

**University of Wales Trinity Saint David,
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**BA (Hons) Leadership and Management Skills for
the Workplace**

Module: Developing Emotional Intelligence Skills

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1. Introduction

Contemporary organisations increasingly depend on employees who can work effectively across diverse teams, manage interpersonal pressures and respond constructively to disagreement. Technical competence alone may therefore be insufficient to achieve sustainable organisational performance. Emotional intelligence (EI), broadly concerned with the recognition, understanding and management of emotions, provides an important framework for examining how individuals communicate, collaborate, lead and make decisions in complex workplace environments (Côté, 2014; Mayer and Salovey, 1997). Mindfulness can complement these capabilities by encouraging greater awareness of emotional reactions and more considered responses to stressful or challenging situations (Stuart-Edwards, MacDonald and Ansari, 2023).

This report critically analyses the role of emotional intelligence and mindfulness in contemporary organisations, with particular attention to employee performance, collaboration, well-being, communication, conflict management, leadership and decision-making. The discussion evaluates three influential approaches to emotional intelligence: Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework, Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model, and Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence Model. Rather than treating these frameworks as interchangeable, the report considers their different contributions and limitations when applied to workplace behaviour.

To connect theory with practice, an illustrative archaeological fieldwork team is used throughout the report. In this scenario, highly capable team members disagree over whether a newly identified historical site should undergo immediate excavation or first be investigated through non-invasive technologies. The case demonstrates how professional expertise can coexist with interpersonal disagreement and provides a practical context for examining self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, motivation and social interaction.

The report subsequently extends this analysis to a multigenerational workforce, examining Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z. It considers how differences in values, communication preferences, motivation and technological adaptability may influence organisational effectiveness and evaluates how emotionally intelligent and

mindful management can support inclusion, psychological safety, recruitment, employee development and retention.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Emotional Intelligence and Mindfulness

Emotional intelligence has been conceptualised in different ways, and this has led to several influential models that emphasise different dimensions of emotional functioning. Three of the most widely discussed approaches are Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework, Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model, and Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence Model. Although all three recognise that emotions influence behaviour and performance, they differ in the way they define, measure and apply emotional intelligence.

Goleman's framework presents emotional intelligence as a set of practical competencies, including self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Its main strength is its accessibility and relevance to leadership and organisational behaviour. The model is particularly useful in workplace settings because it links emotional capabilities with communication, collaboration and leadership effectiveness. However, one criticism is that the framework is broad and may overlap with personality traits and general management competencies rather than representing a clearly distinct form of intelligence (Goleman, 1998).

In contrast, Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model defines emotional intelligence more narrowly as the ability to perceive, understand, use and regulate emotions. This approach is more closely linked to cognitive ability and offers a clearer theoretical distinction between emotional intelligence and personality. Its strength lies in its conceptual precision, although its application in everyday management may be less straightforward than Goleman's competency-based approach (Mayer and Salovey, 1997; Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004).

Bar-On's Emotional-Social Intelligence Model takes a broader perspective by combining emotional and social capabilities. It includes areas such as interpersonal skills, adaptability, stress management and general mood. This makes the model particularly relevant to organisational resilience and employee well-being. However, its wide scope may also make it difficult to separate emotional intelligence from broader psychological characteristics (Bar-On, 2006).

Mindfulness provides a complementary perspective by encouraging individuals to pay deliberate attention to present experiences without reacting automatically. In organisational contexts, mindfulness may support emotional regulation by helping employees recognise stress, pause before responding and consider alternative perspectives. When combined with emotional intelligence, mindfulness can strengthen self-awareness and reduce impulsive reactions, particularly during conflict or high-pressure decision-making (Gross, 1998; Stuart-Edwards, MacDonald and Ansari, 2023).

Overall, the three models offer different but complementary perspectives. Goleman provides a practical leadership framework, Mayer and Salovey offer a more focused cognitive model, while Bar-On emphasises emotional and social functioning. Their combined use provides a stronger basis for understanding how emotional intelligence can influence workplace communication, leadership, well-being and decision-making.

3. Illustrative Case Study: Emotional Intelligence in an Archaeological Project Team

To demonstrate the practical relevance of emotional intelligence, this report uses an illustrative case study involving a diverse eight-member archaeological project team investigating a newly identified historical site. Each member possesses strong academic or technical expertise, but the team faces a significant disagreement concerning the most appropriate strategy for investigating the site.

One group argues that direct excavation should begin because visible archaeological remains already provide sufficient evidence to justify intervention. From their perspective, excavation would allow the team to identify artefacts, structural remains and stratigraphic relationships more efficiently. Other members advocate a more cautious approach, proposing that non-invasive technologies, such as ground-penetrating radar and geophysical surveying, should first be used to understand subsurface features before physical excavation begins. Both positions are professionally defensible; consequently, the conflict cannot simply be resolved by identifying one group as knowledgeable and the other as mistaken.

