

Developing Emotional Intelligence and Empathy

The need to connect with the people has never been higher. With the COVID-19 Pandemic, contact centers are overwhelmed with customers looking to make a purchase, follow-up on an order, to request additional information, or they just need some help.

With the urgency this brings, there is a significant need for the uniquely human ability to work with others to achieve the right balance of service, speed, and customer satisfaction. It is the need for people to respond with Emotional Intelligence (EI). Ultimately its helping people improve how they deal with a range of situations, in a compassionate and empathetic manner, and it can be learned.

Understanding Your Emotional Intelligence

The development of emotional intelligence is an iterative and ongoing process and will be a different experience for each person. When undertaking a qualitative self-assessment or a review of a team member's approach, keep in mind that everyone should work together to better understand each other's perceptions. Each person should focus on developing the management of their perceptions along with their corresponding actions/reactions.

Accept and Understand the Perceptions of Others

Do not let your own life experiences or personal value system affect your ability to understand or consider another person's perspective. How do you feel during stressful calls? What do you experience? How do you typically respond? Is your response helpful in dealing with that person, or not? If harmful, how do you think you should respond? Would it be better to consider your response before you do?

The best approach is to identify your feelings as they are being experienced and respond with a helpful, non-confrontational approach. What causes an escalation in the stress being felt, or negatively influences the way you engage with such customers? Assessing your actions as objectively as possible can help you realize what needs to be done to treat that person calmly, in a more engaging manner.

It is Imperative - Get Feedback. Then More Feedback. Then More Feedback Again.

You must validate your self-perception versus the realities seen by others, your manager, colleagues, friends, and family. Ask them how they would rate your emotional intelligence. A better understanding of how your self-perception correlates to what others perceive is fundamental to this process. When they let you know how accepting/adaptable you are to stressful or ambiguous situations, they'll usually also offer suggestions regarding what they think you need to improve. This is usually difficult to hear, but if the feedback is consistent, then you should accept that they are providing you with the best information you can get on how to improve your EI.

Develop Understanding Through Social Awareness

Seeing the world through other people's points of view increases our understanding of them, be it culturally, experientially, geographically, or intellectually. This also increases our overall social awareness and improves our acceptance of diverse perspectives, which then helps us more quickly deal with customer situations in more respectful and helpful ways.

This is ultimately when **empathy** becomes **understanding**, which makes the overall customer engagement easier, simpler, and more easily driven to common ground. And, hopefully, a resolution.

Emotional Intelligence Must Be Part of Your Organizational Culture

Improving our own EI is one thing. Helping others to become more empathetic is altogether different. It requires the ability to motivate others to do so. Be the change you expect of others. Lead with EI.

Emotional Intelligence – Assessment and Tracking Sheet (condensed version)

Agent Name: _____

Date : _____

Note: Use 1 sheet per person that you interview. It is recommended that you undertake this process regularly to help identify areas that need specific attention and to track your progress.

Assessment by (Circle one): Self / Manager / Colleague / Friend / Family Member

Person's Name: _____

Situation and Feelings Experienced. And Your Reactions.

Recent or Past Situation (High Level) _____

What do you feel during stressful calls? _____

What emotions do you experience? _____

How do you typically respond? _____

Is your response helpful, or harmful? _____

If harmful, how should you should respond? _____

Plan a better response. _____

Situational Feedback. Their Thoughts and Suggestions.

Validate your self-perception versus the realities seen by your managers, colleagues, friends, and family.

How do you rate my emotional intelligence? _____

How do you see me respond to different situations? _____

Am I empathetic or accepting/adaptable? Yes or No.

Give an example: _____

Have you observed any specific triggers: _____

Do you have any other suggestions for me? _____

Book Tracker

Seeing the world through other people's point of view, increases our understanding of others – from many different perspectives – culturally, experientially, educationally, and intellectually. Start with something intriguing, based in an area or region that you are not familiar with. It is recommended that you start with autobiographies or biographies of people that inspire you.

Book #1 Title: _____

Observations: _____

Book #2 Title: _____

Observations: _____

Book #3 Title: _____

Observations: _____

Book #4 Title: _____

Observations: _____

Book #5 Title: _____

Observations: _____

Note: This article is adapted from various resources including: "The War for Kindness" by Jamil K Zaki, "Insights" by Tasha Eurich.