

A Case Study for Emotional Intelligence

Organisation: A Major Automotive Manufacturing Company

In recent years Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a fundamental ability required for establishing effective working relationships. Critics of EI have argued that it is intrinsic and cannot be learnt, however recent studies demonstrate that EI can be improved through learning a distinct set of competency-based behaviours.

In 2002 Learning Dimensions teamed with Swinburne University to undertake a research study that provided the first empirical evidence of the tangible workplace benefits of a highly emotionally intelligent workforce. In 2003 we applied our research findings with a major vehicle manufacturer to determine whether emotional intelligence (EI) could be developed to improve leadership capability across the organisation.

The Business Challenge In 2000, a project team within a leading automotive manufacturing company was set up to develop a replacement for a phased out engine. The project grew to include more than 30 specialists. Over time it became evident that 'people' and team culture issues had emerged which constrained the team's overall performance. A key factor was an apparent lack of people leadership behaviours.

The Actions taken Learning Dimensions was engaged to improve team performance. Based on the assumption that by improving levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI), leadership capability also improves, an EI competency-based learning solution was developed and implemented.

Initially, the leadership capability and EI of each individual, as well as that of the whole team was measured. The team then embarked on a six-module development process over an eight-month period. The workshop modules aimed to improve participants' leadership abilities by developing the Emotional Intelligence competencies of:

- Emotional Recognition and Expression
- Understanding Emotions
- Emotions Direct Cognitions
- Emotional Management
- Emotional Control

After completing the development program, the team members and the team as a whole were re-assessed for levels of EI and transformational leadership competency.

The Business Result Team results showed that the strength of each of the EI competencies improved approximately 50% following the learning and development program. The transformational leadership re-assessment results confirmed the original assumption that by improving levels of EI, leadership capability would also improve. Results revealed a marked improvement in scores on all five of the leadership characteristics measured.

Qualitative evidence also strongly supported these findings with internal team members and external stakeholders noticing a marked improvement in how this team functioned. The improvements extended beyond just being *nicer* with each other; the team's overall performance was rated as more effective. This included performance indicators such as meeting project deadlines, more effective negotiations with suppliers and other stakeholders.

Outcome This case study provides solid evidence that Emotional Intelligence can be developed using a competency-based training approach. It also demonstrates that EI is an effective competency framework for developing leadership capability and improving team performance. Success was achieved by moving away from the common practice of aiming to improve EI through an individual assessment-coaching model, proving that EI can be cost effectively enhanced within teams, across the entire workforce.

For more information on Emotional Intelligence Research carried out by Learning Dimensions, please refer to our Full Research Report entitled "*Emotional Intelligence: The Impact on Sales Performance*".