The disagreement gradually develops from a technical debate into an interpersonal challenge. Highly capable individuals may become strongly attached to their professional judgements, while time pressures and responsibility for protecting the archaeological site may increase stress. If poorly managed, disagreement can therefore reduce communication, create defensive behaviour and weaken collaboration. The central leadership challenge is consequently not only what decision should be made, but how the team can reach that decision without damaging trust, psychological safety or professional relationships (Edmondson, 1999).

Emotional intelligence provides a framework for addressing this challenge. Self-awareness can help individuals recognise personal biases and emotional reactions; self-regulation can reduce impulsive responses during disagreement; empathy encourages genuine consideration of alternative professional perspectives; motivation redirects attention towards the shared objective of protecting and understanding the site; and social skills support constructive communication and negotiation.

The scenario therefore illustrates an important organisational principle: expertise does not automatically produce effective teamwork. A high-performing team requires both technical capability and the emotional capacity to manage disagreement constructively. Rather than eliminating differences of opinion, emotionally intelligent leadership can use those differences as a resource for stronger collective decision-making (Gerbeth, Stamouli and Mulder, 2022).

4. Applying Emotional Intelligence to Workplace Performance and Leadership

Emotional intelligence can significantly influence how employees perform, communicate and respond to pressure within contemporary organisations. In the archaeological project case, the technical disagreement between team members demonstrates that expertise alone does not guarantee effective collaboration. The ability to recognise emotions, manage reactions and understand the perspectives of others can determine whether disagreement becomes productive debate or damaging conflict.

Self-awareness is particularly important when employees hold strong professional opinions. In the case study, members who support immediate excavation may believe their judgement is based entirely on evidence, while those favouring non-invasive investigation may regard their own approach as more responsible. Emotional self-awareness allows individuals to recognise personal bias, frustration and defensiveness before these reactions influence communication. A team leader who demonstrates self-awareness is also more likely to recognise how personal preferences may affect the way different proposals are evaluated.

Self-regulation is equally important when discussions become tense. Employees who can pause before responding are less likely to react impulsively to criticism or disagreement. Within the archaeological team, self-regulation would allow members to challenge arguments without attacking colleagues personally. This is particularly valuable under time pressure, where stress may otherwise lead to defensive behaviour and reduced cooperation. Mindfulness can support this process by encouraging individuals to notice emotional reactions without immediately acting on them (Gross, 1998; Hülshager et al., 2013; Stuart-Edwards, MacDonald and Ansari, 2023).

Motivation contributes to performance by directing attention towards shared organisational objectives. In this scenario, the leader can remind the team that the purpose of the project is not to prove which individual or subgroup is correct, but to protect the archaeological site and produce reliable evidence. Reframing the disagreement around a common objective can reduce competition and strengthen collective responsibility.

Empathy supports collaboration by helping employees understand why colleagues hold different positions. The members advocating direct excavation may be concerned about delays, while those proposing technological investigation may be focused on preservation and risk reduction. Recognising these motivations can reduce assumptions about incompetence or resistance and create a more respectful environment for discussion.

Social skills bring these elements together through communication, negotiation and relationship management. An emotionally intelligent leader can create structured opportunities for each member to present evidence, ask questions and respond to alternative views. Rather than imposing a decision, the leader can facilitate an evidence-based process in which team members feel heard and respected.

The three emotional intelligence models provide different perspectives on this process. Goleman's framework is particularly useful for explaining practical leadership behaviours such as empathy and relationship management. Mayer and Salovey's Ability Model provides a more focused explanation of how individuals perceive, understand and regulate emotions during complex interactions. Bar-On's model adds further emphasis on adaptability, interpersonal functioning and stress management, which are especially relevant when employees work in uncertain or high-pressure environments (Goleman, 1998; Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2004; Bar-On, 2006).

Applied effectively, emotional intelligence can therefore improve communication, reduce destructive conflict and support more balanced decision-making. However, EI should not replace technical evidence or professional expertise. Its value lies in creating the interpersonal conditions in which evidence can be discussed openly, and decisions can be made collectively. In the archaeological scenario, this may allow the team to move from competing positions towards a shared strategy that combines professional judgement with mutual trust and effective leadership.

5. Managing a Multigenerational Workforce

Contemporary organisations increasingly include employees from different generations working alongside one another. Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z may have experienced different social, economic and technological environments, potentially influencing their expectations of work, communication preferences, motivation and attitudes towards technology. Managing these differences effectively requires more than recognising generational characteristics; leaders must create an inclusive environment in which different experiences and perspectives contribute to organisational performance rather than becoming sources of division (Costanza et al., 2012; Lyons and Kuron, 2014; Rudolph et al., 2021; Schröder, 2024).

