

# Selling with Emotional Intelligence

**By Gaynor Lowndes, Managing Director of The Recruitment Training Company, and The Recruitment and Training Factory**

**M**any psychologists are beginning to question the emphasis society places on the IQ, the intellectual component of intelligence. A leader in this shift of emphasis is Daniel Goleman, who argues that an individual's effectiveness in social interaction and communication, through self-awareness and social sensitivity, should be recognised as an equally important component of intelligence: Emotional Intelligence (EQ).

Consider Goleman's argument in the context of the recruitment profession. The IQ is the key to success in academic fields; whereas the EQ is the key to success in any people-oriented field such as sales, or more specifically, recruitment. Therefore, the recruitment industry needs to embrace the insights and analytical skills of selling with EQ.

Stephen R Covey believes that there are five key competencies of selling with EQ. My experiences over the 20 years I spent as a consultant have highlighted to me how essential it is for all consultants and resourcers to understand and utilise these five competencies in the sales process:

**1. Awareness** – As a recruiter, you need to be able to “see” yourself from outside yourself. You can achieve this through close observation, during a meeting, of whether or not the prospect appears comfortable with you. Great recruiters know that the key to putting a prospect at ease, is to closely observe their mannerisms, and adopt them, from volume of voice, to body language and gestures. The key point is this: **People buy from people like them**, because they are made to feel comfortable.

When I was in my first year as a consultant, I was meeting with a prospect who had a very reserved, emotionless style of communicating. I began to realise, as I watched his body language, that he was irritated by the loud voice and enthusiastic gestures that I naturally use. I decided to sit on my hands for the rest of the meeting, and lower my voice – seemingly small changes – and what do you know, he began to warm to me! He ended up becoming one of my

Gold Clients of the time, and I still believe that if I hadn't have become more aware of my manner during that meeting, he wouldn't have become a client at all!

**2. Restraint** – I believe that the ability to remain calm and relaxed in a difficult situation is a gift, because it allows us to look at problems and issues in terms of solutions, ie: We control the problem, rather than the problem controlling us. Stress or anger at a problem is basically admitting defeat; because, think about it, if you were confident that a solution could be found, what would you have to worry or get angry about?

I once had a dispute with a client over a fee. The specifics of the situation do not matter, suffice to say that our conversation turned to the tone of thinly veiled personal insults, and I realised afterwards (as he probably did too), that the issue had not been solved. Had I remained calm and exercised restraint, I could have formulated a mutually satisfying solution, but, as it turned out, the only winner was the problem itself.

**3. Resilience** – I like to define resilience as “the art of controlling negative emotions,” as opposed to letting them control you. I believe that resilience is one of the most important skills for a recruiter to possess. A resilient recruiter is able to push ahead and overcome the fear of rejection associated with cold calls. A resilient recruiter experiences three client drop-offs in a month, and is motivated to make improvements to his candidate management, rather than feeling defeated.

I tend to take a tough stance on recruiters train who refuse to make cold calls. Many assume that this is because I never suffered from call reluctance myself. This is not true. Indeed, early in my career, there were several times where I made cold calls with tears in my eyes. But the point is, I still made the calls. And that is what resilience is all about.

**4. Empathy** – The word “Empathy” is often used interchangeably with “Sympathy.” But it isn't the same thing.

Sympathy is compassion, Empathy goes a step further, it means, put simply, to place yourself in someone else's shoes, to gain insight into how they feel, what makes them tick, and what they need in terms of service and communication.

For the first few client meetings I did as a recruiter, I was so engrossed in my sales pitch that I neglected to address their needs as a person or as a client at all. It was all about me, and the great service I could offer. I learned the hard way that service, in any context, is selfless, it is about the needs of others, and recruitment service is no exception.

**5. Rapport** – Working with others, relationship-building. Most recruiters are very skilled at building rapport ... until a challenge arises. The truly strong recruiter-client relationship, is one that can withstand disagreements and other difficulties, through a co-operative effort to find solutions to issues as they arise. Indeed, the ability to provide solutions proves that the relationship is indeed worth it!

This can be applied to the situation in Point 2 (Restraint): The dispute with a client over a fee. There was no co-operative effort to find a solution, which made the client feel, understandably, that this relationship was of no benefit to him. I actually called him later that day to make amends and to try and offer a solution, but it was too late, the damage had been done. Needless to say, we never worked together again. The saying goes



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