emotional intelligence, empathy and active listening among the human skills employers most want to hold on to. So the SMT's interest in leading

across generations arrives just as the labour market is both reshaping demographically and leaning harder on exactly the interpersonal skills discussed above.

3.2 What each generation is said to want

The industry research paints a tidy picture. Generation X is described as valuing stability, independence and work–life balance; Millennials (Generation Y) as chasing purpose, development and feedback; Generation Z as wanting flexibility, wellbeing and, as “digital natives”, technology that keeps up with them. Deloitte’s (2024) survey of more than 22,000 people found roughly 86 per cent of Gen Z and 89 per cent of Millennials saying purpose is central to job satisfaction, with work–life balance topping the list of reasons for choosing an employer and mental health a real concern in both groups. Its 2025 findings add that only about six per cent name reaching a leadership role as their main goal, and that a sizeable minority have already walked away from a job that felt purposeless. Read on its own, this looks like a strong case for managing each generation differently, and for setting up reverse-mentoring schemes to close the supposed technology gap.

3.3 The problem: the differences mostly do not hold up

They should not be taken at face value, though, and this is the single most important point for recruitment planning. Move from surveys to the strongest peer-reviewed research and the generational differences mostly shrink or vanish. Costanza et al.’s (2012) foundational meta-analysis found barely any meaningful gaps in job satisfaction, commitment or intention to quit, and pointed out that the birth-year cut-offs defining a “generation” wander by several years from one study to the next. Rudolph et al. (2021) go further, arguing that the whole framework is conceptually and methodologically cracked, and Ravid, Costanza and Romero’s (2025) recent meta-analysis again turned up few systematic, meaningful differences, while noting that researchers tend to wave such null results away. The deeper issue is that what looks like a generational effect is usually age, career stage and period tangled together: younger staff move jobs more often, but that may say more about being early in a career than about being Gen Z. Stiglbauer, Penz and Batinic (2022) report the same mixed, inconclusive picture on work values.

In fairness, not everyone agrees. Twenge (2023) makes the case that generational differences are real and driven by technological and cultural change, and her position still carries weight with practitioners. Weighing the two, the more honest conclusion is that *average* differences between cohorts are small and heavily inflated by stereotype, even though managers feel them strongly. That feeling is itself the danger. Build recruitment and management around generational assumptions and you risk manufacturing the very differences you expected, and

drifting towards age discrimination along the way. The evidence points away from managing “generations” and towards managing people.

3.4 Where EI and mindfulness come in

That shifts the job description. If the cohort differences are small, the answer is not a shelf of generation-specific playbooks but the EI and mindfulness skills that let a manager respond to the individual in front of them and to the needs people genuinely share. Empathy and perspective-taking surface what a particular employee actually values, rather than what their birth year is supposed to predict; self-regulation and unhurried, non-reactive listening take the heat out of the friction that stereotyping tends to generate.

The mechanism, again, is psychological safety. Edmondson (1999) and Frazier et al. (2017) show that inclusive, safe teams are the ones that learn and perform, and those climates are built out of emotionally intelligent behaviour. Two practical bridges follow from the literature. Becker, Richards and Stollings (2022) find that generational diversity can actually help team performance, but only where its tensions are managed rather than ignored, which is itself an EI task. And Chaudhuri, Park and Johnson’s (2022) review shows that reverse and reciprocal mentoring can close the perceived technology gap while building respect in both directions, older and younger learning from each other. So for recruitment, management and retention, the emotionally intelligent move is to design roles and development around individual motivation and the things people want across the board (flexibility, purpose, growth, wellbeing), to use mentoring that runs both ways, and to embed mindfulness practices that support everyone’s wellbeing rather than one favoured group.

Retention shows what this changes in practice. The “job-hopping” everyone associates with younger workers looks different once shorter tenure is read as career stage and unmet needs rather than a generational trait. The response is not to expect less of a whole cohort but to ask, through empathy and listening, what a specific person is after, whether growth, flexibility or plain recognition, and build the role around it. Mindfulness supports the wellbeing that the survey data suggest is genuinely under strain among younger staff, which is a shared human need rather than a stereotype. Handled this way, a generational problem turns back into an ordinary, solvable management one.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The argument of this report is straightforward. Emotional intelligence is real and worth investing in, but its benefits are modest, depend on the situation, and hinge on how you measure it, a nuance worth holding on to whenever the outside world makes bigger claims. It works best understood as a set of learnable behaviours that improve communication, conflict, leadership and wellbeing, mostly by building the psychological safety in which teams do their best work. On the generational question the message is more sceptical still: the differences are loud in surveys and quiet in serious research, and treating cohorts as stereotypes risks both self-fulfilling prophecies and discrimination. The recommendations below follow from that.

- **Employee development:** fund evidence-based EI and mindfulness training, which the meta-analytic evidence shows produces real and lasting gains, but measure the results rather than assuming them.
- **Leadership capability:** treat EI as observable behaviour (listening, self-regulation, empathy) and make building psychologically safe teams an explicit expectation of leaders.
- **Recruitment:** use EI as one modest, role-relevant criterion among several, with validated tools and an eye on their overlap with personality; do not design hiring around generational assumptions.
- **Inclusion:** focus on individual and shared needs, since flexibility, purpose, growth and wellbeing cut across every cohort, and use two-way mentoring to bridge the gaps people think they see.

Taken together, these steps would lock in the improvements the climate survey has already picked up, and turn emotionally intelligent, inclusive practice into something the organisation owns collectively, rather than something that happens to rest on one person.

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