Generation X employees are commonly associated with professional independence, accumulated workplace experience and a preference for autonomy. Within the archaeological case study, experienced team members may place greater confidence in established fieldwork practices and professional judgement. Such experience can provide valuable practical knowledge, particularly when projects involve uncertainty. However, difficulties may arise if established practices are perceived as automatically superior to emerging approaches.

Millennials have experienced the transition between traditional and increasingly digital working environments. They may therefore contribute a combination of established professional practices and greater familiarity with collaborative technologies. Within the archaeological team, they could act as a bridge between experience-based approaches and technologically supported investigation. Opportunities for professional development, meaningful work, collaboration and constructive feedback may also influence their engagement and retention.

Generation Z has entered education and employment within a highly digital environment. Employees from this generation may be particularly comfortable with rapidly developing technologies, digital communication and new methods of accessing information. In the archaeological scenario, younger specialists may therefore advocate tools such as ground-penetrating radar, digital mapping, GIS or other non-invasive techniques before excavation. This technological confidence can encourage innovation, although organisations should avoid assuming that technological preference or ability is determined solely by age.

Differences may also emerge in communication. Some employees may value direct face-to-face discussion, while others may be comfortable with instant messaging, collaborative digital platforms or hybrid communication. An emotionally intelligent leader should avoid imposing one communication style on the entire workforce. Instead, communication methods can be adapted according to the task, individual needs and organisational context.

Motivation presents a similar challenge. Employees across generations may value financial security, career progression, flexibility, recognition, meaningful work or opportunities to develop new skills in different combinations. Emotional intelligence can help managers identify these individual motivations through listening and empathy rather than relying on generational assumptions. Mindfulness can further encourage managers to recognise their own unconscious assumptions before making decisions about employees (Schröder, 2024).

The archaeological case demonstrates how generational diversity can become an organisational advantage. Experienced members may contribute practical judgement and knowledge of established excavation methods, while technologically confident colleagues may introduce innovative investigative techniques. Rather than requiring one perspective to defeat another, emotionally intelligent leadership can integrate these strengths through knowledge sharing and mutual learning.

Nevertheless, generational categories should be treated cautiously. Individuals within the same generation can differ substantially because of education, culture, personality, professional experience and personal circumstances. Over-reliance on generational labels may therefore reinforce stereotypes rather than promote inclusion (Rudolph et al., 2021; Schröder, 2024). Effective management should recognise potential generational patterns while ultimately treating employees as individuals.

Consequently, managing a multigenerational workforce requires an inclusive approach combining emotional intelligence, mindfulness and adaptable leadership. By encouraging psychological safety, reciprocal mentoring and respectful communication, organisations can transform generational differences from a potential source of conflict into opportunities for innovation, knowledge transfer and stronger organisational performance.

6. Critical Discussion: Recruitment, Development and Retention in a Multigenerational Workforce

Managing a multigenerational workforce requires organisations to move beyond recognising generational differences and develop employment practices capable of responding to diverse expectations. Recruitment, employee development and retention are particularly important because organisations need both experienced employees who provide accumulated knowledge and emerging talent capable of introducing new perspectives and technological skills. Emotional intelligence and mindfulness can support this process by helping managers understand individual needs while avoiding assumptions based solely on age.

Recruitment strategies should therefore emphasise inclusion and flexibility. Organisations can use a combination of traditional and digital recruitment channels to reach candidates with different professional backgrounds and communication preferences. Job descriptions should focus on competencies and organisational values rather than assumptions about age or generation. Emotionally intelligent recruitment also requires managers to recognise potential unconscious biases and evaluate candidates according to their capabilities, experience and potential contribution. Within the archaeological case study, for example, recruitment should value both extensive fieldwork experience and expertise in emerging technologies such as GIS or non-invasive surveying rather than treating these capabilities as competing alternatives.

Employee development should similarly encourage reciprocal learning. Traditional mentoring, in which experienced employees support less experienced colleagues, remains valuable; however, reverse mentoring can allow younger employees to share knowledge of emerging technologies and digital working practices. In the archaeological team, an experienced field archaeologist could provide practical knowledge of excavation and site interpretation, while a colleague with advanced technological expertise could demonstrate digital mapping or geophysical methods. Such exchanges can strengthen professional relationships while reducing stereotypes between generations (Leon, 2022).

Emotional intelligence is particularly important in creating the psychological safety required for this knowledge exchange. Employees are more likely to ask questions,

propose new ideas and acknowledge uncertainty when they believe that their contributions will be treated respectfully. Managers who demonstrate empathy, active listening and emotional self-regulation can create an environment in which disagreement is regarded as part of learning rather than as a personal challenge (Edmondson, 1999).

Retention also depends on recognising that employees may have different priorities at different stages of their careers. Flexible working, career progression, recognition, meaningful responsibilities, opportunities for learning and appropriate rewards can all contribute to retention, but their importance will vary between individuals. Consequently, organisations should avoid designing retention strategies around rigid generational stereotypes. Regular feedback and individual conversations can provide managers with more reliable information about what employees actually value.

Mindfulness can complement emotionally intelligent management by encouraging leaders to reflect before responding to conflict, performance difficulties or requests from employees. This may reduce reactive decision-making and help managers distinguish genuine individual needs from assumptions about particular generations (Stuart-Edwards, MacDonald and Ansari, 2023).

Nevertheless, emotional intelligence and mindfulness should not be viewed as solutions to every organisational problem. Poor pay, excessive workloads, limited career opportunities or ineffective organisational structures cannot simply be corrected by encouraging employees to regulate their emotions more effectively. Organisations must therefore combine emotionally intelligent leadership with fair employment practices and appropriate resources.

Overall, effective recruitment, development and retention depend on recognising individual capabilities while creating opportunities for generations to learn from one another. When supported by inclusive HR practices, emotional intelligence and mindfulness can help organisations transform workforce diversity into stronger knowledge sharing, innovation and long-term organisational effectiveness.

7. Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to strengthen employee performance, collaboration, inclusion and organisational effectiveness through emotionally intelligent and mindful management.

1. Develop emotionally intelligent leadership

Organisations should incorporate emotional intelligence into leadership development programmes. Managers should receive practical training in self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, active listening and conflict management. These capabilities can help leaders recognise tension before it develops into destructive conflict and facilitate constructive discussion between employees with different professional perspectives.

2. Integrate mindfulness into everyday working practices

Mindfulness should be applied as a practical management tool rather than treated as an isolated well-being activity. Short reflective pauses before important decisions, structured opportunities for reflection and techniques for managing stress can help employees respond more thoughtfully under pressure. However, mindfulness should complement, rather than replace, appropriate workloads and effective organisational support (Stuart-Edwards, MacDonald and Ansari, 2023).

3. Create psychologically safe communication

Senior managers should encourage an environment in which employees can challenge ideas, acknowledge uncertainty and propose alternatives without fear of embarrassment or negative consequences. In the archaeological case study, allowing both excavation and non-invasive survey advocates to present evidence openly would improve the quality of the final decision while maintaining professional relationships (Edmondson, 1999).

4. Encourage intergenerational knowledge exchange

Organisations should introduce mentoring and reverse-mentoring opportunities. Experienced employees can transfer professional and organisational knowledge, while technologically skilled colleagues can share emerging digital methods. This

reciprocal approach avoids presenting one generation as superior to another and encourages continuous learning (Leon, 2022).

5. Personalise recruitment, development and retention

HR strategies should avoid relying on generational stereotypes. Recruitment should assess capability and potential, while development and retention should reflect individual motivations through regular feedback, flexible development opportunities, recognition and appropriate career pathways.

6. Combine emotional intelligence with evidence-based decision-making

Organisations should integrate emotional intelligence into leadership development, particularly self-awareness, emotional regulation, empathy, active listening and conflict management. These capabilities can help managers identify tension and facilitate constructive discussion between employees with different professional perspectives.

8. Conclusion

This report has critically examined the contribution of emotional intelligence and mindfulness to effective performance, leadership and collaboration in contemporary organisations. The analysis demonstrates that emotional intelligence can support employees in recognising and regulating emotions, understanding alternative perspectives and managing interpersonal challenges more constructively. Goleman, Mayer and Salovey, and Bar-On provide different but complementary perspectives, highlighting the importance of emotional abilities, social competencies and adaptability in workplace behaviour.

The archaeological project case illustrated that technical expertise alone does not guarantee effective teamwork. Where highly capable individuals hold competing professional opinions, emotionally intelligent leadership can help transform disagreement into evidence-based discussion, preserve trust and support collective decision-making. Mindfulness can further strengthen this process by encouraging reflective rather than impulsive responses.

The analysis of Generation X, Millennials and Generation Z also demonstrated that workforce diversity can provide valuable combinations of experience, technological knowledge and different perspectives. However, generational categories should not become stereotypes; effective managers must recognise individual needs and capabilities.

Ultimately, emotional intelligence and mindfulness are most effective when combined with inclusive leadership, psychological safety, fair employment practices and evidence-based decision-making. Organisations that integrate these principles into leadership, communication and employee development are better positioned to convert interpersonal and generational differences into collaboration, innovation and sustainable organisational performance.

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